

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2)-16-06(p.5)

Date: Thursday 23 November 2006

Venue: The Newport Centre

Title: Update on Black, Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Action Plan for Wales

Purpose

The Committee is being asked to note the update on the BME Housing Action Plan for Wales further to the Minister's report to committee on 6 July 2006 informing them that a sub-group of the BME National Housing Review Group had been established to consider proposals for a new action plan.

Summary / Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note the proposals for a new BME Housing Action Plan and how the review may be taken forward.

Background

The current BME Housing Action Plan was launched by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration in 2002 and was the culmination of a comprehensive programme of work and consultation with partners from BME groups and housing organisations across Wales. The Action Plan is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's mission to promote equality of opportunity and achieve social inclusion for all people in Wales.

The BME National Housing Review Group works to monitor and evaluate progress against the actions contained within the Action Plan and in March 2006 it recommended that a working group be established to look at proposals for drafting a new BME Housing Action Plan which would reflect current housing issues for the BME community.

The Working Group met during the summer period and discussed the action points contained within the plan and the following proposals were identified for change. This group felt that it would be a timely moment to draft a new BME Housing Action Plan which could replace the current plan.

The Group also felt that there is a need to reflect that the environment has changed since the production of the Action Plan in 2002 with key factors including the work and code of practice established by the CRE and the statutory responsibility towards race equality.

The working group also felt that a new Action Plan could embrace the recommendations set out by

the Review of Social Landlords' Implementation of the Black Minority Ethnic, (BME) Housing Action Plan for Wales that fall to the Welsh Assembly Government. A table displaying the recommendations with the Working Group's response to date is attached at Annex 1.

It was also noted that a number of the actions within the existing plan have been completed. The group also agreed that now that the building blocks have been put in place to ensure fairness for BME communities the emphasis of a new action plan should be on effective delivery.

Consideration

The working group put their proposals for a new BME Housing Action Plan to the BME National Housing Review Group at their last meeting in September 2006.

It is important to note that these proposals are at a very early stage and are thematically based. The next stage for the working group is to develop specific actions under these headings.

The working group felt that a new action plan should focus on the following themes:

- **Monitoring** > The new action plan could identify measures to tackle inconsistent reporting by housing organisation and also identify what we do with our monitoring material and where this leads. The monitoring of Welsh Assembly Government and local authority expenditure on BME communities should also be examined.
- **Inspection** > Consideration could be given to whether the regulatory code for housing associations registered in Wales is working in practice for BME communities.
- **Stock transfer** > This could also be examined and whether BME issues are being addressed and explained in offer documentation. There could also be actions to ensure that the registration of new RSLs must still contain the commitment to the BME community.
- **Tenant Participation** > Actions could encourage tenant groups to be reflective of their communities and have up-to-date constitutions. The relationship between the Assembly Government and Welsh Tenants Federation could also be looked at in respect of this area.
- **Private Sector Issues** > An examination of how the confidence that BME issues are being dealt with by the Housing Act 2004 could be examined and any outstanding issues could be dealt with in the Action Plan.

The working group will continue to meet to work to draft the new Action Plan and committee will be informed of progress.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this paper.

Cross Cutting Themes

The commitment to eliminate discrimination and disadvantage across BME communities in Wales is a cross-cutting agenda which links closely to the wider social justice objectives. This is reflected in

the BME Housing Action Plan and other documents including Better Homes for People in Wales – A National Housing Strategy for Wales. We are also aware of the work undertaken by the Equality of Opportunity Committee and officials in the Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit and we will continue to work closely with them to ensure that our aims are linked to wider Assembly objectives such as mainstreaming equality and the Race Equality Scheme. We will also take account of the Committee’s work in this area and the need for further action.

Action for Subject Committee

To note the proposals for a new BME Housing Action Plan.

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