

**Minutes of Homes West Partnership Meeting
held on Monday 30 July 2007
at Knightstone HA, Station Road offices, 2.00 p.m.**

ACTION

I. Welcome and Introductions

I. Present

Mike Day (MD)	Arcadia Housing Group (Chair)
Caroline Hughes (CH)	Knightstone Housing Association
James Gibson(JG)	Sovereign Housing Group
Phil Stephens (PS)	Sovereign Housing Group
Leslie Barakchizadeh (LB)	Aster Group (Items 1-12.2)
Tim Southall (TS)	Bristol City Council
Barry Wallen (BW)	Bristol City Council
Karen Ross (KR)	South Gloucestershire Council
Louise Davidson (LD)	North Somerset Council
Mischi Wilk (MW)	BANES
Marcia Gillings (MGi)	Somer Housing Group (from item 3.9)
Caroline Read (CR)	Knightstone Housing Association (minutes)

2. Apologies

2.1 Lynn Collingbourne (LC)	South Gloucestershire Council Vice Chair
Stephen Lodge (SL)	Aster Group
Asad Butt (AB)	Housing Corporation SW
Mike Grist (MG)	Somer Housing Group
Helen Brewer (HB)	BANES
Simon Parks (SP)	Knightstone Housing Association
Monira Chowdhury (MC)	Bristol City Council

3. New Growth Points Funding

- 3.1 Copies of the annex attachments to the Agreement were distributed.
- 3.2 The Partners looked through the annexes and noted the various funding conditions. (The Agreement has been entered into by BANES, the accountable legal body for the West of England Partnership, on behalf of the Homes West Partnership).
- 3.3 At the last meeting it was agreed that the RSL Partners would e-mail MD with further ideas for the use of the funding and these would be discussed at this meeting, bearing in mind that we need to be in a position to claim the grant by March 2008, but this information has not yet been received.

- 3.4 Following PS's letter to the Local Authority Partners there are a number of sites which are being looked at but so far none of them are more than a 50% probability. PS commented that it is a very competitive land market and developers are putting in higher bids which the RSLs cannot compete with. There was general discussion and agreement that the other RSL Partners had experienced similar situations.
- 3.5 MW reported that at the last WoEHOG meeting the perception was that sites had been identified in Bristol and she was surprised that there is nothing in the offing. It was made very clear that the idea of New Growth Points Funding was not to go for sites which are Council owned. The understanding within WoEHOG was that going for Council owned sites would have to be the last resort.
- 3.5.1 TS reported that the Bristol City owned sites referred to were Fulford Road and the Groves with whom they are working with Knightstone HA, but that these had not yet been to the Homes West Partnership for ratification. Because of the lack of options coming forward it was agreed that we could use the Growth Points money to land bank these two sites until a private site came forward and the money recycled.
- 3.6 PS clarified that many sites had been bid for but that the RSLs are being outbid by the developers. He highlighted the bid for Lower Downend School at £3.6 million as an example.
- 3.7 MW reported that the other option discussed at the WoEHOG meeting was looking at existing Section 106 sites and it was felt that this was something that had not yet been explored and reported back to WoEHOG.
- 3.7.1 The RSL Partners responded that in principle Section 106 sites are a good idea but with the housing market still quite buoyant, developers are not contacting RSLs to take on units which they themselves can sell.
- 3.8 MW raised the issue of how would the nominations agreements be worked.
- 3.8.1 MD reported that when Homes West bid for this funding it was recognised that one of the sites would have to be in one of the local authority areas. The Partners discussed this in detail before the bid for grant was made but still felt that it was worthwhile putting the bid together.
- 3.9 The Partners discussed in detail and agreed that the following sites be considered for Growth Points funding:

- 3.9.1
- Fulford Road / The Groves (KHA) – BW reported that he had objected to BCC's preferred option of putting the Fulford Road site on the market. He felt that the more likely possibility for Homes West would be the Groves. TS reported that there is a meeting on 28 August at which he would endeavour to get a decision from BCC on these sites.
 - BANES residential homes (Somer).
 - Hanham Hall – though it is unlikely that this site would be acquired by 31 March 2008 (KHA/Sovereign).
 - Aster Group – redundant Elderly Person's Homes (Aster).
 - Writhlington site – MG to check (Somer).
- 3.10 The Partners agreed that these opportunities be considered and that a final decision needs to be made at the beginning of October. **RSLs**
- 3.11 The Partners agreed that an updated report would be produced with details of the possible options to be taken to the next WoEHOG meeting on 27 November (Nick Horne to take the report to the meeting). The Partners also agreed that the report would be updated on a regular basis for reporting back to WoEHOG. **MD**

