

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting6th November 2008

1. Title of Item/Report

Scrutiny Review of Registered Social Landlords

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report that presented the findings of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee following a review of Registered Social Landlords (commonly known as Housing Associations) and their relationship with the Council. It was explained that the review covered a range of issues including the operational relationship with the Council, local partnership arrangements, RSLs as regeneration partners, trends within the sector, and the future plans of RSLs.

RESOLVED that:-

1. that the communication exchange between RSL partners and the local authority is improved by:

- a) drafting a protocol which the Council should encourage RSLs to use when communicating with Members, and for it to include reference to providing appropriate ward members with key RSL contact details (eg. patch managers/area managers) on an annual basis and request that these contacts are kept up to date,
- b) including this up to date information in the induction packs of new Members as appropriate;
- c) providing all RSLs with general information regarding the role/remit of 'ward councillors' as a means of general awareness raising of their roles within the local community and request this information is shared with their front line housing staff;
- d) providing RSLs with key contact details including ward members and appropriate Council Officers on an annual basis, and encouraging RSL officers based within a local area to informally meet with the appropriate ward members as a matter of course;
- e) SBC Housing Service advising ward members on the strategic role of the LA in dealing with complaints relating to RSLs.

2. that steps are taken to ensure all partner RSLs are active partners in the LSP, in particular, the thematic Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership.

3. a) that the Council create a framework of RSLs who wish to develop within the Borough and this framework be used to identify those RSLs capable of working with the Council to secure future funding, and to assist private developers to identify suitable RSLs to work with them on the deliverability of affordable housing on s106 sites.

b) that the criteria for RSLs on the framework include:

- their role as developing organisations;
- their role as a key local authority strategic partner in order to support agendas including homelessness, training and employment, and the physical and social regeneration of the Borough, for example by attendance at the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership;
- the standards expected in terms of service and presence within Neighbourhoods.

c) that the criteria and membership of the framework be regularly reviewed, and an annual update be reported to Housing and Community Safety Select Committee.

4. that in order to ensure that non-developing RSLs are 'good landlords', promote tenant involvement, participate in community involvement, and that they attend the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership, the Council should undertake an annual review, taking into account the views of tenants/Members/key stakeholders including relevant SBC services, and to work with appropriate regulatory bodies should this be necessary following the review. The results of this review should be reported to Housing and Community Safety Select Committee.

5. that following recommendations 3) and 4), the Council evaluate the work undertaken by RSLs specifically in relation to their 'community investment funds/activity' on an annual basis and to share best practice between partner RSLs and other housing providers, using the meetings of the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership.

6. that in relation to planning obligations, building on the policy work already undertaken as part of the LDF process, officers of Housing and Planning Services (and other services as appropriate) should undertake joint work or training as deemed appropriate by the Heads of Housing and Planning Services to examine best practice in order to further develop experience and expertise when negotiating s106 agreements that contain provision for affordable housing, in order to promote greater understanding of the opportunities and constraints contained within and to maximise the number of units delivered through this method, and that the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee should receive an annual report stating what joint work or training has been completed.

7.a) that Members of the Housing and Community Select Committee (and all Members where appropriate) be provided with timely information relating to the 'housing market' (including for example key Government announcements and projects initiated within the Borough).

b) that the Housing Service actively seeks to bid for/secure resources to deliver new housing initiatives (for example 'Mortgage Rescue Packages').

3. Reasons for the Decision

The topic was identified at a meeting of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum in March 2008, and subsequently incorporated into the scrutiny work programme by the Executive Scrutiny Committee in April 2008. RSLs are key partners of the Council in order to deliver affordable housing, and to deliver the Borough's wider regeneration aims.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of this item as he was a member of Tristar Homes Board.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Friday, 14 November 2008

Proper Officer
10 November 2008