

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Portfolio Holder Decision Report March 2015

REPORT County Councillor Avril York
AUTHORS: Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration
County Councillor Graham Brown
Portfolio Holder for Commissioning and Procurement

SUBJECT: Review of the Strategic Housing Partnership Terms of Reference and Structure

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal to reform the Strategic Housing Partnership and adopt a new Terms of Reference

2. Background

- 2.1 The Strategic Housing Partnership began as the Affordable Housing Task Group in 2005/6 to address the corporate priority for the delivery of affordable housing. Since 2010 it has been designated a partnership and includes a wider range of stake-holder members, including member representation from Brecknockshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire.
- 2.2 Internal discussion of the partnership over the last 18 months had indicated a need for a wider focus than the delivery of affordable housing alone and consideration of the need to revise the groups terms of reference. This was reflected in the consideration of the Interim Head of Housing as part of the redesign of the Housing Service
- 2.3 As requested a survey was drawn up and undertaken by the officer responsible for facilitating the partnership and a total of 15 interviews were conducted during late September and October 2014 to ascertain members' views.
- 2.4 The various comments were anonymised and circulated to management and partnership members and a workshop conducted on 30th October 2014. The notes of the views of Group members circulated to the meeting are attached as Appendix 1. The following points were agreed at the October meeting.
- 2.5 **Vision and Purpose of the Partnership** - After lengthy and considered discussion it was agreed that the vision of the Partnership should be expressed as: ***“Ensuring a secure future in suitable housing for everyone in Powys”***. This vision needed to be expressed in simple language and not in any sort of council jargon.
In discussing the role and purpose there was a considered viewpoint that the partnership should have a wide and comprehensive overview of housing with a consideration of it assisting the Council deliver the Strategic Housing function. With that in mind various ideas were put forward in terms of role that will be

included below in consideration of potential work streams. The final conclusion of the discussion was that the role and purpose of the partnership is: ***“To enable a strategic approach to housing in the light of the One Powys Plan and other legislation and policy.”***

2.6 **Work streams** - In light of the discussion on the above vision and purpose it became very clear that the agenda for meetings could become extremely long and complicated. Taking various of the main areas of work that were considered important it was suggested that there be work streams for the partnership that would have smaller sub-groups of interested partners working on the issues and reporting to the full partnership. The initial suggestions for work streams (neither a comprehensive nor exclusive list) were:

- Affordable Housing and Housing Support.
- Housing and regeneration
- Responding to Welsh Government Consultations
- Mortgage rescue and welfare issues
- Understanding the Housing Market

It was suggested that the work streams would have a mixture of leads, some PCC officers and some from other agencies.

2.7 **Governance and reporting within PCC structures** - part of the weakness seen by all and discussed at length was the relevance of the partnership and its work to the wider strategic purpose of the Council. Discussion varied around the role of the group and how it could best fit into existing structures. It was for this reason it was felt essential to have a portfolio holder present to be the link with the decision-making process and that the Group needed to connect with one of the Programme Boards of the One Powys Plan.

2.8 **Terms of Reference** - the discussions having ranged around the issues above it became clear that the current terms of reference, membership and meeting structures were not suitable for the framework suggested. The workshop therefore turned its attention to the core of these issues and suggested that the Strategy Team Leader be responsible for drafting new Terms of Reference. These are appended for information.

3 Proposal

3.1 It is proposed that the following changes to the Strategic Housing Partnership be agreed.

3.2 Political membership shall be one Portfolio holder with Housing within their portfolio. In the first instance it is proposed that the lead portfolio holder will be the Portfolio holder for Regeneration and should they be unable to attend the Portfolio holder for Commissioning & Procurement. There will no longer be member representation from each of the shire districts.

3.3 The membership of the partnership shall be widened to include greater representation from the private and voluntary sectors.

3.4 The Brecon Beacons National Park be requested to re-instate Officer involvement.

3.5 That there should be a smaller “core” group driving the partnership with work-streams reporting to the full Partnership.

- 3.6 That meetings be held on a quarterly basis for the full partnership.
- 3.7 That officers of relevant Powys departments attend when required to assist on the delivery of different work streams.
- 3.8 That the work streams be led by the most appropriate person, not necessarily a Powys County Council officer.
- 3.9 Finally, that the new terms of reference, attached at Appendix 2, which detail these proposals be approved for adoption.

4 One Powys Plan

- 4.1 This is a minor change of policy that will ensure that the objectives of the Strategic Housing Partnership closely align with those of the One Powys Plan.

5 Options Considered/Available

- 5.1 The Portfolio holders could decide to keep the current structure.
- 5.2 The proposed new structure.

