

East of England Rural Forum's Housing Sub-group
c/o GO East Rural Team
Eastbrook
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge CB2 8DF

Telephone: 01223 372776

Fax: 01223 372864

E-mail: RuralForum@goeast.gsi.gov.uk



East of England Rural Forum

EERF Rural housing Sub-group
Minutes of meeting: 2.00pm, 10 March 2008

Hastoe Housing Association, Little Chesterford

Present:

Graham Hedger, Andrew Budden, Martin Aust, Sandy Cruickshank (minutes), Ulrike Maccariello, Tim Isaac, John Lefever, Moira Groborz, John Yates.

Apologies:

Tim Lucas, Graham Tomlinson, Peter Fletcher, Louise Wilby, Darryl Smith.

1. Introduction

Graham Hedger welcomed members and in particular, Moira Groborz, RHE from Essex attending for the first time.

2. Minutes from the last meeting (10 January 2008) and matters arising

Matters arising: all to be raised under agenda items.

3. Review of EERF Conference on 5 March.

About 145 delegates attended. In general the event was well received. The format and structure was considered appropriate although possibly a short comfort break in the morning should have been included. Venue was good and provided value for money. AV and staging support was excellent and good value for money, as was the conference facilitation and management by Ian Cooper.

The attendance of representatives of a broad range of sectors was welcomed and ensued a very wide range of issues were discussed and recorded.

4. EERF/CLA Report Progress

CLA have achieved regional press interest in the report and it will be circulated to other CLA regions in the near future.

EERF circulation:

- From the housing sub-group and members:
- all who received invitations and attended the EERF Conference
- Regional housing delivery advisory group
- Regional sustainable communities delivery group

- EERA members and appropriate officials
- Appropriate officials at EEDA.
- Housing Corporation at national and regional level.

From full EERF (John Yates):

- Ministers and senior officials responsible for housing and planning.

Action: SC and TI to finalise report and distribute to networks.

5. Housing Corporation Up-date.

HC have announced what will and will not receive funding. The sub-group agreed it would be beneficial to have a breakdown of this information:

- How many bids received and for how many houses?
- Allocation of funding by sub-region?
- How many successful bids funded – number of houses?
- What was average grant rate per sub-region?
- What was not funded and why – delivery issues/value for money reasons?

Action: SC to write to Peter Fletcher to request additional information

6. Rural housing Enablers Up-date

Moira Groborz reported on the current reduced coverage of RHEs following confirmation that current funding programme will finish in March 2008.

Bedfordshire: hoping to continue current coverage by negotiating higher contributions from LAs and RSLs.

Cambridgeshire: nobody in post.

Essex: some funding available to maintain current coverage.

Hertfordshire: RHE has been served redundancy notice.

Norfolk: one RHE has resigned; the other has been served redundancy notice.

Suffolk: ACRE reviewing all posts, including RHEs.

The sub-group recognised the valuable role of housing enablers in achieving planning permissions for exception sites. The sub-group confirmed their support for the independence of the rural housing enabler function from local authorities, RSLs and private developers. While the issue of funding the posts may not be an issue for Matthew Taylor's review, the potential loss of their function should be.

Those working for RSLs confirmed that their associations would be willing to increase funding and place this on a longer term commitment basis providing it could be linked to delivery.

Action: Martin Aust and John Lefever to prepare a draft proposal for a future RHE funding model. This model to be circulated to the Sub-group for comment.

Action: GH will then use the agreed model to approach the RCC network with the proposal that the EERF act as a broker to arrange an agreement between RCCs and RSLs.

7. Matthew Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing.

Matthew Taylor MP has been asked by the Prime Minister to review how land use and planning can better support rural business and aid delivery of affordable housing. The sub-group agreed that the CLA/EERF report should be submitted as support to any contribution to the evidence gathering. Graham Tomlinson has asked that the EERF liaise with EERF re a combined response.

SC briefed the meeting on proposals for Matthew Taylor MP visit to the region on 19 March. The Sub-group is fully involved. SC will accompany MT for whole visit for GO East/EERF Sub-group. Visits arranged to Hastoe and Flagship sites to discuss planning and affordability issues on site with developers and tenants. JY (representing the EERF), MA and JL (representing their RSLs) and CLA will be at stakeholder discussions in the afternoon. JY reported on recent discussions between RRAF Chairs and MT.

Action: SC to circulate MT's initial thought paper for the sub-group to respond to by the 19 March.

Date of future meetings:

2.00pm, 4 June 2008. Flagship office, Histon

2.00pm, 2 September 2008 at Hastoe's Offices, Little Chesterford.

2.00pm, 3 December 2008. Flagship office, Histon

Sandy Cruickshank

Secretary, East of England Rural Forum's Housing Sub-group.

1 March 2008