

Local Government North Yorkshire and York

8 July 2016

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.

2.0 Sub-Regional Housing Board – Report of Mary Weastell (Chief Executive, Selby District Council)

Progress report as at 14 June 2016

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 Board has considered a proposal to review the Rural Housing Enabler Programme in light of the changing financial landscape partners are working in. The decision has been taken to defer a review until the impact of national housing policy becomes clear – probably early in the new calendar year. The RHE programme has reported a delivery of 177 new rural affordable homes against a target of 100 during 2015/16 and is forecasting a further 238 new rural affordable homes being delivered during 2016/17. The Programme is also to participate in two high profile initiatives – one looking at a Rural Revolving Land Bank and one exploring a Community Land Trust.
- (b) The Housing Board continues to closely monitor 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 we continue to await further details.
- (c) 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. The previous update report highlighted the key developments in this respect.

- (d) As part of a wider North Yorkshire partnership approach with all key agencies, North Yorkshire Councils have agreed to assist with the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme. Each Council will resettle an agreed number of refugees based on a simple pro rata population formula. The total figure for North Yorkshire is 200 (people). Each North Yorkshire Local Authority has signed up to a regional and sub regional governance structure along with a memorandum of understanding to clarify roles and commitments within North Yorkshire. The intention is to resettle on a phased geographical basis to ensure resources are not spread too thinly – Harrogate and Craven (and possibly Selby) are to form phase one in line with this approach. However, the next meeting of the Strategic Project Group is to discuss this approach in light of difficulties experienced so far e.g. a mismatch between properties available and the size / location of properties needed in Harrogate.
- (e) The Housing Board has also received a Homelessness update which shows that there was a 6% reduction in homeless decisions (a drop from 1557 in 2014/15 to 1459 in 2015/16) and a 14% drop in homeless preventions (4099 to 3537 over the same period). Over 10,000 households accessed housing options services during 2015 /16, showing a continued high demand for these services. The Homeless Group is looking further into the drop in homeless preventions and the reason/s behind this. Housing Options services continue to strive to improve and currently 45% of Local Authorities have achieved the “Bronze Standard” on their way to hopefully achieving the nationally recognised “Gold Standard”.
- (f) A “Section 106” Task Group continues with its work to develop standardised or example agreements as (and the associated complex legal negotiations with housing developers) such agreements are seen as a blockage to increasing housing supply quickly. The work has the full support of the private sector builders and further updates will be given in this respect.

2.2 Barriers to progressing the project over the next period

- (a) 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.
- (g) The vast raft of new / proposed housing legislation is also proving to become a barrier as housing providers take stock and come to terms with all the new policies and proposals and the impact on business plans. This barrier is likely to reduce as time moves on and updates will continue to be provided in this respect.

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

- 3.1 The Board last met on 9 December 2015. A report of that meeting was noted at LGNY's meeting on 11 March 2016.
- 3.2 The supporting Technical Officer Group is due to meet on 24 June 2016 with a view to determining whether a meeting of the Board should be arranged for July/August 2016.

<h3>4.0 Recommendation</h3>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">4.1 That the report be noted. |
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Richard Flinton

Honorary Secretary to Local Government North Yorkshire and York