6 Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 6.1 The proposed new structure was developed by the existing membership who agreed that the partnership was no longer providing the strategic input necessary to comply with the One Powys Plan.

7 Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

- 7.1 This change to an existing structure will have a positive impact by providing strategic direction to the Housing Service, which has been developed in partnership with all key stakeholders.

8 Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

- 8.1 This is a change to an existing structure and as such it has no wider impact.

9 Local Member(s)

- 9.1 This matter has equal effect across the Council

10 Other Front Line Services

- 10.1 This is a minor change to an existing policy and as such it has no wider impact.

11 Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

11.1

12 Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

12.1 This is a change to an existing structure that will further advance the Council's drive to work in partnership with interested agencies and individuals.

13 Communications

14 Statutory Officers

14.1 The Strategic Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) notes the comments made by Finance.

14.2 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented: "I have nothing to add to the report".

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
To accept the proposals as laid out and re-convene the partnership	To ensure the partnership remains fit for purpose

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Terry Flynn
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	1st March 2015

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Terry Flynn	07836 686329		terry.flynn @powys.gov.uk

Background Papers used to prepare Report:

Notes of the workshop discussion held in October 2014.

- **Structure:** In considering the work stream approach it was agreed that if all those involved were to meet regularly the meeting would become too large to be effective. It was therefore considered appropriate to recommend a “core and hub” approach that would mean a smaller over-arching partnership group that would be consistent in attendance and provide a continuity of oversight.
- **Membership:** The existing membership is poorly balanced in terms of the private sector and we should therefore strive to include a wider private sector involvement, specifically to include more builders, (the Home Builders Federation?); funders, possibly building on the relations with Lloyds that were created under the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme; landowner representatives and possibly external specialists in housing and planning law.
- **Political:** It was suggested that political membership should be the portfolio holder alone as representing the decision making authority of the Council. It was universally agreed that Shire representation was anachronistic and unnecessary so long as there is a reporting mechanism.
- **Powys CC Officer Members:** It was agreed that the Strategy and Affordable Housing Leads should be regular attendees along with representatives from Planning Policy and Development Management and that other officers should attend at need and when issues of relevance were to be discussed.
- **Housing Associations:** The lack of commitment by some association reps was noted and it was considered that the invitation to attend continue to be offered but that we should rely on the three that have always consistently attended to be the representation of the sector.
- **Brecon Beacons National Park:** It was felt that the invitation to send officer representation to the core partnership group would restore a good working relationship.
- **Following these points it was felt that the core group would define itself after a preliminary meeting to agree the new way forward and ToR.**

Meetings:

- It was agreed that meetings of the (core) partnership as proposed above should be 6 monthly, with the work streams meeting as frequently as necessary to undertake their specific tasks and that these should be conducted in a project management style process with targets and timelines agreed with the partnership.
- Chairmanship of the meeting should be discussed and agreed at the first meeting to accept the new ToR. (Cllr R. Harris made this proposal and was happy to abide by an election so long as the PH is present at the meeting that suffices from her point of view)
- Each Work stream to be led by an appropriate person, not necessarily an officer, although officers should be involved in each to ensure linkage.
- It was also felt that the only “quorum” requirement should be the presence of the Portfolio Holder or a representative of Cabinet delegating for the PH.

The Powys Strategic Housing Partnership – Terms of Reference

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1. Introduction, Vision and Purpose

The Powys Strategic Housing Partnership is an assembly of stakeholders with an interest in the provision and maintenance of housing of all tenures across Powys.

The Vision of the partnership is:

“Ensuring a secure future in suitable housing for everyone in Powys”

The purpose of the partnership is to contribute to the formation of housing strategy for the County and to provide input to the development of housing and housing related policies and give consideration to potential new ways of working for the Council and partner agencies. It is critical that the work of the Partnership follows the strategic direction established by the Local Service Board in the One Powys Plan.

The partnership is intended to give as wide and inclusive a perspective as possible on housing issues within Powys, focusing on the challenges created by the geography, demography and economy of the County. This will include:

- the identification of housing needs
- the development of new housing and use of the existing housing stock to meet housing needs
- the prevention and alleviation of homelessness
- the management and maintenance of the existing housing stock

In the light of the above vision statement the role and purpose of the partnership is expressed as:

“To enable a strategic approach to housing in the light of the One Powys Plan and other legislation and policy.”

2. Functions of the Partnership:

The primary function of the partnership is to be a forum for discussion and agreement in respect of recommendations arising from work undertaken by a number of specifically agreed work-streams, which the Partnership will establish to address a range of housing and housing related issues. The Partnership will monitor progress in these work-streams and assist in setting realistic time frames, milestones and targets for completion of agreed work.

