Affordable Housing
Task Group Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Affordable Housing Task Group held on Tuesday 1
May 2012 in the Burton Room, North Euston Hotel, Fleetwood

__Members present:__

- Councillor Anderson
- Councillor E Anderton
- Councillor Balmain
- Councillor Brooks (Chairman)
- Councillor Henderson
- Councillor Ormrod
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Robinson
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Shewan
- Councillor Williams

__Officers present:__

- Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

__Others present:__

- Councillor R Gandhi
- Councillor Greenhough
- Councillor Hewitt
- Councillor Ivor Bould
- Councillor Alan Marsh
- Councillor John Warnock
- Bill Waller
- Evina Davis
- Jeni Phillips
- Pete Ryan
- Wyre Council
- Wyre Council
- Wyre Council
- Fleetwood Town Council
- Fleetwood Town Council
- Fleetwood Town Council
- Poulton and Carleton Residents Association
- Concerned Residents of Poulton (CROP)
- Thornton Action Group (TAG)
- Thornton Action Group (TAG)

__AH.18 Apologies for absence__

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M Gandhi, a member of the
task group.

Apologies were also received from Cllr Newsham (Wyre Council) and
Lesley Middleton, Chair of the Poulton and Carleton Residents Association.
AH.19 Declarations of Interest

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

Fleetwood Town Councillor Alan Marsh declared a personal interest as he sits on the Board of Blackpool Coastal Housing who will be involved in administering the Fylde Coast Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

AH.20 Affordable Housing – Demand, Supply and Public Awareness (Chairman’s introduction)

The Chairman, Cllr Brooks, welcomed representatives from Fleetwood Town Council, Thornton Action Group (TAG), the Poulton and Carleton Residents’ Association and the Concerned Residents of Poulton (CROP) to the meeting.

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 and Town Councils and community representatives as the topic of ‘affordable housing’ was one which was growing in importance for all communities. He informed the meeting that the current stock of such housing accounted for approximately 5% of housing in the borough, broken down as follows:

Fleetwood
- Broadwater 294
- Town Centre 370
- Warren 190
- West View 636
- Other 264 (Fleetwood total 1754)

Garstang Rural 265
Poulton / Over Wyre 303
Thornton / Cleveleys 423
Sheltered Housing total 538

GRAND TOTAL 2745

Cllr Brooks advised the meeting that the Fylde Coast Choice Based Lettings Scheme was to go live for public re-registration on 8 May with the first homes to be advertised on the new system on 6 June. The Scheme would assess applications according to a set of agreed criteria, the most significant of which was the ‘local link’.

Wyre currently had a demand for affordable housing of 570, with only approximately 60 new units being added each year. There were approximately 640 empty homes in the borough some of which the council intended to buy, renovate then add to the stock.
AH.21 Affordable Housing – Demand, Supply and Public Awareness (Discussion)

Cllr Henderson, who was also Chairman of the Planning Committee, informed the task group that and development of fifteen units or above would need to take affordable housing into account. That was the trigger level. The build quality of social rented housing had to be above that of private housing and all properties were required to meet the same design within a development. All affordable housing had to mix with the ‘streetscene’.

Poulton and Carleton Residents’ Association

Bill Waller wondered whether residents should have been more involved in the review than they had been hitherto. He added that affordable housing was a very important subject, whereas in the task group’s scoping document the review itself was described as “low”.

Thornton Action Group (TAG)

Jeni Phillips informed the task group that TAG had been looking at affordable housing for ten years. They were of the view that it was very important; not only was it important to recognise the need for it but also to recognise the increasing need.

Ms Phillips said that there was still something of a stigma attached to affordable housing, and there was also a feeling that some developers did not like it, but TAG wanted to make clear that the message should be that affordable housing will become so much more important in the future, and it should be supported. Ms Phillips was in favour of affordable housing which needed to be of good quality and primarily for local people.

Mr Ryan added that TAG had shown their support for affordable housing by making representations to a developer when the percentage of affordable housing in a development near Marsh Mill was reduced from 100% to 40%.

Fleetwood Town Council

Cllr Marsh said that he recognised that there was a stigma attached but he felt that would probably always be the case. Despite that, affordable housing was very much needed and, in his opinion, every family deserved to have a decent home.

Cllr Bould added that it was important to try to change people’s attitudes as otherwise the stigma was likely to remain. He added that it was people’s perception that was important.

Cllr Warnock believed that it was important to meet need with an appropriate size of property. Steps might be taken to try to deal with
‘under-occupation’ but it was recognised that this was a very sensitive subject. Cllr Marsh gave an example from Blackpool where incentives were being used to encourage people to consider moving from larger accommodation to smaller, in appropriate situations. He added that it was important to get the mix of housing right, and that building should only take place where there was need. In Blackpool, for example, there were too many 1-bedroom units whereas in Wyre there were not enough.

Cllr Warnock said that more and more people were likely to struggle with paying rent in the light of the current welfare reforms.

Concerned Residents of Poulton (CROP)

Ms Davis said that she believed that people in private housing did not want to live next to affordable housing. She suggested that it was not beneficial to integrate affordable housing with private housing and that there should be more rigorous tests applied to applicants for affordable housing. She made it clear that these were her personal views and not necessarily those of CROP.

Other comments

Cllr Anderson said that, from her experience, problems had arisen from people moving in from outside the area. Allocations for affordable housing needed be for local people. Cllr Brooks reminded the meeting of the ‘onion-skin’ approach which was one of the criteria used for allocations.

Cllr Shewan said that he thought that some larger estates would be required, in addition to integrated developments, in order to begin to tackle great need for affordable housing, which currently far outweighed the supply.

In Thornton, Cllr Greenhough had been surprised at the general support for an affordable housing development, which many people had assumed would raise more objections, and he welcomed that view. He also pointed out that people’s attitudes towards affordable housing tended to change; those who were originally ambivalent about developments often turned out to be very much in favour once the development was established.

Cllr Robinson’s experience from Hambleton and Stalmine was that it was important that most people who occupied affordable housing should be local. She added that she would be very happy to show anyone the affordable housing developments in her Ward should they wish to visit.

Cllr Perkin told the task group that, from his experience as a police officer for many years, the majority of anti-social behaviour and crime took place in private estates. He added that there was something of a dilemma to be considered – should larger estates be developed to meet identified need, or should a policy of integrated affordable housing be pursued, which would not meet the identified need? In his opinion attitudes needed to change to
support integrated housing.

Cllr Balmain highlighted the fact that in a small development of affordable housing in Garstang the only two private houses appeared to be up for sale quite frequently. He suggested that the terms ‘council housing’ and ‘social housing’ ought not to be used at all – ‘affordable housing’ was the correct term, in his view.

The Chairman thanked all the various representatives for attending the meeting and contributing their valued views, knowledge and experience to the work of the task group.

**AH.22 Next Steps**

The task group will meet with representatives from Great Eccleston Parish Council at their next meeting.

**AH.23 Date and time of next meetings**

Tuesday 15 May 2012 at 6pm in the Great Eccleston Village Centre.

Thursday 24 May 2012 at 6pm in the Members’ Lounge, Civic Centre.