



STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

3 May 2007

Business Development Centre, Stafford Park

PRESENT:

Richard Webb	Telford & Wrekin Council (Chair)
Mike Atherton	T&WC
John McNulty	Bournville Village Trust
Rob Kilby	Housing Corporation
Lloyd Bradshaw	Beth Johnson Housing Group
Paul Williams	National Housing Federation
Tony Hewitt	The Wrekin Housing Trust
Bernie Lewis	Wrekin Landlords' Association
Emma Pierce-Jenkins	T&WC
Paul Donohue	T&WC
Chris Winter	T&WC
Susanne Fitzpatrick	T&WC

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Dave Morgan	T&WC
Helen Collins	Bromford Housing Group
John Acres	Redrow Homes
John Broadhead	The Wrekin Housing Trust
Sarah Williams	English Partnerships
Michael Barker	T&WC
John Williams	Harris Lamb
Jeremy Crabb	T&W PCT

1 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

RW welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

As Items 4 and 6 in the agenda require detailed discussion, the agenda will be taken out of sequence.

2 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received as recorded above.

3 **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (22 February 2007) AND MATTERS ARISING**

- PW advised that the House of Commons reception scheduled to take place in April/May is to be rescheduled for the autumn due to MP availability. The second phase of research is underway
- Affordable Warmth Workshops: MA reported that these will be concluded by June
- Proposed merger of EP/HC: RK advised that HC are still waiting for details regarding the regulatory aspect of the merger. More information will follow

- LB gave an update on Telford Millennium Community and Lawley, ie:
 - TMC** Both TMC and Lawley had a false start due to problems with site levels. Work will continue in six weeks' time
 - Lawley** Start on Phase 1 anticipated in June/July 2007
- Gerry Dawson has left the council and is replaced by Mark Donovan who will lead on Woodside/South Telford. LB asked that congratulations be extended to Mark on his appointment
- RW attended a national Association of Adult Directors of Social Services meeting last week: one item under discussion centred around how adult services directors who have housing responsibilities and how we can strengthen regional and national networks
- Item 11, Page 8 (third para): amended to read - *"MA welcomed comments on the scope of the review and reported that £450m has been allocated **nationally**"*

The minutes were then approved as a correct record.

4 **HOUSING CORPORATION NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME (2008-2011)**

RK circulated copies of a slide presentation (attached to the minutes) drawn from a HC pre-prospectus document which sets out the bidding framework. He reported that HC has achieved all its regional and national targets during 2006/07 as did all preferred partners, who are now through to the next bidding cycle and working on their prospectuses. Once this process is complete, funding will be allocated. RK also confirmed that if there is an under-spend, it would be possible to transfer funding from one pathfinder to another.

Comments on the presentation were received as follows:

- In response to a question from RW, RK responded that *"Evolve is under-performing in terms of getting its voice heard"*
- Estate ownership: as more properties are being purchased on a 'buy to let' basis, an increasing number of landlords are taking on responsibility for the upkeep of properties. If legislation regarding insulation changes as is anticipated, it will represent a major cost implication for private landlords to bring properties up to a set standard. In view of this, BL asked whether grant aid will be available to everyone to maintain properties to a uniform standard. RK explained that Manchester have classified estates by tenure, design, size etc and tailored funding to suit the specific needs of each estate by adopting a 'menu' approach to funding allocation. RK is confident that Manchester's initiative could be rolled out to other authorities
- RK is hopeful that HC's efficiency targets *"would not be as high as the rest"*

of the region”

- Re: protocol ('Working with LAs' – slide 7). RW welcomed RK's overview and is keen to explore a protocol in relation to growth points, partnership plus, judgement of how top performers are allocated, and allocations to 'real deals'
- Re: S106: CW emphasised the point that the developer involved in negotiations may not *necessarily* be the one appointed to deliver the scheme – is 'top-up' funding available in this instance? RK confirmed that this is the case and asked CW to contact him at the relevant time
- Preferred partners have been requested to complete a Procurement Method Statement (which is non-binding) by 17 May, to allow HC to 'contrast and compare', although RK has no information at this time re: how HC will use the information gained from this exercise

JMcN is concerned that this generic approach to development will hamper 'uniqueness' – how is this factored into the equation? No RSL grant will inevitably push house prices up, resulting in less affordable housing being available and that which is available will be less affordable. RK responded that regrettably *“there is no blueprint for development”*

- Looking ahead 5+ years, PD asked how EP's land ownership in the borough will tie in with the newly-established Communities England remit? Is there scope to produce a long-term development programme/commitment in order to attract advance funding? RK considers that Telford is *“uniquely placed to tie the HC into this sort of deal”*.

