

Minutes

The Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership

Tuesday, 4th December, 2012, 02.00 p.m. at River Tees Watersports Centre, North Shore Road, Stockton on Tees, TS18 2NL

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Chair:

David Pickard (Vela Homes)

Members:

Paul Thomas (Central Area Partnership); Val Scollen (Northern Area Partnership); Jim Scollen (Northern Area Partnership); Kerry Garbutt (Home Group); Philip Addison (Western Area Partnership); Michelle Street (Stockton Flats); Sue Thompson (Teesside Private Landlords NLA); Barbara Watson (Coast & Country Housing); Linzie Hough (Accent Foundation); Suzanne Fletcher (Central Area Partnership); Tracy Bradburn (Stonham); Stewart Tagg (Tees Valley Housing).

Advisors:

Jane Edmends (SBC); Julie Higgins (SBC); Simon Rogalski (SBC); Carole Straughan (SBC); Ann Pursey (SBC)

Apologies**Members:**

Helen Westcott (Hanover); Andrea Ainsley (Places for People); Steve Simpson (National Landlords Association); Janet Stubbs (Job Centre Plus); Chris Fixter (Jomast); Sally Thomas (North Star Housing); Cllr Steve Nelson (SBC); Cllr Julia Cherrett (SBC)

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ITEM/ISSUE	ACTION
1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES	
2. Minutes Comments and Decisions Agreed as a true record	
3. Matters Arising Local Council Tax Support Scheme Update / Welfare Reform Julie Higgins gave an update on Local Council Tax Support Scheme and informed members that it went to Cabinet on 29th November. The scheme was recommended and will go to full Council in January 2013. Training needs were being looked at and the possibility of merging council tax bills with local council tax support notification letters. Discretionary housing payments were also being considered for those most affected by the welfare reforms but funds are very limited. Julie informed HNP members that a Members seminar would be held in January to provide information on proposed changes and the key issues. Still awaiting further information regarding Universal Credit. To share information re the new local council tax support scheme with other agencies/housing providers once more information is available. Contact: For information on the Welfare Reform Project Linda Stephenson Stockton Borough Council Telephone: (01642) 526245 email: linda.stephenson@stockton.gov.uk	

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<p>4. Sustainable Community Strategy Indicators - April to September Update</p> <p>Simon Rogalski circulated a table detailing delivery plan measures and targets. The partnership was given an explanation as to what the measures involved and were updated on the progress of each of these targets from April to September 2012.</p> <p>Contact: Simon Rogalski: Strategic Housing Officer Stockton Borough Council Telephone: (01642 528359) email: simon.rogalski@stockton.gov.uk</p>	
<p>5. Affordable Housing Development in the borough</p> <p>Simon Rogalski presented the Partnership with details of affordable housing within Stockton-on-Tees and explained the definition and eligibility of affordable housing.</p> <p>Simon detailed new homes sites which included affordable units; these included town centre locations as well as schemes at Hardwick and Thornaby. Information was given on how affordable homes were secured through planning obligations as well as the Homebuy scheme and affordable housing programme funding. Details of specialised housing schemes for people aged over 55 with care needs and people with learning disabilities which had been secured or were awaiting planning decision were given to members.</p> <p>The Empty Homes Project has been successful within the borough and this was provided through funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, Stockton Council, Vela Homes and Coast and Country Housing, and in the last 18 months provided 23 homes to be brought back into use on an affordable housing basis as well as offering</p>	

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<p>training and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Finally Simon updated the partnership on the number of completions in the borough over the past eighteen months and where these had taken place.</p> <p>A number of questions were asked including how affordable housing is allocated and how the Council works with private developers to develop affordable housing on private sites.</p> <p>Contact: Simon Rogalski Strategic Housing Officer Stockton Borough Council email: simon.rogalski@stockton.gov.uk Telephone: 01642 528359</p>	
<p>6. Refreshment Break</p>	
<p>7. Welfare Reform</p> <p>Dave Pickard gave a presentation to the partnership and explained the impact of welfare reform on Vela as a landlord.</p> <p>The main points were that 2000 customers were affected by the bedroom tax and of these only 200 wanted to move to a smaller property, 80 customers wanted help to find work and a further 100 were receiving money advice, in general it was felt that the majority were either not aware of the changes or felt that the proposed changes would not happen. It was likely that there would be an increase in arrears and bad debt, more void properties would be created and the cost of repairs to these could cost in the region of £1,500 - £2,000 per property; it was also felt that the sustainability of neighbourhoods would be affected.</p>	

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<p>In order to deal with the impact income management policies would need to be reviewed.</p> <p>Some private landlords felt that there are still a number of private landlords that are unaware of the changes.</p> <p>A paper detailing responses from Landlords on how welfare reform changes would have an impact on them was also distributed to the group.</p> <p>It was noted that fuel poverty might become an even more significant issue for households and it was suggested it is put as a future item on the partnership work programme.</p> <p>Registered Providers talked about some of the work they are doing to respond to welfare reform including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- identifying and contacting tenants affected to discuss the changes.- Holding roadshows, a visiting 'Benefit' bus, sending out newsletters.- Plans to help under 35s live together.- Exploring re-designating rooms in houses. <p>Contact: Dave Pickard Director of Operations Vela Group email; david.pickard@velahomes.co.uk Telephone: 0300 111 1000</p>	
<p>8. Stockton Renaissance Update</p> <p>Dave Pickard updated the partnership on previous Stockton Renaissance meetings including items on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Troubled Families Programme.- A health update from the Council's Director of Health.	<p>Circulate paper on the Troubled Families programme to partnership members.</p>

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9. For Information: Housing Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2012-15 Comments and Decisions The Partnership was informed that the updated Housing Strategy 2012-15 is now available to be viewed online at www.stockton.gov.uk/housing	
10. Meeting Dates for 2013 Comments and Decisions Future Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership dates for 2013 have been arranged, these will take place at River Tees Watersports Centre, North Shore Road, Stockton on Tees TS18 2NL. Tuesday 26th February 2013 Tuesday 4th June 2013 Tuesday 24th September 2013 Tuesday 3rd December 2013 All at 2pm-4pm	
11. Request for future agenda items Comments and Decisions Members were asked to inform Simon Rogalski or Dave Pickard of any agenda items they would wish to have	Include an item on the agenda for the next meeting on Forward Planning agenda items for next 12 months.

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<p>included in forthcoming meetings. It was agreed that at the next meeting, an item on forward planning issues for the partnership for the next 12 months would be included.</p> <p>Contact: Simon Rogalski Strategic Housing Officer Stockton Borough Council email: simon.rogalski@stockton.gov.uk Telephone 01642 528359</p> <p>David Pickard Director of Operations Vela Group email: david.pickard@velahomes.co.uk Telephone: 0300 111 1000</p>	
<p>12. Any other urgent business</p> <p>Suzanne Fletcher gave an update from the last meeting of the Asylum Seeker multi agency forum and members were informed that funding from G4S to provide cooking/basic kitchen equipment has been obtained for the hostel in Stockton and work is ongoing to improve hostel conditions for Asylum Seekers.</p>	