

Coventry Partnership - Housing Theme Group

Minutes 18th May 2010

Attendees

Richard Monk (RM) - Chair	Whitefriars Housing Group
Ayaz Maqsood (AM) – Adviser	Housing Strategy Manager, CCC
Stephen Rudge (SR)	Head of Housing Policy & Services, CCC
Councillor Nigel Lee (NL)	Cabinet Member – Climate Change, Housing & Sustainability
Chris Jones (CJ)	Orbit Heart of England HA
Carole Bray (CB)	University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
Jan Handley (JH)	University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
Mark Andrews (MA)	City Development – Development Plans, CCC
Denise Shuker (DS)	West Mercia Housing Group
Tim Brown (TB)	De Montford University
Caron McKenna (CM)	Coventry University Students Union
Sarah Crawley (SC)	Neighbourhood Management, CCC
Kim Fawcett (KF)	Housing Strategy, CCC

Guest Attendees:

Mike Campbell (MC)	Decent Homes Manager, CCC
Tim Jones (TJ)	Sustainability and Community Programme Team Leader, CCC

1. Apologies and Introductions.

Apologies were received from Brian Walsh, Stewart Fergusson, Joan Allen, Clive Benfield and Sarah Perry.

- Denise Shuker was introduced as the Executive Director of West Mercia Housing Group.
- Jan Handley was introduced from University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire, who will be replacing Carole Bray as the UHCW representative.
- Sarah Crawley was introduced as the new representative from Neighbourhood Management, replacing John Payne.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 25th February 2010, were agreed as accurate.

TJ – Single Conversation

There are continuing discussions with public sector partners and a Local Investment Plan should be in place by the end of this year. This has been delayed due to uncertainties around the change in government and possible changes to national policy.

MA – SHLAA review

The SHLAA is now likely to be reviewed and republished later this year, depending on any changes in national or local policy.

3. Energy Efficiency and Aerial Infra-red Thermal Survey

Mike Campbell, Decent Homes Manager at Coventry City Council, gave a presentation on the aerial infra-red thermal survey.

- The aerial infrared thermal survey has been carried out which identifies the infra-red emissions from buildings (this is not the same as measuring temperature but is closely linked).
- The data will now be overlaid with other datasets such as benefits claimants etc, in order to target grants and resources for insulation and other energy efficiency measures at people who may be living in fuel poverty (National Indicator 187). This data can also be used by other council departments for their specific needs.

- Conditions have to be within certain limits for a successful survey, and the plane flew over the city to conduct the survey on 30th January 2010.
- The results were analysed and each property categorised into one of five bands (from excellent/blue to very poor/red) to represent the amount of infra-red radiation. This has been mapped and a programme set up where you can search for each address and it will show the band/colour of the property.
- It is planned that the data will be available to the public on the internet once technical difficulties have been resolved. This will be limited to an address search without scrolling or zoom facilities to discourage unscrupulous 'cowboy' builders and installers from targeting streets of properties.

RM – Tenants of social rented properties will not be eligible for grants to improve insulation or heating, therefore it is important that the scheme is clearly explained and this agreed with the RSLs prior to its launch so that people who are not eligible do not have expectations of receiving the grant or works being undertaken by their landlord.

MC – we will be targeting specific properties and writing to individuals where fuel poverty may be an issue, and so social tenants should not receive these letters. RSLs will also be able to use the data that has been collected to plan improvements to their own housing stock if necessary.

SC – People in deprived areas and on low incomes may not have access to the internet to find out this information.

MC – We will be writing to households identified as likely to be in fuel poverty so putting this data on the internet is not the only method we are using of informing people.

NL – All libraries in Coventry offer free internet access.

4. Update on Major Regeneration Schemes

Tim Jones, Sustainability and Community Programme Team Leader, gave a presentation.

- There are now two teams that are responsible for regeneration and major projects; The Development Division (city centre and commercial) and the Economy and Community Division (regeneration of deprived areas).
- Coventry is a growth point and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) plans for 33,500 new homes, 2.5m ft² of office space and 1.5m ft² of shopping space in the city centre by 2026. The Conservative manifesto included abolishing the RSS, so we are waiting to see what impact this will have on plans. There are a total of approx 4950 net additional homes planned in the major regeneration areas by 2026.
- **Canley:** Planning permission has been granted and 700 net new homes will be provided. There has been interest from a range of developers. A bid has been submitted to the HCA for Public Land Initiative funds. Land has been cleared and surveyed ready for development. A feasibility study has been commissioned to see if a district heating system would be viable. The leisure centre, a new school and two new playgrounds have already been completed.
- **Paragon:** the development is to be reconfigured and is going through the planning process. There is the possibility of a Judicial Review by the existing scrap yard as they are concerned about future renewal of their licences if residents complain about noise etc.
- **Peugeot/Stoke Aldermoor:** There are three developers involved in this site. Kickstart funding is in place for the infrastructure and the next phases are due to start soon. The developers are looking to re-negotiate the Section 106 agreement.
- **NDC:** Phase 1A1 has started on site, there will be 154 new units here including 39 for Whitefriars social rent. WF have also underwritten a proportion of the rest of the phase. A combined heat and power generator will provide for the houses. A bid for Kickstart funding has been submitted for Phase 1A2.
- **Swanswell:** schemes in this area had stalled but are now moving forward. The health facility is due to complete next year, the Salvation Army hostel will start on site this summer and complete at the end of 2011.

AM – what is the situation with the Central Depot site? A group of RSLs were interested in developing this site. Is there still an opportunity for RSLs to get involved?

TJ – They should contact Paul Beesley (details below).

- **Friargate:** Planning permission was granted in Jan 2010. The development will be mainly office/commercial/retail but there will be a housing element. A bid has been submitted to DFT

for £30m for improved rail links to Nuneaton, and another £30m bid will be submitted in the autumn for road infrastructure.

