

Local Government North Yorkshire and York

28 June 2019

**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, City of York Council

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

2.1 Progress to date/update:-

- (a) Work around the Community Housing Fund is currently at a cross roads. The Community Led Housing Hub was formally launched on the 5 March 2018 with a new “REACH” website. The key aim of the Hub is to assist communities in developing their own housing schemes via access to advice and assistance from key professionals such as architects, project managers, funders and legal professionals. The Housing Board has previously approved the direction of travel for the Hub which, in essence, revolves around moving towards an independent Hub with its own community led management body – keeping the Hub sustainable in the medium to long term. A report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Housing Board (24 June), putting in place a route map to an independent governing body or ceasing any further work on the Hub concept. Further updates will be given. Many local authorities have found it difficult to bring forward community led housing schemes, hence a feeling in certain quarters that no further Hub development work should be undertaken.
- (b) The Housing Board has received reports previously on Syrian Refugee Resettlement and the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme. In terms of the asylum seeker dispersal, further negotiations were put on hold due to a change of contractor (G4S to Mears) and staffing changes at the Home Office. Home Office officials have recently been in contact wishing to re-open discussions on asylum dispersal. A Home Office representative has been invited to the next meeting of the Chief Housing Officers’ Group with a view to submitting an update report to the Housing Board later in 2019.
- (c) The Housing Board and Directors of Development have been working on a Joint Housing Investment Plan for York, North Yorkshire and East Riding following previous advice from the Homes England Chief Executive that we need to clearly articulate our “asks” ,“gives” and aspirations as a Housing Partnership. The plan has been developed in close liaison with Homes England colleagues but the Deputy Chief Executive of Homes England has confirmed that Homes England could not support the document in full. This was met with

disappointment by the Housing Partnership and the Chair of the Housing Board has written to the Homes England Chief Executive expressing this disappointment. The Housing Board have resolved to keep the Investment Plan in place to steer housing investment priorities in the medium term with Homes England funding assisting where appropriate.

- (d) Work between North Yorkshire County Council and the lower tier Local Authorities to look at transforming County Council funded homeless prevention services in order to secure further efficiencies/savings has concluded. The outcome will be the transfer of staffing/services to individual districts/boroughs which will facilitate a financial saving for the County Council. The transfer process is currently underway and will be completed by September 2019.
- (e) The Rural Housing Enabler programme continues to succeed in delivering affordable rural homes with 405 new homes delivered during 2018/19 – a record number of completions for the programme. A further 396 new homes are forecast for 2019/20.
- (f) The final outturn figure for overall new housing completions is awaited but it is anticipated that the 5000 target will be met for 2018/19. Further updates will be given in this respect.
- (g) A collaboration agreement with Housing Associations working in the Housing Partnership area is at an advanced stage in order to remove development barriers in order to boost the supply of affordable housing – the affordable housing element of the overall supply target has not been met in recent years (for a variety of reasons) and there is a clear acknowledgement that further focus is needed in this area of activity. The collaboration approach is therefore a much welcomed development.

2.2 Barriers to progressing the project over the next period:-

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.

3.0 Sub-Regional Spatial Planning and Transport Board – Report of Ian Stokes (Principal Development Control Engineer (Planning))

3.1 There is nothing to report, except that the Board Secretariat is intending to convene a meeting of the Board in July 2019.

4.0 Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Migration Group – Report of Ann-Marie Douglas (City of York Council’s Temporary Accommodation Manager) on behalf of herself, Councillor Derek Bastiman (Scarborough Borough Council) and Neil Irving (NYCC)

4.1 The main points which arose at the meeting of the Strategic Migration Group on 28 February 2019 were as follows:-

- (a) Indications from the Government suggest that they will drop their net migration target.
- (b) Secondary school pupils will be taught about the dangers of female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2020 as part of the compulsory relationships and sex education classes.
- (c) Libraries are being asked to prepare to support people applying for the EU Settlement Scheme but local authorities were not consulted and are not being provided with any additional support.
- (d) Home Office update - The Home Office and the LGA are working to develop a new methodology for asylum dispersal across the regions. This includes reviewing the costs, how contracts can be influenced and how the dispersal can be more equitable.
- (e) New Asylum contracts:-
 - Asylum accommodation support transformation has been awarded to Mears Group while the Advice, Issue, Reporting and Eligibility (Aire) has been awarded to Migrant Help. The Government are confident that the new contracts will be of better quality, keeping the best bits of Compass and improving the standards of support and accommodation.
 - Discussions included how to clarify vulnerability as this means different things to different people and can change in the course of the asylum process.
 - Due to the unprecedented increase in service users in December/January, some people have been placed very short term (under 12 hours) in hotels.
- (f) Migrant Help:-
 - Some recent issues with Aspen cards and arrangements have been made for Migrant Help to meet with the Home Office to discuss.
 - The new AIRE contract includes proposals to increase outreach provision across the Yorkshire and Humber region. Outreach provision is limited to ‘vulnerable clients’ and would be capped at 10%. This

caused concern but would be checked and reported back. Members would like more detail on plans for delivery of the service.

- Individuals having no recourse to public funds to be discussed in more detail at future meetings.
- Concerns that individuals do not feel confident to report hate incidents/crimes due to their migration status.

(g) VPRS Update:-

- Online application form launched in December 2017 - By the end of 2018, 25% of applications came via this route. Process is quicker and information linked automatically to that which is already on the system.
- Ethiopia recently joined the reintegration support while Egypt has dropped out.

(h) Marketing - In the process of setting up a stand-alone website, with English web chat facility and the ability for the web site to be translated into 10 languages.

5.0 York, North Yorkshire and East Riding ESI Funds Sub-Committee – Report on behalf of County Councillor Andrew Lee (NYCC), Councillor Steve Arnold (Ryedale District Council) and former Councillor Peter Dew (CYC).

5.1 *Report not available as at 19 June 2019.*

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That the report be noted.

Richard Flinton
Honorary Secretary to Local Government North Yorkshire and York