

**COUNCIL MEETING 17 MAY 2007 – MINUTE No. 9 - QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR GRUTCHFIELD TO CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL**

**Question**

The district has a Council housing stock with a value of around £X and also has a waiting list of approximately 1,900 persons. Why does Babergh District Council not have a Housing Champion?

**Response**

The Council has an interim Corporate Plan to take it through 2007/08 whilst the new Council gives consideration to the priorities and key actions it wishes to adopt. This Corporate Plan has five corporate priorities within it, one of which is “To increase the supply of housing that local people can afford to buy or rent”. The Plan then details 19 key actions for 2007/08 that it wishes to take around the areas of:-

- Increase the supply on new developments of affordable properties for rent or shared ownership, and encourage a percentage of smaller open market houses.
- Increase the supply of local needs housing.
- Increase the number of properties available for rent through Housing Associations.
- Increase the supply of decent private sector rented housing.
- Continue the efficient management of the Council’s own Housing Stock.
- Reduce homelessness and support those who are homeless.
- Improve administration of Housing Benefit.

The above demonstrates that a lot of consideration has been given to the district’s housing needs and actions put in place that are far wider than just trying to deal with the issue through the Council’s own housing stock.

In addition, the Council has a Housing Panel and Paper G4 sets out its proposed Work Plan for 2007/08.

In 2006/07 Members gave consideration to Member Champions, Priority Champions and Remuneration for such posts and decided (subject to the agreement of the new Council) that each Corporate Priority should have a Champion who would co-ordinate the work of the Member Champion and any other Members representing the Council on Panels and Bodies within their Corporate Priority.

Paper G3 on today’s agenda recommends that the Council continues with the current Member Champion posts to allow Members the opportunity to consider its priorities and how it wishes to handle these.

In summary, housing need is a priority need for this Council and this is recognised and set out within the Corporate Plan and governance arrangements are in place through the monitoring of that Plan and through the Housing Panel. In due course and following proper consideration there may well be a Priority or Member Champion for some or all aspects of housing needs.

**Supplementary Question**

Can the Chairman confirm that Choice Based Lettings Group covering 7 Districts and over 50 RSL's works with all these groups to obtain maximum grants.

**Reply from the Chairman of the Council**

Yes – as Affordable Housing is one of our priorities, we do everything we can in this area.