4. Savills Land Agent

- 4.1 JG reported that Savills have been appointed as land agents to look for land site opportunities (for over 100 units) for Homes West.
- 4.2 Savills first report majored on sites in South Gloucestershire and the second on Bristol sites. These will be followed by a report on the BANES area.
- 4.3 The LA partners made the point that it is likely they would already have quite a lot of information on sites so far identified which they could have passed on to the RSLs if they had been informed of those sites.
- 4.3.1 The RSL partners reported that most of the sites identified within the South Gloucestershire report were already known to them, though the Bristol report does contain more interesting information. Regarding value to service, Savills have been appointed for one year and the RSL partners were all sceptical as to whether they would be able to identify sites that were not already known to them, but felt it would be a worthwhile experiment to see if Savills could add value. The reports are discussed at the monthly Project Team meetings and sites are identified which Homes West wish to pursue further. Savills then investigate those sites in more detail, possibly getting into information not accessible to RSLs and then possibly adding value by creating a list of sites for the RSLs to pursue.

- 4.3.2 The LA partners acknowledged that they now had a clearer understanding of what the RSL partners are trying to achieve with Savills.
- 4.4 MW reported that she has a list of sites which are not necessarily in the local plans – windfall sites.
- 4.5 JG agreed to pass a copy of the Bristol report to BW. **JG**
- 4.6 MD reported that a request had been received from Simon Smedley, based on a recommendation from Savills, that Homes West take out a newspaper advert which would appeal to landowners in the former Avon area.
- 4.6.1 Following discussion it was agreed that a half page colour advert would be taken out in the Bristol Evening Post at a cost of £1,010 (to be taken from the Homes West budget). MD to respond to Simon Smedley. **MD**
- 4.6.2 It was further agreed that a quotation would be obtained from Estates Gazette for a similar advert. **MD**
- 4.7 TS reported that there are two key databases that the partners need to be aware of:
- Housing land assessment for Bristol
 - Employment of development land in Bristol
- These can be accessed via the BCC website.
- 4.8 Discussion took place regarding private land change of use. MW is putting forward a proposal that in order to get change of use affordable housing is built on the identified sites. MW is carrying out a huge piece of work on areas in BANES. MW suggested it would be useful for the partners to tap into the information she holds.
- 5. Homes West brochure**
- 5.1 MD circulated copies of the brochure to those who had not yet seen it, and expressed thanks to Richard Kitson and Phillip Mackay who had produced it.
- 5.2 Following discussion it was agreed that LB would co-ordinate the distribution of the brochure. **LB**
- RSL partners to provide SL with a list of who they would like added to the distribution list. **RSLs**
 - Local partners are to be added to the distribution list.
 - The brochure to be placed in LA housing websites.
 - The brochure is to be sent out in pdf format (but not zipped).

5.3 The LA partners will distribute the brochure to their planning colleagues as agreed at the last WoEHOG meeting. **LAs**

5.4 MG to ensure that Savills have a supply of the brochure for distribution. **MG**

5.5 All agreed that it was a good brochure and should be distributed as widely as possible.

6. Annual Reviews

6.1 KR apologised that the South Glos annual reviews had stalled. They had carried out Knightstones and the remaining RSL partners' reviews have been set up to take place over the next couple of months.

6.2 North Somerset - completed. Bristol City Council - completed and performance agreements are in the post. BANES – completed and reports will be sent out as soon as HB returns from sick leave.

6.3 The LA partners felt that the Annual Review process had been better this year.

6.3.1 The RSL partners reported that the reviews had been more specific to each individual RSL and what is happening within the individual local authorities. The reviews had been fine but it was felt that they lacked the strategic emphasis of dealing with Homes West as an entity.

6.4 It was agreed that at the next RSL/LA partnership meeting some time would be set aside to do a strategic review. **MG**

6.5 Review arrangements need to be set up for the completion of the Homes West partnership (2010). A decision needs to be made as to when that review process will start and when the competition arrangements will be for the next partnership. **MG**

7. Affordable Home Ownership – Geoff Fox's paper

7.1 TS reported that following a further meeting between the LAs and Geoff Fox today it was agreed that in the absence of securing any market information through the Strategic House Market Assessment (SHMA), Hometrack market data would be utilised. It is hoped that the report will be published mid-September.

7.2 Interest rates have gone up since Geoff's first report and the LAs are now looking at on-costs and mortgage rates of 6.75% for Shared Ownership mortgages and the report will be updated accordingly.

7.3 The West of England enabling group will be doing some further work on market rents and threshold of affordability. Hometrack will be used for the data on market rents.

7.3.1 MW commented that in BANES this has to be looked at slightly differently because of the high price of property in the area.

7.3.2 The RSLs have experienced situations whereby applicants for shared ownership have been unsuccessful as they do not meet the RSL affordability criteria and these applicants have subsequently complained to their MPs.

