

**BRIDGING NEWCASTLEGATESHEAD BOARD
FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2009
MINUTES**

Present:

Jim Coulter	Chair
Sheila Johnston	Gateshead Council
Councillor Angela Armstrong	Gateshead Council
Bill Fullen	Gateshead LSP
Geraldine Wilcox	Independent
Steve Errington	Independent
Kevan Carrick	Independent
Neil Barker	Newcastle LSP
Councillor Bill Shepherd	Newcastle City Council
David Slater	Newcastle City Council
Chief Supt Graham Davis	Gateshead LSP

Observers:

Fiona Gough	Government Office for the North East
Jim Darlington	One North East

Officers in Attendance:

Anne Mulroy	BNG
Karen Anderson	BNG
John Sparkes	BNG
Ian Mackintosh	BNG
Jonathan Dunk	BNG
Julia McAweaney	BNG (minutes)

Action

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Pat Ritchie, Andrea Proudlock, Charlie Hughes and George Curry. The Chair reported that Tom Warburton had left One North East and was now at the HCA. ONE had not yet formally nominated his replacement.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Personal, non prejudicial declarations of interest were made by the Chair (in respect of the Audit Commission) and Councillors Armstrong and Shepherd, Sheila Johnston and David Slater on certain Gateshead and Newcastle development matters.

3. **MINUTES OF 18 SEPTEMBER MEETING, ACTION NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

- The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- Actions noted.

4. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Board Awayday Follow-up

- Significant progress has been made on the pieces of work being carried out and all will be finished in December. A further update will be given to the January Board.

HCA Chair Visit and Follow-up

- Robert Napier visited on 27 October. The visit was a success and included a tour of some of the Newcastle and Gateshead schemes. There are some issues around comparisons being made between Pathfinders and it was recognised that Pathfinders are at various stages and the implementation of their strategies.
- Robert Napier will be presenting his findings and thoughts on future plans to a meeting of Pathfinder Chairs on 14 December.
- He has sent a letter posing some questions (copy attached to the report along with a copy of BNG's response).
- Robert Napier is particularly interested in value for money and per person and how to demonstrate to Treasury the need for further funding. He was interested in the principles of Pathfinder working across local authority boundaries and the different responses made to market issues.
- The Chair is meeting with Richard McCarthy, Director General of Housing and Planning at CLG next week and will discuss this further with him.

Audit Commission – BNG Market Response Report

- Recommendations of the report are as follows:-
 - continue to keep communities effectively engaged and informed in the regeneration process;
 - develop and implement the proposals set out in the BNG housing recovery plan to ensure momentum is maintained and remains strategically focussed; and
 - continue to consider interim uses or alternative treatments for cleared sites to ensure they do not undermine neighbourhood sustainability.
- Most of the recommendations reinforce what BNG are doing already in relation to the response to the market downturn.
- In response to the third recommendation, the meadow at Scotswood could be used as an example of good practice. However, the issues relating to interim use of sites were highlighted. BNG will research further good practice ideas in the other Pathfinders.

BNG

Visit by Terrie Alafat, CLG

- The visit took place on 30 October and was very positive. A letter received following the visit is attached to the report.

Major Projects Update (confidential)

Riverside Dene

- An update on the current position was given and discussion took place.

Byker Investment Task Group

- The group has been established and will report on potential solutions for Byker Estate to John Healey, the Minister, by the end of January. The group is chaired by Professor Peter Roberts and draws in all the key agencies involved in regeneration of the estate. BNG is represented on the Task Group by the Chairman.
- David Slater thanked John Sparkes for work done on best practice options for delivery. Community consultation day took place which was chaired by John Sparkes in Professor Roberts absence.

Kickstart 2 (confidential)

- An update was given and further discussion took place.

Efficiency Plan Update

- The efficiency targets total £7.6m (£4.1m 2009-10 and £3.5m 2010-11). These are savings of money not spent by BNG or efficiency gains of resulting from lower costs for the same outputs. It was confirmed that the targets are supportable.
- There is still much work to do and a meeting of the group will take place after Board to look in more details at efficiencies. Also need to look at benchmarking and baselining so that savings going forward can be tracked across each project. Good progress has been made so far.
- A full report will be brought back to next Board and will be aligned with a review of risk register.

