Yorkshire and Humberside AGM & evening event 2012

Going local – housing’s role in strong and sustainable communities

28 June 2012

Post event briefing
Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee – post event briefing

As part of the regional work plan for 2012 the Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee have commissioned a series of briefings to complement the range of seminars and events offered to CIH members across the region. A briefing will be published after every regional event to help ensure that all members, whether they have attended the event or not, can access the key issues raised, practice approaches shared and find out more about the topics discussed.

This briefing aims to provide an overview of the discussion and key points from the presentations at the AGM evening event.

To download the AGM papers and minutes visit www.cih.org/yorkshirehumbersideresources

Previous post event briefings can be downloaded from www.cih.org/yorkshirehumbersideresources

Introduction to the AGM evening event

As a profession, we are experiencing the most significant period of change in a generation. Housing professionals across the region are working hard to adapt to the challenges of welfare reform, localism and changes to the regulatory and funding regimes.

This AGM event provided the opportunity to hear from a range of specialist speakers on the central role of housing in the delivery of strong and sustainable communities in these challenging times.

The speakers considered:

- How the CIH is changing to meet the needs of its members and the communities in which they work
- The importance of sector led solutions in meeting both the challenges and opportunities faced
- The economy and how housing can play a significant role in its recovery
- How we can improve the resilience and independence of individuals in their communities
- Effective approaches in supporting communities to develop local solutions to local issues.

Further information

For information on the AGM, event or this briefing please contact Stephen Blundell, Yorkshire and Humberside CIH regional committee chair – email stephen.blundell@lfha.co.uk or telephone 0113 386 1014.

For information on CIH membership visit www.cih.org/membership

For information on the Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee please visit www.cih.org/yorkshireandhumberside

Future events

12 July 2012 – York College - Free for CIH members
The future of social care – who delivers? who pays?
To book please visit www.cih.org/eventsfinder or contact the CIH events team on 024 7685 1722 to book over the phone.
The future direction of CIH
Robin Lawler, CIH President

Discussion /key points

A key focus for the CIH is to continue to support its membership in delivering excellence in what are challenging times. Robin provided attendees with an overview of how the CIH is changing to respond to new agendas and is working to ensure the organisation remains fit for purpose.

- The recent changes introduced by CIH (new governance arrangements) and those currently being progressed are necessary to ensure the organisation remains relevant and fit for purpose
- CIH keen to engage with the housing sector generally – a broader appeal to more than just those involved in social housing
- Work in progress – on-going thinking around how CIH is run and operates. Seeking to remove any disconnects
- There has been a membership review – resulting in a simplified offer around grades and membership
- The on-going ‘member get member’ campaign – seeks to encourage new members to CIH – transforming the organisations approach to membership
- The corporate plan – adopted by the governing board – seeks to put members at the heart of operations and business. CIH is keen to harness the collective knowledge, experience and skills of members to make a difference in the communities in which they operate.

Governance

- Governance reform – the new governing board has been appointed. Appointments were by open recruitment using an agreed skills matrix – seen by the new trustees as a ‘testing process’
- Robin, as President, attends the governing board – keeping up to date with discussions to ensure he is effective in his wider ambassadorial role for CIH
- The new audit and risk board has been established and is being recruited to
- Three new delegated boards are being developed and will be recruited to, these will centre around, learn, improve and influence
• Vice President – to be appointed by open election process. The process is just commencing with a ballot expected in early 2013. The CIH is keen for more members to engage – by either putting themselves forward for the role or voting in the Vice President ballot
• The next CIH President will be Paul Tennant who will take office at the AGM in May 2013
• Corporate calendar – going forward the AGM will align with the One CIH conference. New technological approaches to help facilitate member engagement at the AGM are being considered. The AGM offers the opportunity for members to hold the governing board to account on the operation of the organisation.

Regional Boards

• Transition from regional committees to regional boards is on-going
• Resource review to be carried out in terms of finance and support to regional boards. Each region is different with different needs. Some are more entrepreneurial than others
• ‘Golden thread’ from corporate plan, to governing board to regional boards – regional work to link to corporate objectives
• Key role in regions in lobbying and influencing – supported via national policy team
• Scope for new networks? Could we develop regional best practice networks? Run virtually and supported by the three new national boards of influence, improve and learn?.

The offer to members

• How can CIH work to support individuals and organisations in ‘being brilliant’?
• New strategic partnerships – a tailored offer meeting organisations different requirements
• Improved website – work in progress
• A new customer relationship team including account managers
• Tailored correspondence with members
• Internationally – reviewing international proposition. How do CIH respond to requests from around the world? Responses must be business focussed, proportionate and cost effective.

