



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

Present

Councillors	Tony Boto (Chair)	CllrTB
	Steven North	CllrSN
	Helen Harrison	CllrHH
	Richard Lewis	CllrRL
	Sarah Peacock	CllrSP

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
Housing Services Officer	Louise Bagley	LB
Senior Planning Policy Officer	Louise Jelley	LJ
Community Partnerships Manager	Mike Greenway	MG

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	Apologies and introductions	
1.1	Apologies received from Jenny Walker	
2	Minutes of the meeting of 19th October 2016	
2.1	The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.	
3	Matters arising	
3.1	The draft Housing Allocation Policy was approved by Policy and Resources Committee to go out to consultation. Any changes will be taken back to P&R in February/March.	

4	Updates	
4.1	Housing (DCLG letter)	
4.1.1	<p>Key points noted in the letter from DCLG were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional £1.4 billion for housing associations to deliver more affordable homes of every tenure • Expansion of the Right To Buy pilot scheme for housing association tenants • A new £2.3 billion Housing Infrastructure fund, which we will be bidding into as part of the North Northants broader approach, tied in with NEP/SEMLEP • Not proceeding with the 'Pay to Stay' policy • Banning letting agents from charging fees to tenants • Doubling the size of the Rough Sleeping Fund • A White Paper will be published in January setting out further measures to release more land for housing, speed up development and diversify the range of people building new homes. 	
4.2	Welfare Reform	
4.2.1	An update from Lucy Hogston was noted; the full service rollout of universal credit is commencing in the area gradually as there are five different job centres covering the district with different dates of rollout. The first will be Corby in February 2017, followed by Peterborough, Rushden (Feb 18), Kettering and lastly Wellingborough (Aug 18).	
5	Housing Mix Project Brief update	
5.1	It was noted that this is currently out to tender. The bids will be shortlisted and analysed, with interviews conducted in the New Year, and work being completed by the end of the financial year.	
5.2	It was agreed that CllrTB will join the selection panel for the consultant . RP to inform TB of dates in the new year.	RP
	<i>(CllrRL joined the meeting at 14.20)</i>	
6	Homelessness Update Report	
6.1	The Homelessness Reduction Bill going through Parliament will place new duties on the council. There is also an increase in the projected number of homelessness applications for 2016/17 and an increase in complex cases and people with multiple debts. B&B accommodation is only used as a last resort, with the average length of stay being weeks as opposed to months. There is a slight increase in rough sleepers recorded for this year at 4 (3 being recorded last year).	

6.2	<p>At present the council has a duty to provide advice and assistance to intentionally homeless households and temporary accommodation for a reasonable time to allow them to secure alternative accommodation; this is usually 28 days. Under the Homelessness Reduction Bill this is likely to increase to 56 days.</p> <p>A great deal of work is undertaken by the Housing Services Team in conjunction with the Homes Direct Housing Options Team to prevent homelessness, and this minimises the number of homelessness applications and of those needing to go into temporary accommodation, with an average of 5 households recorded in temporary accommodation at the end of each month.</p> <p>The Bill proposes to extend the definition of threatened with homelessness to someone who is likely to become homeless within 56 days, double the current 28 days. The council would be required to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of particular groups at increased risk of becoming homeless e.g. victims of domestic abuse, people with mental illness/impairment, those leaving care, the prison system, hospital or the armed forces. If the council is satisfied someone is homeless then they must take reasonable steps to help them secure suitable accommodation available for their occupation for at least 6 months. The Bill would place a requirement on all applicants to co-operate with the council's attempts to comply with their prevention and relief duties. Specified local agencies will have to refer those homeless or at risk of being homeless to LA housing teams. The government is supporting the Bill and has indicated that some funding will be available to councils to fund the additional burdens it will bring.</p> <p>Members expressed concern that there was also a need for daytime support for homeless and other people in Rushden.</p>	
6.3	<p>The Homelessness Prevention Grant funding will be £29,525 in 2017/18, with bids totalling £48,994.</p> <p>It was agreed to recommend to the next P&R committee meeting that the Homelessness Grants Panel should be reconvened to begin discussions on how the money should be allocated and to highlight the potential shortfall in the level of funding available.</p>	CC
6.4	<p>The local housing allowance cap has been postponed until April 2019. Rent in advance payments to Registered Providers have not yet been a problem but this will be monitored in the coming months.</p> <p>Work is in progress with Spire Homes to prepare applicants</p>	

	for the responsibilities of taking on a tenancy and other providers are to be approached to agree a joint approach. Longer term, e-learning modules are being developed that applicants will need to complete before they can submit an application. It is also hoped to develop a common affordability test so that all organisations are applying the same criteria when applicants are nominated for tenancies.	
	<i>SM left the meeting at 3.05</i>	
7	Development of Services for Victims of Domestic Violence	
7.1	MG gave an update on the service, advising that Wellingborough and East Northants Women's Aid has recently closed due to funding issues. A review is to be undertaken to ascertain the financial situations of voluntary organisations in the district.	
7.2	Funding of services for domestic abuse victims is being considered by the countywide group Violence Against Women and Girls. There is a funding pot of £2.5 million available from the government for all of the UK. There will be a county bid for this funding.	MG
8	Supported Housing Funding Consultation	
8.1	The Local Housing Allowance Cap will not take effect until April 2019, but will apply to all tenants on Universal Credit, not just those who take on new tenancies. The LHA Cap will also apply to supported housing from April 2019, raising concerns from providers in respect of housing management and development. Providers are unwilling to commit to new supported housing schemes and development has halted until the details of the new arrangements are known.	
	<i>CllrSN arrived at 15.15</i>	
8.2	The framework for the new funding model has been set, and the consultation is seeking views on the key system design of the new model. We need to begin to formulate a response, and incorporate any views of the providers into it that members wish to include. The consultation will be taken to the Housing Forum meeting on 8 th December 2016, and CC will feed back at the next HPWP in January, followed by a draft response for approval by P&R committee in February.	CC
9	Work Plan Update	
9.1	CC provided an update on the work plan, advising that the Housing Allocations Policy has been to P&R, and will be out	

	to consultation this week.	
10	Risk Review	
10.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk 1 – The wording has been updated to take into account the changes to starter homes • Risk 4 – Score increased to reflect a potential increase in homelessness applications as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Bill going through. • Risk 6 – score reduced to reflect the LHA cap being delayed until April 2019. 	
11	AOB	
11.1	No items were raised.	
12	Next and future meeting dates	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 18th January 2017 2pm Kasen Room • Wednesday 1st March 2017 2pm Kasen Room • Wednesday 12th April 2017 2pm Kasen Room 	
	The meeting concluded at 15.40pm	