

Local Government North Yorkshire and York

4 December 2015

General Updates

Report of the Honorary Secretary

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide a brief update on issues which do not require a full paper.
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2.0 Sub-Regional Housing Board – Report of Mary Weastell (Chief Executive, Selby District Council)

Progress report as at 12th November 2015

Enhanced two tier project title:
Affordable Housing

Project Description:
Working Together to Increase the Number of Affordable Housing Units

Project Lead:
Colin Dales, Corporate Director (Operations), Richmondshire District Council
Tel: 01748 901002 email: colin.dales@richmondshire.gov.uk

2.0 Progress to date/update:

- (a) The Housing Partnership's Annual Report for 2014/15 has been published via the Housing Partnership website.
- (b) The Housing Board is closely monitoring national policy developments, particularly around the extension of the Right to Buy to Housing Associations, annual rent changes for social landlords (being set at -1% each year for the next 4 years), the sell off of high value Council housing and starter home proposals which may have an impact on Council's approach to Section 106 housing supply. The details of how and when these key policies will be rolled out are starting to become clear but more detail is still awaited.
- (c) A new York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategy with a new set of key priorities was formally launched on the 14th September. The event was well supported by partners.
- (d) The Housing Partnership has been tasked with formulating a series of high level housing "asks" as part of any agreed devolution deal. The "asks" are being refined via on-going consultation with the CLG and housing partnership members. The Housing Board are also being kept updated on progress.

- (e) The Rural Housing Enabler network held an event at Duncombe Park, Helmsley on the 23rd September to promote affordable rural housing. Again, the event was well supported with the guest speaker being Lord Richard Best.
- (f) As part of a wider North Yorkshire partnership approach with all key agencies, North Yorkshire Councils have agreed in principle to assist with the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme. Each Council will resettle an agreed number of refugees based on a simple population formula. Work is currently on-going to translate this in principle agreement into practical action with the first refugees anticipated in the new year.
- (g) The Housing Board's performance management role as part of its wider housing supply remit is currently being tested via a request for Councils to provide estimated housing supply figures as at the end of quarter 2 for the 2015/16 financial year. This is the first time Councils have been asked to provide 6 monthly updates rather than annual updates.

2.2 Barriers to progressing the project over the next period

- (a) The main barrier continues to relate to current housing market conditions which are hindering the contribution that the planning system can make to affordable homes delivery. However, housing market conditions and associated confidence are continuing to improve and this barrier continues to lower as housing market confidence grows.
- (b) Lack of suitable land continues to be a barrier to the delivery of affordable housing although Local Authority planning frameworks are continuing to develop with a growing number receiving or anticipating Planning Inspectorate approval. This progress should ease housing land supply in the medium term. The Growth Deal makes specific reference to the need to have up to date local plans and associated land supply.
- (c) Private sector housing improvement funding ceased from 1 April 2011 as a direct result of CSR. Local Authorities still have the freedom to fund private sector housing renewal from their own funds, but current feedback from Local Authority colleagues is that this area of activity has reduced significantly with Disabled Facilities Grants being the core business.
- (d) Local opposition to housing (including affordable housing) is also hindering progress in boosting housing supply. The Housing Board has written to the Housing Minister to request that more supportive key messages come out of Government, supporting new housing and the key role it plays in boosting local economies and sustaining communities. The Chair of the Board has also met with the Housing Minister when he visited the region in July in order to reinforce this message.
- (e) Funding the infrastructure needed to bring housing sites forward is also a barrier which has, at least in part, been resolved via the allocation of Local Growth Funding. However, this is likely to be an on-going pressure as further key sites come forward.
- (f) Selby District Council has also had a further barrier raised by developers and agents within its area which relates to delays in statutory agency consultee responses to planning applications.

3.0 Sub-Regional Spatial Planning and Transport Board – Report of Ian Stokes (Development Officer (Transport Strategy), City of York Council)

3.1 A further meeting of the SP&T Board in early December 2015 is currently being pursued.

4.0 Yorkshire and Humberside European Regional Development Fund Performance Management Board for North East and West Yorkshire – Report of Councillor Derek Bastiman (Scarborough Borough Council)

4.1 No meeting has been held subsequent to my previous report.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 That the report be noted.

Richard Flinton

Honorary Secretary to Local Government North Yorkshire and York