Affordable Housing
Task Group Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Affordable Housing Task Group held on Tuesday 27 March 2012 at Claughton Memorial Hall.

Members present:

Councillor Anderson
Councillor Balmain
Councillor Brooks (Chairman)
Councillor M Gandhi

Councillor Henderson
Councillor Ormrod
Councillor Rogers

Officers present:

Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

Others present:

Councillor Trish Bugeja
Councillor David Gornall
Councillor Eddie Moorat
Councillor June Jackson
Councillor April McCann
Councillor Don Lawrenson
Councillor Pete Murphy
Councillor Dave Swift

Catterall Parish Council
Claughton-on-Brock Parish Council
Pilling Parish Council
Stalmine-with-Staynall Parish Council
Stalmine-with-Staynall Parish Council
Wyre Council
Wyre Council
Wyre Council

AH.12 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the task group: Councillors E Anderton, Perkin, Pimbley, Shewan and Williams.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Richard Eccles, Claughton-on-Brock Parish Council.

AH.13 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Balmain and Rogers declared a personal interest in item 3 on the agenda, as members of the Regenda Partnership Board.
AH.14 Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6 March 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.

AH.15 Affordable Housing – Demand, Supply and Public Awareness

The Chairman, Cllr Brooks, welcomed representatives from the Parish Councils of Catterall, Claughton-on-Brock, Pilling and Stalmine-with-Staynall to the meeting. He also thanked Claughton-on-Brock Parish Council for agreeing to host the meeting at the Memorial Hall.

Cllr Brooks advised that six task group members had visited residents at the Beech Close development immediately before the meeting. Residents had been asked about their experiences of the application and allocation processes as well as the way in which they valued and benefitted from affordable housing provision.

Cllr Brooks explained the background to the task group and its rationale and went on to explain the formal definition of ‘affordable housing’. He added that the task group was interested in hearing from the Parish representatives as all of those present had had some recent experience of an affordable housing development in their area.

Stalmine-with-Staynall

Cllr June Jackson informed the task group that there was a demand for sheltered housing and affordable housing for your people in the parish. It was also desirable to provide some houses into which people could downsize, although there was a need to deal with such an issue with the utmost sensitivity.

Cllr Jackson said that there would always be some people who would object to a housing development, but it was essential to continue to provide a variety of housing to meet different needs. Cllr Jackson said she supported the ‘onion-skin’ approach to ensure that local people were prioritised, rather than prioritising those in greatest need who might not necessarily be from the locality.

Stalmine needed more sheltered accommodation.

Pilling

Cllr Eddie Moorat echoed many of the points made by Cllr Jackson and informed the task group about an application that was currently in process, known as the Bluebell Development, comprising approximately sixteen dwellings of two and three bedrooms.
Cllr Moorat highlighted the problems in Pilling caused by excess surface water, with which the sewerage system could not always cope. He accepted that there was a need for more affordable housing in Pilling and other rural areas although the problems with the sewers meant that people often objected. He added that there was definitely a need for more affordable housing provision for local people.

Cllr Rogers reminded members that people needed to be mobile and they needed to be able to move if work or other personal circumstances dictated. Although he supported the principle of prioritising local people he also thought there should be a degree of flexibility to take into account other factors.

Cllr Moorat highlighted the fact that many residents would prefer to stay in their own home rather than move onto sheltered accommodation at a later stage of life, and this should ideally be built into the planning process at the earliest stage. Cllr Henderson quoted an example in Thornton where exactly that approach had been taken.

Claughton-on-Brock

Cllr David Gornall said that for the Beech Close development there was relatively little interest until the plans were approved. A total of seventy applications were eventually considered for the sixteen units. Cllr Gornall asked for clarification about how the allocation process would work if and when one of the units became vacant again, stressing that local people should still be prioritised. It was agreed that this question would be raised with Regenda during the course of the review. Cllr Balmain made the point that the 'local' principle should apply to all future allocations.

Cllr Rogers informed members about the National Home Swap Scheme which facilitated swaps of affordable housing between two tenants in any part of the country.

Cllr Gornall said that, with the experience of Beech Close behind them, Claughton would be happy to consider a further affordable housing development, depending upon local need and an appropriate site being identified.

Catterall

Cllr Bugeja said that the residents of Catterall were generally in favour of affordable housing, although they had some concerns about the lack of local services.

Cllr Moorat added that small communities also needed an influx of people from outside in order to sustain them. Sustainability was crucial.
Conclusions

- Most people were supportive of affordable housing
- There was a general lack of awareness about affordable housing
- Education was essential
- Local people were the most effective at passing on the positive message about affordable housing
- It was possible that there was unnecessary concern about local opposition to affordable housing
- Close liaison between the developer, Regenda and Wyre Council over a significant period of time was needed to help people understand the issues and the need
- It was important, regarding future developments, that Regenda got their publicity for the local community correct from the start
- Closer communication between Regenda and the parish councils was essential
- Parishes should be encouraged to identify their own land suitable for affordable housing

AH.16  Next Steps

The task group will meet with representatives from the more urban areas of the borough at the next meeting.

AH.17  Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 1st May 2012 at 6pm in the Burton Room, North Euston Hotel, Fleetwood.