7.3.3 KR will circulate guidance to all partners.

KR

7.4 Discussion took place about 2-tier levels and also recycling of receipts.

7.5 TS reported that it is not proposed that a final draft will be circulated to the RSL partners for comment as the principles have been agreed and all the information/comments from the previous discussions have been taken into account and data within the report has been revised accordingly. Andrew Wiles has agreed to work on a pilot on reduced rentals.

7.5.1 However, it was agreed that prior to the report being published, JG will run a scenario to ensure that the figures are correct. TS will ask Geoff to contact JG directly. JG also to liaise with MD.

TS/JG/MD

7.6 It was also agreed that a sliding scale is incorporated into the report as in BANES for instance there are a lot of higher earners. MW reported that she needs to be sure that she does not agree to a product that means moving away from BANES policy on Section 106 agreements. Some RSLs shy away from working to BANES because values are higher and a product has to be found that works for all.

8. Homes West Action Plan

8.1 The Action Plan was discussed at length at the last RSL partners meeting and the comments from that meeting have been incorporated into the latest draft.

8.2 All partners agreed that this will be the final Action Plan for the next 6-12 months and review of progress will start at the next meeting. It was also agreed that the Action Plan can be published on the Homes West website.

MD

9. Housing Corporation bidding round – Homes West joint bids

9.1 Discussion took place around:

- Low levels of grant per unit which once applied to sites on the open market are unrealistic.
- The level of grant the Housing Corporation is talking about is probably only suited to Section 106 sites.
- Commuted sums.
- The Housing Corporation and English Partnerships joint working.

9.2 It was agreed that Hanham Hall is the only joint Homes West site to be bid for. The Housing Corporation prospectus is due out in September.

10. Review of the Matrix

10.1 TS reported that the decision had been taken earlier this year that Bristol City Council would put this commission out as purely a Bristol commission as North Somerset Council had already completed their review of the matrix, and South Gloucestershire were comfortable with theirs.

10.2 Unfortunately the programme has had to be put back due to lack of time of the consultants. BCC are now looking to complete the review by 31 December 2007 and to introduce it on 30 April 2008. Fee arrangements are still being discussed and should be resolved within the next 2-3 weeks.

10.3 BCC have also been asked to review Bristol property agents' proposals for procurement for affordable housing to be secured by the square metre. There are five options:

10.3.1 Option 1: To update the matrix based on supportable deficits on new data being provided by Atis Real and Hometrack – transferring to local partners at this figure.

10.3.2 Option 2: To update the matrix on the same basis as Option – however it was suggested at the BHP meeting that the supportable deficit is uplifted half yearly by % figure to reflect the market position – transferring to local partners at the adjusted half yearly figure.

10.3.3 Option 3: Market led – with updated supportable deficit only providing baseline in the event of default by a developer – transferring to local partners at supportable deficit figure.

10.3.4 Option 4: as option 3 but transferring to local partners at the market figure.

10.3.5 Option 5: Matrix based on discounted serviced land, i.e. market price of unit less market price of land/unit element with grant support – transfer to local partner at this price, with grant.

10.4 RSLs will be consulted on the 5 options.

10.5 TS acknowledged that it was important that the other LAs are kept in the loop.

11. Chair of Homes West 2007/08

11.1 It was agreed that MG will take over as Chair from October 2007, including the servicing of meetings, and PS will take over from October 2008.

11.2 PS will become Vice-Chairman from October 2007.

11.3 The venue for the meetings will change with the new Chair. The next meeting will therefore be held at Somer's offices.

12. Minutes of meetings held 2 April and 4 June 2007

12.1 2 April 2007:

12.1.1 (4.3.2) Outstanding. The information contained on Savills summary of sites will be included on the sites monitor. Once in receipt of the spreadsheet, MG will look at the format and work out how best the information contained in it can be incorporated into the Sites Monitor.

MG/KR

12.1.2 (5.1.6) Discussed in 10.2 above.

12.1.3 (5.2) SGC held a pre-consultation with HBF re the draft SPD. Still on track to formally adopt the SPD in September 2008.

12.1.4 (5.3) LD reported that North Somerset did a pre-consultation back in February and as no responses have been received, they will be re-circulating. LD asked if the partners could comment if the consultation document is received by them.

ALL

12.1.5 All other actions points have been dealt with.

12.2 4 June 2007: All action points have been dealt with.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Transfers: It was agreed that KR would adopt a traffic light system to the column on the sites monitor which shows which partners are involved, red indicating that the transfer is not worth much. RSL partners to inform KR of the colour to be applied to sites when

KR/RSLs

providing information for the updating of the monitor.

- 13.2 Staffing changes: this item requested as AOB by LB but was not discussed as LB left the meeting at item 12.2.

Dates of future meetings:

1 October 2007 Somer's office - to be confirmed
3 December 2007 Somer's office - to be confirmed

Enabling Managers meetings to be held at 10.00 am on the morning of the joint RSLs/LAs Homes West meetings:

3 December 2007 Somer's office - to be confirmed