

Minutes of Health & Housing Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 22 March 2012 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	J Holgate
S Brunskill	R Newmark
C Conner	L Rimmer
R Elms	M Robinson
B Hilton	C Ross

In attendance: Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Health Services and the Housing Strategy Officer.

810 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Hargreaves and M Ranson.

811 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

812 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman referred to Minute 665 – Affordable Housing Update, and in particular to the invitation to Christine Grimshaw, the Chief Executive of Ribble Valley Homes to attend the next meeting of this Committee. He reported that this invitation had been made but Christine had suggested that instead of her attending the meeting, she would invite the Committee on a tour of Ribble Valley Homes estates and then speak to the Committee afterwards. A date for this had not yet been arranged.

RESOLVED: That this suggestion be accepted.

813 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

814 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

815 REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no references from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Housing Strategy Officer submitted a report informing Members of the difficulties households were experiencing in securing a mortgage on some affordable housing sites due to the content of Section 106 Agreements. She highlighted that there had been three separate sites where mortgage lending had proved to be a problem due to specific clauses within the Section 106 Agreements. Those sites were at Barrow Brook, Barrow; Primrose Village, Clitheroe and Feildens Arms, Mellor.

On the Barrow Brook site of the eight shared ownership properties, four units were occupied as immediate rent to buy and four shared ownership units were unoccupied, with purchasers lined up with a mortgage offer in place, dependent on securing changes to the Agreement. An application to vary had been received from St Vincent's.

At Primrose Village, Clitheroe, 10 out of the 12 shared ownership properties were not able to secure a mortgage due to the mortgage lenders identifying a problem with the mortgagee in possession clause with the Section 106 Agreement. No application to vary the Agreement had yet been received.

The Strategic Housing Working Group had arranged to meet to discuss the specific problems with the Agreements and had invited relevant solicitors, mortgage advisors and registered providers to attend. The main problems identified were the clauses that restricted sales in mortgages in possession situations. The other issue which was causing problems with lending was the general marketing/sale of the shared ownership units.

Advice from the Homes and Communities Agency on both these matters was to follow the promoting mortgage access for affordable housing 'A good practice guide'.

She further reported that Cumbrian districts had also recently experienced the same problems with lenders and they had allowed a series of options with regards to relaxation of the original Agreement. There was an acknowledgement that three months or less was the time period mortgage lenders accept in terms of restricting sales in mortgages in possession situations. A maximum of six months was the standard time period for general sales requiring a sale to an approved person.

The Strategic Housing Working Group had discussed the options available but concluded that the restrictions within the Agreement should not be replaced to meet the demands of the lenders. In the case of mortgagee in possession situations, Members felt that a four month time period requiring a sale to an approved person was reasonable. Within the four months, the property should be offered to both the local authority and the registered provider. The Working Group accepted that after six months of marketing the affordable unit to an approved person, a sale was permitted to a household not meeting the approved person criteria but all future sales should required compliance with the Agreement.

Members then discussed this matter in some detail.

RESOLVED: That Committee accept the national guidance and the advice of neighbouring authorities. And accept that in a mortgagee in possession sale situation, there will be a restriction of two months to an approved person and that both the Local Authority and the Registered Provider will be notified of the sale and given the opportunity to purchase.

Committee also accepted that for general sales of affordable units, after marketing the affordable unit to a household that meets the approved person criteria for six months and the unit is not sold, then the unit can be sold free from the approved person requirement. However, all future sales will require compliance with the Agreement.

817 WARM HOMES, HEALTHY PEOPLE GRANT

The Housing Strategy Officer referred to Minute 659 of Committee dated 19 January 2012 and now reported how the scheme was operating. She reported that the Warm Homes packs had been made available to all vulnerable households in receipt of an income related benefit. Almost 500 households had had their packs delivered to their home with the provision of energy advice and a further 120 households were on the waiting list. The grant had also allowed for the purchase of a thermal imaging camera, 12 home energy efficiency monitors and thermally insulated blinds at the homeless hostel.

There was approximately £30,000 remaining of the grant. One of the grant conditions was that the full grant allocation should be committed before 31 March 2012. A second grant application had therefore been submitted to the Department of Health to demonstrate how the remaining allocated grant would be spent to avoid having to return any under spend.

The proposal submitted continued along the original grant objectives for the Warm Homes Healthy People fund and to offer a boiler replacement scheme and home safety pack. The boiler replacement scheme would offer households across the borough on income related benefit, a 50% contribution towards the cost of replacement and installation of a boiler. To be eligible the house would have to be within Council Tax bands A-D and the boiler would have to be over 20 years old or irreparable.