Responding to a query from PD as to how the protocol would create employment and training opportunities for the local workforce, RK explained that he is *“open to suggestions”* and asked that any ideas (ie around EP land, hospital expansion etc) be notified to him at the earliest possible time. A wide range of outcomes will be supported by HC but would not *necessarily* attract more funding. RK asked members to advise HC by late summer/early autumn re: how funding is to be allocated

T&WC will collate a response to the pre-prospectus information and members were requested to do likewise.

6 FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR STRATEGIC HOUSING

RW gave a presentation (attached to the minutes) linked to his report, which was agreed in outline at Cabinet and which deals with:

- The SHPB's relationship with The Wrekin Housing Trust Board and the number of Elected Members who are represented
- The political commitment/interest in housing issues and which seeks to clarify the future remit of the SHPB in terms of the regional growth agenda/ RSS/Hills Report etc
- ways to bridge the link between housing and planning

A draft Local Strategic Partnership structure diagram was tabled, outlining the suggested hierarchy of thematic partnerships and their remit. RW tabled a chart showing the various partnerships, boards and groups as they currently exist, membership of which is under review.

An internal Co-ordination Group has been established between Adult Social Care (ASC) and Environment & Regeneration (E&R), attended by Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. Two meetings have taken place to date.

With regard to the future remit of the SHPB, RW said he perceived this as being:

- raising its profile as part of LSP
- achieving a balance between strategic commissioning and collaboration
- enabling wider engagement and strategic focus
- strengthening the focus on housing supply and renewal
- being proactive with regard to housing need and links to care and support
- developing closer links between the housing and planning agendas

Comments on the presentation were as follows:

- JMcN considers that *"We're all trying to deliver the same objectives in terms of sustainability and regeneration, yet members are 'branded' separately, not as one entity"*. LB endorsed this view, and feels that 'housing' leans towards affordable/social housing – is it the intention to address housing in its broadest possible sense? RW confirmed that this is the intention but explained that *"we have to address one to complement the other"*.

JMcN suggested links with other groups such as Transforming Telford be explored: also ways in which they could complement the holistic diagram (entitled 'Appendix') tabled at the meeting

- Noted that obtaining feedback from tenants and the public had proved difficult - the recent questionnaire having elicited only a 38% response. CW reported that in excess of 1,000 people sit on the T&W Community Panel which could prove a useful forum for future consultation exercises
- RW is keen to capture the views of an established group such as the Community Panel/tenants forums during future consultation exercises
- RW suggested annual meetings with individual member organisations to clarify their performance indicators etc – this suggestion was welcomed

BL commented that last year's Housing Conference at the Telford Whitehouse Hotel appeared to be *"council and RSL run"* and short on attendance by developers/partners. RW welcomed this feedback and is happy to arrange another conference if it is considered to be of value

RW agreed to take the above comments to the next internal Co-ordination Group with E&R officers. JMcN extended his good wishes to Meredith Evans for a speedy recovery from his recent injury.

5 DRAFT REGIONAL ALLOCATIONS STRATEGY 2008-2011

Work on developing the RAS has been ongoing since January and the council have actively sought to influence the RAS in terms of housing stock, renewal etc. CW has been part of the discussions, both at regional level and on the C3 Group. Noted that the C3 Group has made a collective response, setting out investment needs.

The consultation period remains open until late May: the final decision will be taken at Ministerial level.

7 IDeA STRATEGIC HOUSING PROGRAMME

In order to define the strategic housing role, a piece of work has been commissioned at national level to undertake an improvement programme for the strategic housing role, looking at the relationship between housing/planning/the economy/strengthening delivery arrangements/how to work effectively with partners. The outcome of the research will assist local authorities undertake their strategic housing role and provide Members with a clearer understanding of their responsibilities.