Future work

• CSR – CIH lobbying to demonstrate the economic benefits of investing in housing
• Nationally and regionally – focus on disenfranchised groups for example, the impact of welfare reforms on the young
• Making CIH Manchester 2013, an even greater success. Building on the positive feedback from 2012. CIH would welcome your feedback on the 2012 conference to help shape the 2013 event.

Further CIH reading and information on these topics can be accessed through the following links:

CIH corporate plan
New governance
Year of practice
How can housing support employment, personal growth and economic growth?
Gavin Smart, Director of Policy and Practice, CIH

CIH topic background

“We are keen to ensure housing remains one of the government’s top priorities in restoring growth. Housing must take centre stage in helping stimulate the economy through its vital contribution to achieving economic growth. Investing in house building has a positive multiplier effect on communities and on employers, and can be delivered quickly. It brings employment and expands to benefit more than just those the homes are built to serve. It is essential people are able to access appropriate housing, at a price they can afford and in the right location to enable them to access employment opportunities’ (www.cih.org).

Discussion /key points

Gavin provided an overview of the current challenging economic context and highlighted how investment in housing can have a quick and positive impact on the economy and local communities.

The current economic context

- Revised ONS figures released – poor growth performance – recession
- Will the economy grow in the future? How long will it take for lost growth to be made up and how will this be achieved?
- Other countries are not in recession – their economies are growing. The UK will find it harder to make up lost ground
- Spending cuts – major in terms of scale and reach – tricky uncharted territory, what will be the long term impact on the economy?
- A jobless recovery – past evidence suggests employers will not rehire quickly as growth returns. As a result unemployment levels will remain higher for longer (in particular youth unemployment)
- Real earnings have reduced
- The housing market has stalled as a result of ‘mortgage rationing’ – this is a global phenomenon, occurring in most developed countries and predating the credit crunch
- There is a shift to the private rented sector
• Long term demographic challenges for example, ageing population and what comes after that.

Deleveraging – reducing the debt on the UK balance sheet

• Characteristics of previous major deleveraging episodes – painful and long lasting (6 to 7 years on average), GDP contracts for several years
• Responses – austerity, default, inflate or growth
• 6 key tests - derived from previous international experience of required conditions for economic improvement. Highlights the challenge to the UK around point 6, we have not had a stable housing system for some time:
  1. A stable banking system and lending rising
  2. Economic reform
  3. Deficit reduction plans
  4. Export growth
  5. Private investment
  6. A stable housing system
• Investment in housing can deliver wide ranging economic and social benefits – from increasing employment, to reducing waiting lists, to improving educational attainment and health outcomes etc.

Housing and the impact on the economy

• Investing in new supply, investing in existing stock and bringing empty houses back into use
• Research shows for every £1 invested in housing there is a £2.84 benefit to the economy. In addition 52p is returned to the exchequer via tax and benefit gains
• Investment in housing – is quick, local and retains benefits in the UK / economy
• We need to influence government thinking around infrastructure investment priorities – investment in housing would deliver quicker economic benefits when compared to for example, proposed high speed rail lines
• Retrofitting – Energy Saving Trust estimates that £85bn spend required by 2020
• There is a role for both private investment and the state to deliver housing at scale
• Use of state backed guarantees – for example, the NewBuy scheme, indicate possible future and wider use
• Delivering a functioning housing system – would underpin improvements in mobility, health, education etc.
• We must not underestimate the impact of housing investment in the longer term – investment could underpin sustainable construction industry improvement, skill up workers and help the UK break into export markets. There are ample opportunities around sustainable construction in the UK, when one considers the 2050 carbon reduction target.

Challenges

• Scale of housing need and level of dysfunction
  o 4.5million on waiting lists for affordable housing
  o Likely 100,000 new homes to be built this year
  o State intervention required to increase volume
• Affordable rent model – not a model for all areas
• Scale of private finance required to deliver the number of new homes needed
• How do you deliver housing in low value areas for a social and environmental return?
• Welfare reform – making it work
• Regeneration – work not completed from the old HMR programme
• Localism.

CIH response – how should we meet the challenges?

• CIH talking about sector led solutions – the decade of best practice
• Grasp the opportunity – members are the experts. What do you think? what best practice and sector led solutions are there?
• CIH continues to work to support members in responding to the challenges – through practical support and policy influencing
• The nation is depending on us – let’s not let them down.

Further CIH reading and information on these topics can be accessed through the following links:

Empty homes
Government planning and spending
Housing supply
Tenure reform
The green agenda
Welfare reform
Year of practice
How can we challenge apathy and a lack of civic participation?
Mike Chitty, Consultant and Community Activist – Realise Development

Discussion /key points

Mike urged the audience to think differently around engagement methods to help communities articulate local problems and develop local solutions.