Members then discussed this matter, in particular in relation to the suggestion that people on low incomes should pay half of the cost of any replacement boiler.

RESOLVED: That Committee accept the proposed grant initiatives for the commitment of the remaining grant funding, with the proviso that this could rise to 70% in relation to boiler replacement in cases of particular need. All grant expenditure would be monitored and reported back to the Department of Health.

FORMAL CONSULTATION – DELIVERING THE PUBLIC HEALTH REFORMS IN LANCASHIRE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HEALTH WORKING GROUP

The Chief Executive asked Committee to consider the Council's response to the consultation from Lancashire County Council on reforms to public health services and to consider the future role of the Health Working Group.

The Health and Social Care Act would shortly see the transfer of public health responsibilities from Primary Care Trusts to the County Council. The County Council had been putting in place the necessary structures to help deliver this change and had produced a consultation paper to provide both an update and to seek views on measures and proposals.

As the closing date for responses was 22 March 2012, a response had been sent on behalf of the Council by the Health Working Group and relevant officers. The Health Working Group had welcomed the recognition of the role of districts in the process, however, had identified concerns that the role was somewhat underplayed in the proposed structures. Issues were raised in connection with the risk of a continued clinical approach as opposed to a holistic approach in the way in which public health was addressed and the opportunity to deliver in a different matter may be missed.

The role of the voluntary sector was also not as well recognised and it was now clear that there would be a number of boundaries and groups which would operate across Ribble Valley under the proposed structures. There was therefore concern that this situation needed to be recognised by the County and commissioning bodies in order to avoid inconsistencies.

It was also becoming clearer that the Ribble Valley would need to have in place a structure that would allow a strong voice for the area to feed into health and wellbeing boards and commissioning groups, which were being established. It was therefore suggested that the existing Health Working Group should take on this role of a health and wellbeing executive. It was also suggested that the Chair of the Ribble Valley Health Improvement Group be invited to join this group in an advisory role and that the existing health improvement Group should act as the operational support group to provide information, advice and service expertise to the executive panel.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. endorse the consultation response set out at Appendix 2 to this report and the Chief Executive be asked to confirm the Council's response; and
2. agree in principle to the creation of a Health and Wellbeing Executive and ask the Health Sub Group to develop a role giving consideration to its membership and terms of reference as appropriate, and that a report be brought back to the next meeting of this Committee.

819 PROVISION OF NEW HEALTH CENTRES – PENDLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Members considered a request from Pendle Borough Council to support a motion seeking this Council's support and assistance in securing the use of money for work to start on the new health centres in Colne and Great Harwood and the new community hospital in Clitheroe.

Members, whilst supporting the broader aims of the Pendle motion, were concerned that this should not, in any way, water down their support for improvements to Clitheroe Hospital, which were long overdue.

RESOLVED: That the Chief Executive reply to Pendle Borough Council supporting their notice of motion.

820 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012-2013

Committee considered a report on the new schemes which had been approved for inclusion in this Committee's capital programme for the forthcoming financial year 2012-2013. These were as follows:

- Clitheroe Cemetery installation of infrastructure
- Housing landlord/tenant grants
- Disabled facilities grants
- Repossession prevention fund

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

821 MINUTES OF THE HEALTH WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Health Working Group held on Monday, 27 February 2012.

822 GENERAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Committee considered the general report of the Chief Executive which had been submitted to Committee for information, which included the following items:

- Flood protection grants update – Ribchester
- Clitheroe market – update
- Update on pest control income
- Food inspection update
- Lancashire Directors of Public Health – Annual Report 2010/2011
- Radioactivity in Food and Environment 2010
- Licence to explore for natural gas in Lancashire

In response to a request from a Councillor, the Head of Environmental Health Services agreed to provide both relevant maps and a report to a future meeting in relation to the incidence of Radon in the Ribble Valley.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

823 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business be an Exempt Information Under Categories 1 and 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

824 GENERAL REPORT – GRANTS

The Chief Executive submitted details of five disabled facilities grants that had been approved.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

825 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted an update on the affordable housing schemes in progress and proposed in the Borough. These had been split into pre-application and applications which had been submitted and were either approved or awaiting determination subject to Section 106 Agreements being completed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

826 HOUSING WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Committee received the minutes of the Housing Working Group for meetings held on 10 January, 8 February and 29 February 2012.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).