

Responding to the Housing Market and Economic Climate

Working Groups

Workshops - Topics

- Response to the Credit Crunch and the Mortgage Rescue scheme
- Value of a Landlords Accreditation Scheme in Hart
- Rural Housing – how to make it work effectively
- Partnership Working Groups
- Future Development and Affordable Housing

Credit Crunch and the Mortgage Rescue Scheme

In common with councils across the country, we are being squeezed. In response to the credit crunch Hart have developed a package of measures designed to prevent some of the most vulnerable families losing their homes

What we've been doing

- Mortgage rescue – One case currently being reviewed by the housing association
- Promotion of our services on the intranet and in the Hart Life newsletter
- Attending local events such as HEAR and CREW
- Rent Deposit scheme for non priority adults
- Provision of advice and assistance for all those who need it regardless of circumstances
- Publication of a wide range of leaflets

- What else can we do?
- How should we be promoting our services?
- Where should we be promoting our services?
- Is the Mortgage Rescue Scheme a good idea?
- How should we be promoting it?
- Do you think it will be successful?

Value of a Landlords Accreditation Scheme in Hart

The Council are considering setting up a Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme, this aims to benefit both landlords and tenants:

Key features:

- They are voluntary – landlords agree to join rather than being obliged to, and are usually closely involved in establishing and running schemes.
- There is a set of standards relating to management and property condition to which accredited properties and landlords must adhere.
- The scheme is administered by an independent body such as a local authority, which checks that the required standards are met.
- There are incentives to membership such as access to information and advice, advertising of accredited properties, or grant aid with the cost of building work.

What are your thoughts on whether an Accreditation Scheme is both necessary and achievable, or whether the existing private rented sector activity tackles the problems in this sector?

Value of a Landlords Accreditation Scheme in Hart



Rural Housing – how to make it work effectively

Background:

- The provision of affordable homes in rural areas is high on the Governments agenda
- In the Housing Strategy 2008-11 we have a target of providing 30 affordable houses in rural areas
- We have carried out 12 rural housing needs surveys in villages in the District
- Hart is a partner in Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing (HARAH) as a delivery vehicle for housing

• Developments in villages can take a number of years to complete – *How do we reduce this time?*

• There is a sometimes ‘not in my back yard’ resistance when an affordable housing scheme is proposed in villages – *What can we do to change this?*

• Do you think people really understand what affordable housing is?

Partnership Working Groups

Current topics are:

- Empty Homes
- Crack-house closure protocol
- Create a joint 'one stop' resource for older people
- Produce a best practice 'under occupation' protocol for the local area
- Views on the topic of pepper-potting affordable housing within a development

Some of these may only take place online. Others (such as the crack house closure topic) are being progressed through both online and face to face meetings. A demonstration of the working groups will be running though lunch,

- Do you want to receive an invitation to join the working groups?
- The working groups become more useful as more people get involved, do you have suggestions on how we can promote discussion?
- Are there any topics you would like to see worked on in the forum?

The aim:

- Shift towards a 'specific objective' focus, rather than general themes, in partnership working
- Focus on defined outcomes that are measurable and work towards meeting common strategic objectives
- Provide a space for partners to explore recent developments in housing issues within the local area, make comments and suggestions
- Reduce the need for face to face meetings, saving time and energy



Future Development and Affordable Housing



- Over the past 2 years we have not completed any affordable housing units partly due to SPA issues – The “Special Protection Area” and surrounding “zone” covers most of the District.
- Also, the difficult economic climate has meant that some of the sites in the District have not yet been brought forward or those that have planning permission granted have not commenced.

Any ideas and suggestions for bringing forward more affordable housing? We'd like your views on:

- Wokingham ask for Affordable Housing on commercial developments should we do the same?
- Staggering or delaying s106 payments to later in the development? Which kind of payments should be delayed?
- Hart DC building bungalows specifically to encourage people to downsize and free up family accommodation?