



West of England Partnership

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
COUNCIL

South Gloucestershire
Council

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The HomesWest Partnership: building more affordable housing

A housing partnership has broken all records in delivering more affordable homes for local people. HomesWest is a partnership of four housing associations - Knightstone, Sarsen, Somer and Sovereign - who were selected by West of England councils (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) to deliver more affordable homes on new housing developments in the area.

A review of the HomesWest approach by the Housing Vision Consultancy has confirmed that the original target of a 25% increase in new homes has been almost doubled. 675 new homes were built between 2005 and 2008, almost 220 above the original target.

Dr Richard Turkington, Director of Housing Vision said, "This is a real success story, not only has HomesWest delivered beyond all expectation but it is ahead of the game nationally and an example to others in its partnership approach to delivering new affordable housing".

The partnership's success has been achieved by speeding up negotiations with commercial developers; by improving communication between the partner local authorities and housing associations, and by making the whole process more efficient and effective. There is a strong commitment to working with local communities in planning new developments and ensuring that a high level of sustainability is achieved in new affordable homes. One innovation is that half the new properties are transferred to smaller and more local housing associations, helping to support both them and their communities.

"The West of England Partnership needed to ensure a steady supply of affordable housing in the area and set up Homes West in 2004 to achieve this" explained Councillor Matthew Riddle, Chair of the West of England Planning, Housing and Communities Board. "We set the strategic direction and gave the partner housing associations clear targets with minimal regulation. We freed them up to deliver - and deliver they have".

Councillor Riddle continued "The commitment and enthusiasm they have shown in working together and with local communities has produced a real 'can do' attitude that is resulting in more local people being offered the

opportunity to buy, rent or own a share of a modern, sustainable and affordable home of their own”.

And the story doesn't end there. West of England councils and their housing association partners in HomesWest are in a stronger position to deal with the economic downturn and ensure that the maximum number of new affordable homes can still be made available to local people.

The Partnership is now seeking to face up to the challenge of seeking to maintain affordable housing supply in a changing economic climate, bringing fresh challenges that it is working to overcome as well as new opportunities that it is seeking to pursue.

Notes to Editors

HomesWest is a strategic delivery partnership consisting of Knightstone, Sarsen (part of Aster Group), Somer Housing Group and Sovereign Housing Associations working on behalf of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire councils to deliver most affordable housing in the West of England area.

The local authorities provide the strategic direction whilst the housing associations deliver the new affordable housing and share in good practice.

HomesWest's objectives are to improve quality, reduce costs and speed up the process of building new affordable homes.

Housing Vision are an independent consultancy operating nationally from a Midlands base and specialise in housing market analysis and housing policy review.

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