



**Housing Policy Working Party
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 7th
September 2016 at 2pm in the Kasen Room**

Present

Councillors **Tony Boto (Chair)**
 Steven North
 Helen Harrison
 Richard Lewis

Also in attendance

Executive Director	Sharn Matthews	SM
Head of Planning Services	Paul Bland	PB
Planning Policy and Conservation Manager	Richard Palmer	RP
Housing Enabling Officer	Aine Cooper	AC
Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager	Carol Conway	CC
Planning Policy Officer	Louise Jelley	LJ
Environmental Protection Manager	Jenny Walker	JW

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	Apologies and introductions	
1.1	Apologies were received from Cllr Sarah Peacock and Louise Bagley	
2	Minutes of the meeting of 13th July 2016	
2.1	The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman	
3	Matters arising	
3.1	Item 8.1 Policy and Resources Committee had agreed at their September meeting that S106 funding held for affordable housing provision be allocated to facilitate the development of the Grenson's building in Rushden.	
4	Updates	
4.1	There were no updates to report.	

4.5	Work Plan	
4.6	Housing allocation policy – A draft policy will be presented to the October HPWP meeting prior to going to P&R in December.	CC
4.7	Accessible properties - Olympus Care has been taken back in house by NCC. DFGs will be raised again at the next Chief Housing Officer Group meeting with concerns over a potential backlog of cases..	JW
4.8	Property investment opportunities – discussions still in progress regarding the purchase of 2 properties.	JW/CC
4.9	Housing mix requirements SPD to be moved into the current work category. Affordable housing completions have increased in line with the upturn in development in the area. In 2015 there were 90 affordable homes constructed, and in 2016 there have already been 100 so far.	CC
5	District-wide Housing Mix – Needs and Aspirations	
5.1	A paper was presented to the meeting proposing options for members to consider in relation to gathering improved information on future housing mix requirements for new housing sites which would take into account future economic development aspirations for the district.	
5.2	It was suggested that a study for the district could include the Rushden East and Deenethorpe Airfield Garden Village projects which would provide cost savings and efficiencies.	
5.3	Members agreed that it would be crucial to clearly outline the council's requirements in a brief to potential consultants. Areas to be considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requirement for a variety of employees in the district to be able to live locally • Place shaping to include facilities offered • Demand for larger, more aspirational homes. <p>It was agreed that an outline brief for consultants would be submitted to the Working Party by the end of September. Funding for the study would be sourced internally.</p>	PB/RP
6	Homelessness Prevention Grant Fund	
6.1	A draft paper was brought to the meeting prior to presentation to Policy and Resources committee. HPG funding in the MTFs has been set at £29,525 for 2017/18. It was noted that internal funding requirements are increasing, and if not met could lead to extra costs for homelessness and B&B accommodation.	

6.2	<p>The additional requirements were outlined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most RPs are now requesting up to 4 weeks rent in advance which can prevent applicants being rehoused and may therefore mean they have to go into B&B or increase the time they have to stay there. A fund for rent in advance would assist with moving applicants into permanent housing. • A tenancy training programme in partnership with RPs, would assist younger and more vulnerable tenants to save for a deposit and understand the responsibilities involved in taking on a tenancy. It is hoped this work would also help prevent future homelessness due to rent arrears, anti-social behaviour etc. • All new tenancies entered into from April 2016 will have their benefit capped at the LHA rate from April 2018. Older tenants will be affected by this restriction, particularly in sheltered housing where service charges can be high. Single tenants under 35 will only be entitled to the single shared accommodation rate, considerably below the rent for a one bedroom flat. A fund to bridge the gap between the LHA rate and the full rent will assist with the prevention of homelessness for cases where the council would have a duty to accommodate should the tenancy be lost as a result. • The police will no longer pay for target hardening (lock changes etc) and sanctuary installations (provision of a secure panic room within a property), for those at risk of domestic violence, A fund to enable such work would prevent homelessness where the victim wishes to remain in the home. 																			
	<p>It was suggested that additional funding was required internally as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="347 1451 1137 1702"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2017/18</th> <th>2018/19</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Rent in advance</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tenancy training programme</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Housing Allowance Gap Funding</td> <td></td> <td>£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target hardening/Sanctuary</td> <td>£ 2,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£12,000</td> <td>£25,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2017/18	2018/19	Rent in advance	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	Tenancy training programme	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	Local Housing Allowance Gap Funding		£10,000	Target hardening/Sanctuary	£ 2,000	£ 5,000	Total	£12,000	£25,000	
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6.4	<p>Members expressed serious concerns on this funding proposal and further consideration of the issues and financial implications would therefore be required before any recommendation could be made to P&R committee.</p>																			
7	Voluntary Right to Buy Clawbacks																			

7.1	Government guidance on how the voluntary right to buy process will work has not yet been issued, and pilot exercises are currently being carried out around the country which will inform future guidance. Registered Providers will have discretion when deciding the types of properties that will be sold under VRTB. Clear policies must be set out for tenants and staff to follow.	
7.2	It is not mandatory for the council to facilitate the operation of VRTB, but members agreed it would be appropriate and reasonable to do so. It was therefore considered that requests to clear title restrictions contained in transfer agreements should be viewed favourably, subject to a legal agreement that any proceeds would be reinvested into affordable housing in the East Northamptonshire District. It was suggested that sale proceeds could be used for homelessness prevention, although it was noted such proceeds are likely to be ring-fenced to new replacement affordable housing provision.	
7.3	A further paper will be brought to a future meeting of the Working Party, once more government guidance and information regarding the VRTB is available, with a view to putting a comprehensive clawback policy in place.	CC
8	Risk Review	
8.1	The risks were reviewed, noting that Risk 6 – Introduction of Local Housing Allowance Cap - had been added at the last meeting.	
9	Any other business	
9.1	None.	
10	Next and future meetings	
10.1	The next meeting will be held on 19 October at 2pm in the Kasen Room Future meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 December Meetings to be held every 6 weeks	
	The meeting concluded at 15.50pm	