



**Housing Policy Working Party
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 9 December 2015
at 2pm in Kasen Room**

Present

Councillors	Tony Boto (Chairman)	TB
	Rupert Reichhold (Vice-Chairman)	RR
	Richard Lewis	RL
	Helen Harrison	HH

Also in attendance

Executive Director and Interim Head of Planning Services	Sharn Matthews	SM
Planning Policy and Conservation Manager	Richard Palmer	RP
Housing Enabling Officer	Aine Cooper	AC
Housing Services Officer	Louise Bagley	LB
Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager	Carol Conway	CC

ACTION

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Sarah Peacock, Cllr Steven North, Jenny Walker and Karen Pell

2 Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2015

- 2.1 The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman

3 Matters arising

- 3.1 The approved minutes of the last meeting of the Working Party are to be forwarded to the Policy and Resources Committee along with the two suggested additions to the Terms of Reference

CC

- 3.2 The homelessness and waiting list figures were circulated during the meeting, with LB giving a brief overview of them. It was also noted that homelessness cases are becoming more complex and involved and are therefore not as easy to deal with.

4 Housing Options Contract

- 4.1 CC outlined details of the existing Housing Options Contract documentation, including the service specification.
- 4.2 The frequency of the use of B&B's in emergencies was discussed, with two single females currently being accommodated in B&B's - one in the district and one outside. B & B usually has to be sourced outside the district and although ENC try to ensure residents are housed in B&Bs as close to the district as possible, this is becoming increasingly difficult with Milton Keynes and London Boroughs sending people to B&B accommodation in North Northants due to its cheaper cost, thereby further reducing availability. It was also noted that there can be Safeguarding issues when placing people in B&B's.
- 4.3 CC and LB had been looking at the contract in conjunction with Midland Heart to ascertain what changes may be needed. The exit plan needs to be revisited once the contract has been extended. **CC/LB**
- 4.4 The Variation Agreement was discussed. The addition of Clause 25.8 is to ensure that both the Council and Midland Heart can break the contract if necessary, for example if the Choice Based Lettings Scheme was no longer viable. It was agreed the clause be amended to provide for 6 months notice to terminate the contract at any time. **CC**
- 4.5 The Appendix of the Variation Agreement outlined the Data Sharing Agreement along with data security. RL requested that the 'Information/Data Transfer' paragraph from the appendix is also included in 6.9.2. CC to refer back to LGSS to see if this is possible **CC**
- 4.6 Clause 7.13.3 should read High Street *South*. This is to be amended. HH queried the relationship between Homes Direct and Midland Heart housing association. It was noted that Homes Direct was the brand name under which Midland Heart operate the Choice Based Lettings Scheme for the district. **CC**
- 4.7 The proposed amendments were agreed. CC to bring a final Variation Agreement back to the next meeting and also forward a copy to members prior to the meeting. It will then be taken to P&R Committee in February. **CC**

5 Update following Autumn Statement

- 5.1 Proposals include doubling the housing budget and also to create 200,000 starter homes to be sold at 20% discount to first time buyers. There is concern that this will affect our ability to deliver sub market rental properties and meet our statutory duty to homeless people and people on the housing waiting list. It is not proposed that there will be any restriction on the resale or letting of starter homes. There are particular concerns regarding the effect on rural exception sites. CC to look at the National Parks scheme in Cornwall. **CC**
- 5.2 Other key points were the proposed building of 135,000 help-to-buy shared ownership homes, and the extension of the right to buy for which there will be a pilot scheme. The local housing allowance, currently operated in the private sector, will also be applied in the social housing sector.

5.3 To supplement the Housing and Planning Bill, a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had just been published and includes:

- broadening the definition of affordable housing to include starter homes and other home ownership products
- requirement for a minimum percentage of starter homes as part of developments and LAs to have a statutory duty to promote them
- sanctions for under delivery on housing targets
- higher densities around commuter hubs
- more support for new settlements
- presumption in favour of brownfield development

A full briefing on the proposed changes will be brought to the next meeting.

RP

6 Clawback Policy

Under the Stock Transfer Agreement, the Council currently has the right to claw back proceeds from sales of former council housing stock by Spire Homes. The Council can choose to waive the clawback fee if the funds are recycled back into development for affordable housing.

6.1 The development of a clawback policy will be considered at the next meeting in January, with a view to a draft policy being brought to the February meeting to then be considered by P&R committee in March.

CC

7 Working Party Work Plan

7.1 In addition to continuing work on the Housing Options Contract, the NPPF consultation, and receiving updates on housing and welfare reform, the working party will also start work on the review of the Housing Allocations Policy.

7.2 LB will give a brief overview of the housing allocations policy at the next meeting, and identify areas that the working party may wish to review. The policy will be sent to members for consideration prior to the next meeting.

LB

7.3 Development of the joint Accessible Properties Allocations and Disabled Facilities Grants policy would be considered in tandem with the general Allocations Policy

7.4 The Supplementary Planning Document on Housing Mix Requirements could not be progressed at this stage due to uncertainties with changes to government policies, such as the Starter Homes Initiative, but would be considered once the detail of the Housing and Planning Bill was known.

8 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9 Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 20 January 2016 at 2pm in the Kasen Room

The meeting concluded at 15.56