The initial work streams (neither a comprehensive nor exclusive list) are:

- understanding the housing market and the development of the Housing Strategy
- housing and regeneration (including reducing the carbon footprint of the housing stock)
- responding to Welsh Government consultations
- The management and maintenance of the housing stock
- homelessness prevention and alleviation
- tackling poverty
- the Common Housing Register Partnership Board

The work streams will have a variety of leads, some being PCC officers and some from other sectors.

Work-streams will be conducted in a project management format and shall have specific milestones and time-lines agreed and monitored by the partnership.

3. Structure:

If all those who wish or need to be involved were to meet regularly the meeting would become too large to be effective. It is therefore considered appropriate to have a “core and hub” approach that means a smaller over-arching partnership group that is consistent in attendance and provides a continuity of oversight.

4. Membership of the Strategic Housing Partnership:

Membership:

The membership should strive to include a wide private sector involvement, specifically builders, funders, landowner representatives and, if possible, external specialists in housing and planning law.

Political:

The portfolio holder for Regeneration shall represent the decision making authority of the Council and shall provide a reporting mechanism to the appropriate Programme Boards. Should the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration be unable to attend, their position will be filled by the Portfolio Holder for Commissioning and Procurement.

Powys CC Officer Members:

The Housing Strategy Team Leader will act as facilitator for the Partnership. The Senior Management Team for Housing shall be represented at all meetings. The Affordable Housing Officer, other team leaders and representatives from Planning Policy and Development Management shall be regular attendees at relevant work stream meetings. These and other officers, representing differing sections of the Council, shall attend the full partnership meeting when issues of relevance are to be discussed; or when reporting on work-streams.

Housing Associations:

As major partners in the delivery of affordable housing those housing associations working in Powys have a standing invitation to attend the core group and to contribute to work-streams

Brecon Beacons National Park:

As the Planning Authority for a large area of Powys the National Park shall have officer representation on the core partnership group.

Following these points of basic membership the core group will define itself according to changing need over time.

5. Expectations of Members of the Partnership:

In the light of the vision and purpose expressed above the main expectations are that members of the partnership shall:

- Attend and contribute to meetings unless reasonably otherwise constrained.
- Contribute to work-streams relevant to their field.

- Share information and best practice.
- Support and advise the Council's officers and the Portfolio Holder in enabling the delivery of agreed objectives.
- Respect and observe the normal codes of behaviour for meetings.
- Respond to correspondence on issues relative to the partnership.

6 Governance:

These arrangements seek to set out the framework of accountabilities and governance in order to ensure that all partners are clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding the partnership.

The aim of the partnership, in the light of the above vision statement, will be to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of the work of each partner in contributing to and supporting the strategic housing role of PCC.

Through its portfolio holder member the partnership is accountable to the Stronger Communities Board.

Each partner retains their own existing lines of accountability within their organisations. Partners should therefore be aware of their own roles and responsibilities, and governance structures within their own organisations.

Each member of the Board has a responsibility to ensure their own organisation is informed of the work of the partnership and particularly to highlight through their organisations governance arrangements any risks associated with that organisation not meeting its given commitments.

7. Conflicts of Interest:

All members of the partnership are expected to draw the Chair's attention to and declare any conflict of interest that may arise.

8. Meetings:

Meetings of the (core) partnership as proposed above should be 3 monthly, with the work streams meeting as frequently as necessary to undertake their specific tasks.

Chairmanship of the meeting shall be agreed by consensus and the chairman shall be nominated at the first meeting of the calendar year. In the absence of the Chair a deputy shall be agreed by those present at the meeting.

There shall be no specific quorum for meetings however the attendance of at least one Portfolio Holder or cabinet representative shall be considered essential to maintain the link with the political process of the council. This shall apply whether or not the Portfolio Holder is elected Chair.

Each work stream shall be led by an appropriate person, not necessarily a Powys CC officer, although officers should be involved in each to ensure strategic linkage.

Meetings of work-streams shall be as frequent as necessary for the work undertaken and shall report regularly to the Partnership. These reports may be either verbal or written depending on the work-stream. Workstreams will also be showcased at the proposed annual housing conference.

9. Outcomes and Decision Making

The partnership shall be a forum for consultation, advice and guidance and as such may reach conclusions and agreed positions that may not be seen as binding on any partner organisation or member since the individual partner organisations shall have their own decision-making processes to observe.

However it is presumed that all members of the partnership shall have sufficient stature within their organisations to be able to speak with a suitable degree of commitment and to relay the workings and discussions of the partnership to their own decision-makers in a positive and supportive way.