Work will continue until March 2008 and good practice will be disseminated.

RW reported that two of the five events (London and Manchester) are fully booked, although places remain at:

- Gateshead (7 June)
- Bristol (26 June)
- Birmingham (27 June)

8 RESPONSE TO DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT CONSULTATION

MA read from Neil Brookes' letter to Communities & Local Government dated 3 April, setting out the council's response to the consultation paper entitled 'Disabled Facilities Grant Programme'. The letter (attached to the minutes) is self-explanatory.

9 RSS REVIEW/LDF UPDATE

EP-J gave an update as follows:

RSS Review

- Preferred Options workshops are scheduled for mid-July – most authorities were happy with Option 2 levels of development
- Issues being addressed relate to the new household projections for the West Midlands and how this can be addressed through the partial revision. An infrastructure study had recently been commissioned to assess capacity of infrastructure to accommodate levels of development
- T&W have submitted formal comments on the review. It was considered

that Option 2 was likely to be acceptable but would be subject to the outcome of current feasibility work linked to our growth point which is continuing

- Comments on the RSS Review will be formally submitted by December 2007

LDF Update

- The LDF is being challenged by a number of developers who favour the Option 3 level of development (36,000)
- A meeting took place with the Inspectors in January. The core strategy examination begins on 15 May with two weeks of 'sitting days' in the form of informal hearings
- Key issues relate to housing supply and flexibility to address the emerging RSS and the strategy for distribution of housing within the borough
- Developers generally consider the council is placing too great a reliance on EP land and should look further afield
- The Inspector's report is due by early September/mid October
- The Waste Exam starts shortly thereafter (on 5 June)

Land Allocations and Development Control

- Documents need to be finalised during 2007 for formal submission to GOWM in March 2008 – this was delayed to allow for the results of feasibility work on the growth point and receipt of the Inspector's report on the core strategy. Noted that these documents can only progress if the Core Strategy is found to be sound
- The Land Allocation document will identify specific sites for development and the hope is that the larger sites will include aims to develop a concept statement covering issues such as house types, levels of affordable housing etc which will lend weight to the planning phase of development
- The Development Control document is intended to accelerate the planning process
- Work is also commencing on an affordable housing SPD and a Developer's Contribution SPD
- As part of the evidence base for the land allocations, the council is in the process of preparing a Housing Land Availability Assessment. This will involve contact with all landowners/developers with outstanding planning permissions or of potential allocations. Developers will be required to identify a five-year plan of sites that are considered to be 'deliverable' in order to accelerate the planning process. It is proposed to hold an event in early autumn to consider the outcomes of this work, together with the

results of the HMA and the development of the above SPD's

- RW asked that the Development Control document be discussed in greater detail at a future meeting

Central Telford

- Development proposals for the Central Telford area were criticised by GOWM – therefore a new set of options is being prepared to re-evaluate the Preferred Options. This may result in a four-month 'knock-on' effect on adoptions

10 UPDATE OF HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT/HOUSING NEEDS STUDY

The 2005 HMA Study has been updated to include new Government guidance; however, detailed work on understanding individual need is still required. The Study also includes consultation with key stakeholders.

Planning is required to ensure a stable future for the delivery of affordable housing. There are moves to update data to reflect Government guidance and build on research work.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MA gave an update on:

Phase 2 (West Woodside)

- Work has commenced on site
- Funding for the first year has been allocated from regional housing allocation monies. Capital planning for 2007/08 will direct funding into Woodside, for which a commitment has been made. Funding beyond Phase 2 is not yet committed
- Proposals may be rolled out to include Brookside at a later date but the focus would be on *estate management* rather than development
- There are currently no proposals to extend development to include Sutton Hill – the focus will remain on regenerating the Town Centre area and Woodside

South Telford Area Action Plan – this will be a spatial document, giving opportunity for partners to feed into the process. A consultation exercise will be scheduled for early 2008. BL welcomed the opportunity to become involved.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for **12 July 2007 at 9.30 am** in the Severn Room, Business Development Centre, Stafford Park.