- Mike posed a question to attendees – to what extent does apathy crop up in your day to day work? One attendee noted an example of perceived lack of change following a lengthy period of tenant involvement. Large amounts of time and effort expended for no perceived change and no feedback to participants. Result is apathy and an unwillingness to engage in future participation offers

- Civic enterprise commission report – due to be published soon. Exploring how in the context of reduced public expenditure, communities can be supported to help themselves. How can skills and experience at a community level be harnessed to make a difference?

Apathy

- Clarity around words used – what do you mean by community? what do you mean by empowerment? what is apathy?

- Considering the word ‘apathy’. The origins of meaning - ‘free from suffering and pain’. People learn from experience, if previous engagement isn’t seen as making a difference, then people are unlikely to engage in the future, they will keep themselves from the ‘pain’ of engagement

- Apathy can result if feeling overwhelmed, or feeling that you lack power to change anything

- Is the community really apathetic? Or do we consistently design systems and processes for ‘engagement’ that are not fit for purpose?

- To overcome apathy – set the right challenge for people, think about the context you have put them in – changing the context can result in a different response. For example, look at your engagement strategy. Is it badly designed? fit for purpose? does it use the wrong language? does it offer the right space / place for engagement?

- Passive citizenship – are you trying to do too much? Too much intervention can disempower and weaken communities’ ability to solve their own problems.
The fundamentals - self-interest and power

- When engaging with communities focus on their agendas rather than your own
- What is your self-interest? what are the drivers for your involvement? what do you want to achieve?
- How can you empower others to achieve their own interests?
- Create the conditions in which power can be shared – you cannot give power
- Power can arise from finding a common cause with others
- Go into engagement with an understanding / clarity around the issues of power and self-interest.

Effective engagement

- Create the time
- Create the space
- Create the networks and relationships
- An example of a community working together to address local problems is that of Chapeltown Voices, based in Leeds. The engagement approach employed works against apathy, generates interest in and develops local solutions to issues. The community set the agenda and articulate what is important to them. They are supported to identify what they want to do about the issue and what help professional stakeholders can bring.

Mike can be contacted via email at mike@realiseddevelopment.net
Opportunity for questions and discussion

Is Quantitative Easing (QE) as an economic approach, a way of reducing public sector debt effectively by inflating that debt away?

- This is a complex subject – briefly, QE is an approach designed to increase inflation and the supply of money within the economy. So to some extent this will reduce the real value of government debt. The primary aim of QE is to avoid the risk of deflation - which impacts negatively on economic growth
- For more information on QE visit the Bank of England website.

Is the CIH investment portfolio robust? Concern noted at the recently reported stock market loss. In addition, what is the direction of travel around member subscription levels?

- Acknowledge that CIH need to balance any subscription increase around member retention
- The stock market portfolio is fine
- Funds have been taken from reserves to invest in the website
- The new audit and risk committee within CIH will have a key role in oversight of the organisations finances
- Traditionally CIH has been cautious around use of funds. Discussion around calculated risk approach to ensure investment in ‘good works’
- Widening the involvement of housing in CIH – not just social housing
- Review of regional resources – some regions more entrepreneurial than others.

In the light of the presentation on participation and apathy – there appears a conflict between wanting to give customers a free hand in decision making and the need to adhere to rules and regulations etc.

- Difficult to reconcile for landlords – are you about strategic policy or bottom up change? Can you be person centred and strategic?
- One view – as a landlord you need to carry out your service functions, rather than trying to be a community facilitator. It’s a question of if the landlord self-interest aligns with that of the community. Landlords should be one of a range of community stakeholders – creating the space for others to work in and with communities
- Alternate view – landlords have a long term stake in communities. Their responsibility doesn’t end at the front door. Be conscious that as a landlord you are not creating a range of services to impose on customers – work to facilitate community involvement. A key role for a social landlord Chief Executives is that of relationship management with stakeholders and communities.

How would you approach individuals who will not divulge their self-interest and could be damaging to the engagement process?

- ‘Big room’ processes / engagement can help to dilute power
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour – but recognise that people will make mistakes and need to learn from these
- Accept that you can only work with the people you have got.
Further reading

**CIH - The Housing Report**

Since the coalition government came to power in May 2010 it has taken a big bang approach to reform announcing significant changes to the planning system, welfare, investment and social tenure. The aim is to meet people's housing aspirations. The CIH along with the National Housing Federation and Shelter have launched a series of reports aimed at holding ministers to account by rating the government's direction of travel under ten main policy headings.

**Communities and Local Government - Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England**

The government's housing strategy sets out a medium-term vision for housing, until 2015.