- **Coventry University:** phase 1 - £150m investment over 5 years, building is under way.
- **Contact details are:** Tim Jones, Sustainability and Community Team Manager
Tim.jones@coventry.gov.uk
024 7683 2641

Paul Beesley, Property Team Leader
Paul.beesley@coventry.gov.uk
024 7683 1377

RM – What is the latest on the UHCW accommodation development?

CB – The plan now is to upgrade the existing accommodation rather than to develop new accommodation. The focus now is on a second entrance to the hospital site for emergency service/ambulance access.

5. Outcome of the General and Local Elections – what impact will it have on housing?

AM – Coventry City Council is now Labour-controlled and Cllr Tony Skipper will be the new Cabinet Member for Housing, Sustainability and Local Infrastructure. Other appointments include: Cllr John Mutton – Leader; Cllr George Duggins – Dep Leader, Strategic Finance and Resources; Cllr Linda Bigham - Cabinet Member, City Development; Cllr Phil Townshend – Cabinet Member, Corporate and Neighbourhood Services.

SR – Cllr Skipper is keen to tackle the problem of empty properties. With the reduction in public funding, housing is unlikely to be a priority for capital spending.

AM – nationally, Eric Pickles has been appointed Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Grant Shapps is the new Housing Minister, but no longer has a seat in the Cabinet. The Conservatives plan to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Planning, for a much more 'localised' planning system as set out in their Open Source Planning paper.

SR – This may mean it becomes more difficult to develop specialist housing for certain client groups.

6. Housing Strategy Update

Ayaz Maqsood, Housing Strategy Manager, gave an update:

- An initial consultation event was held on 1st April and a draft Housing Strategy is now being produced. The second phase of consultation will be on this draft document – we are hoping to send it out at the end of June.
- We will be holding another Housing Fair in the Lower Precinct on Friday 13th August 2010.
- The Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sub-Regional Housing Growth Strategy has now been endorsed by the CSW Forum.

7. Coventry Homefinder 2009-10 Analysis

Ayaz Maqsood gave a presentation, main points included:

- 2536 properties were advertised on Coventry Homefinder during 2009-10 and successfully let (status – offer accepted).
- 62% of properties were flats, 27% houses, 6% were maisonettes, and 5% were bungalows.
- 13% of properties were studio/bedsit, 33% had one bedroom, 38% had two bedrooms, 14% had three bedrooms, and 2% had four or more bedrooms.
- Nearly 60% of all vacancies/lettings occurred in just ten areas of the city.
- There were only 15 purpose-built wheelchair properties available during 2009-10, 18 partly adapted houses, and 8 partly adapted flats for people with mobility needs.
- 254,265 bids were made during 2009-10, an average of over 100 per property. The highest number of bids for one property was 756 bids for a three-bedroom house in Keresley.
- 97% of properties let during 2009-10 were advertised once and an offer was accepted by someone on the shortlist. A small number of properties required more than one advert, but

some required a significant number of adverts. 29 properties were advertised during 2009-10 but not let during this time.

- Of the properties that required more than five adverts before an offer was accepted, all but one were bedsit or one-bedroom sheltered flats for older people.
- 2373 offers were rejected by people on the shortlist. Reasons included 'did not respond', 'area/location unsuitable' and 'property unsuitable'.
- There is a shortage of properties available with four or more bedrooms – 45 became available during 2009-10 but there were 128 families in Bands 1 and 2 (very urgent or urgent housing need) requiring four or more bedrooms that were on the register on 1st April 2010.
- The new banding system is now in place and the review of the register has reduced the total number to 13,509 (as on 18th May 2010).

NL – The total number on the register has fluctuated significantly since the introduction of Homefinder and with the review, but the number of people assessed as being in housing need (Bands 1 and 2) has remained very consistent.

RM – Whitefriars and the other partner RSLs are looking at the future of the sheltered bedsit blocks. AM – At the Homefinder Board meeting it was suggested that they could be remodelled to provide accommodation currently in short supply such as adapted properties for people with mobility difficulties.

SC – If people actively bid for properties, why do they then reject them because of the area? They know where the property is before they bid.

SR – People seem to bid for properties without seriously thinking about the realities of moving to an area until they actually receive an offer or have been to visit the property. There is no penalty for refusing an offer.

TB – The trends identified are similar to comparable cities. Some have taken a more radical approach – for example Portsmouth reduced their register from about 12,000 to about 2,000 through targeted advice on the realistic chance of being successful for the type of property and area that people wanted.

SR – We are considering a 'things you need to know' page on the website, showing the number of lettings per year in each area, and of each property type etc.

8. Any Other Business

NL – The guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) changed in April this year – it now requires planning permission for a dwelling to become a HMO (although existing HMOs do not need to apply for retrospective planning permission). Many landlords and estate agencies do not seem to be fully aware or understand the new rules and this may cause issues.

CM – It is very important for us to discuss the private rented sector at a future meeting, especially in relation to student housing. There were about 3000 complaints made to Coventry University last year and this needs to be discussed by this group.

Thanks were given to Councillor Nigel Lee, Carole Bray and John Payne for their contributions to the group.

Thanks were also given to Richard Monk, who is leaving Whitefriars and stepping down as the Chair of the Housing Theme Group. As the position of Chairman of the group was originally shared between Richard Monk and Stewart Fergusson (Orbit Heart of England), Stewart will now take on the role of the Chair.

Dates of future meetings:

- **19th August, 10am - 12noon**
(Tour of sites in the city – details to be confirmed)
- **17th November, 2pm - 4pm**
(6th Floor Conference Room, Spire House, New Union Street, Coventry CV1 2PW)