IM

Housing Market Report

- Karen Anderson introduced this interim report.
- Figures on house prices are still low in terms of transactions but are starting to increase. Median prices seem to be holding up with Gateshead BNG area higher than Newcastle BNG area for the second Quarter but the same as NewcastleGateshead as a whole. Will continue to monitor this.
- To help understand the apartment market in Newcastle and Gateshead an exercise has been completed exploring price and supply changes.
- Council of Mortgage Lenders information is starting to look more positive in terms of loans issued.
- There has been no increase in repossessions.
- Vacancies in Newcastle BNG areas are reducing, however Gateshead's are increasing but this is due to Bensham and Saltwell and Dunston 'Rocket'.
- There is little change in Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claims – apart from

Felling which continues to increase. Walker, Elswick and Felling are 3 of 5 wards in Tyne and Wear where JSA claim rates are over 15%. Will continue to review this. Gateshead Council is doing work to look in more detail at that and BNG would be interested to know the outcome of this work.

Affordable Housing Solutions Progress Report

- Work is moving forward.
- Had hoped to be out to tender for loan provider by now but papers still being pulled together at Gateshead and BNG are chasing this up.
- Letters for developers of 5 priority sites already identified will go out for checking by both local authorities next week. BNG will work with developers to negotiate what will be appropriate on each site.

BNG

Who is moving into new homes in BNG

- BNG has been working with developers of key sites to ascertain who is moving into new homes. This is in response to a recommendation from the Audit Commission, having previously been raised in the strategic commissions review. This work is almost complete and will go to Advisory Group for discussion before coming back to Board.
- Audit Commission report reinforces the importance of getting housing solutions going. This was a condition of achieving the 10% additional resources, which, if the additional 10% is not achieved, will result in BNG having to draw on capital receipts to fund some of next year's programme. This has been caused by legal delays within the local authorities outside BNG's control.

BNG

The remainder of the Director's report was noted.

5. COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EVALUATION OF THE HMR PROGRAMME

- CLG have produced a series of evaluation reports recently and Karen Anderson has summarised the findings. This is a useful reference in terms of BNG community engagement budget, strategic reviews work is highlighted as good practice and work around HMR and cohesion. Other examples of good practice from other Pathfinders are around training and employment and BNG will look at that.
- It was highlighted that most of the reports are based on evaluations that finished in 2007.
- One of the headlines is 'it is thought that regeneration activity will continue to go to places with clear long term plans, who are committed to partnership and local leadership, value the private sector and are innovative, flexible and efficient'. Acknowledged significant signs of progress but gaps remain between regional and national averages. BNG definitely has unfinished business and communities couldn't be left the way they are now.

- Professor Michael Parkinson concludes that the public sector needs to maintain activity and ensure policies around other public projects are aligned with regeneration aims.
- Value for money – Pathfinder Directors are pulling together case studies to demonstrate value for money. Report will highlight what the Sustainable Communities Programme is about and that we are only half way through what was meant to be a long term programme.
- BNG Management Team is looking at a suite of recommendations across the piece for learning and community cohesion. Results will be reviewed in Community Cohesion workstream and value for money will be picked up. CC W'steam
- Local authorities have done a lot of work around community cohesion but perhaps need to be working closer with BNG. Karen Anderson will ask Advisory Group to look closer at the detail of recommendations, such as this. KA
- Need to highlight that BNG is responding to and dealing with inequalities as it moves forward and will continue to focus on that. Data around unemployment and health inequalities in some neighbourhoods will be reinforced. BNG

6. Q2 BUSINESS PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

- The programme is very much on track and this was acknowledged by the Board.

7. FINANCIAL UPDATE 2009/10

- Target spend of £16.9m at this point against £17.2m. Spent £306,000 of Growth fund so far.
- Ian Mackintosh then worked through the list of projects and explained reasons for any significant variance, for example due to lower tender prices than expected or invoices not received. However projects are on target and spending.
- Programme Management Group is looking to reduce the level of overprogramming. It was highlighted that project risk needs to be reviewed due to Riverside Dene - financial not outcome risk. Ian Mackintosh will update areas highlighted as spend risks so they are part of the text. IM
- There was some discussion about variance analysis being linked to optimism buyers figures. An anticipated final column will be added to get true figures on variance. Variance risk may be on buyers and the project. It was noted that a lot of these projects have been running already so it is phased over 3 years. IM

8. **PROGRAMME UPDATE 2009-11 (confidential)**

- Jonathan Dunk gave a presentation to update the Board on the programme.
- Jonathan Dunk was thanked for a clear and good presentation and the work in relation to project management was acknowledged.

9. **DVD**

- The Board were shown the 'Creating Great Places to Live' DVD.

10. **ADVISORY GROUP**

- Minutes of 25 September meeting were received.
- 6 November meeting was cancelled.

PROJECT APPRAISAL PANEL

- Minutes of 13 November meeting were received.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- No discussion.

12. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

- 10.30am, Friday 29 January at Gateshead Civic Centre.