

**Minutes of Housing and Affordability Strategic Reference Group
held at Inner West Council - Petersham Service Centre on 10 April 2017**

The meeting commenced at 6:35pm.

Members in Attendance:

Hazel Blunden (Chair)	Sayed Kazmi
Paul Adabie	Debbie Kearns
Rachael Haggett	Jane Sampson

Other Attendees:

Gabrielle Rennard	Inner West Council	A/Group Manager Community Services & Culture
Lynne George	Inner West Council	Manager, Community Development
Jon Atkins	Inner West Council	Affordable Housing Officer
Mark Drury	LRAC	Local Representation Advisory Committee

Chairperson: Hazel Blunden

1. Welcome

2. Acknowledgement of Country

3. Apologies:

SRG Members: Tom Kiat; Gary Moore; Kayleigh Ellis; Beverley Garlick; Ann Chantiri; Julia Murray

Council Officers: John Warburton, Deputy General Manager Community & Engagement

4. Minutes of meeting held on 13 February 2017

The minutes are amended to include Debbie Kearns on the list of apologies; and to delete her name from the attendance list.

The minutes were adopted.

5. Disclosures of Interest:

Debbie Kearns advised she is on the Board of Address Housing, which is a specialist provider of housing for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

6. Status of Recommendations from February SRG Meeting

THAT the Strategic Reference Group receives and notes the update on recommendations provided in Attachment 1.

7. Inner West Council Community Strategic Plan Consultation

THAT the Strategic Reference Group:

1. notes the process for development of the CSP; and
2. determines that SRG members will individually respond to the 4 questions below, using a housing and affordability lens, and forward their responses to Hazel Blunden, who has agreed to collate and forward the responses on to Council. The link to the Community Strategic Plan Issues Paper is at: <http://www.yoursayinnerwest.com.au/26956/documents/56433>
 - Where are we now?
 - Where do we want to be in 10 years' time?
 - How will we get there?
 - How will we know we've arrived?

Responses from the SRG are due back to Lynne George by Friday 30 June, 2017.

Moved: Paul Adabie **Seconded:** Debbie Kearns

8. Adoption of Inner West Council Affordable Housing Policy and Value Capture Position Paper

THAT the Housing and Affordability Strategic Reference Group:

1. notes the adoption of the Inner West Council *Affordable Housing Policy* and contributes to the development of a 5-10 year implementation action plan for the Inner West LGA;
2. congratulates Council and Judy Stubbs and Associates on the quality of research and modelling done for the development of the policy;
3. strongly supports the original policy wording which stated that Council will set up a Trust Fund ...(which) will clearly differentiate funds or resources for Affordable Housing, and account separately for these funds; and
4. requests that the Council returns to the original policy statement, which was to dedicate surplus rental income for affordable housing purposes.

Moved: Hazel Blunden **Seconded:** Jane Sampson

9. Adoption of Inner West Council Homelessness Policy

That the Housing and Affordability Strategic Reference Group:

- (a) notes the adoption of the Inner West Council *Homelessness Policy* and contributes to the investigation of and strategies to address the issue of homelessness in extreme weather events; and
- (b) requests that at a future meeting the SRG includes an agenda item on possible actions that may be taken by Inner West Council to address the prevention of homelessness.

10. Staff Update

The Affordable Housing Officer, Jon Atkins, provided a verbal update to the SRG, noting that:

- Newtown Neighbourhood Centre had revitalised and was convening the Boarding House Roundtable, which has been discussing actions to address a range of issues; and
- Council is working with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to advocate for Inner West Council to be included in SEPP 70. A further update will be provided at the next SRG meeting.

11. Other Business

(a) Management of Council's Affordable Housing Units

Debbie Kearns asked Council officers about the process whereby Link Housing was selected as the Community Housing Provider to manage Council's 4 affordable housing units at Lewisham. Jon Atkins provided background about the process. Legal advice was provided to Council that the proposed head lease arrangement commonly in place across the industry, raised concerns and posed risks to Council. Council's legal advice indicated that the relevant section of the Residential Tenancy Act 2010 requires both the landlord (Council) and the tenant (CHP) to be "social housing providers" in order for a head lease arrangement to be in place. This compares with the previous Residential Tenancies Act 1987 where it was sufficient for the tenant (CHP) under the head lease to be a "social housing provider".

Inner West Council is not a "social housing provider", and therefore could not sign a management agreement with a CHP that was compliant with the Act. This meant that certain sections of the head lease would be inconsistent with the requirements of the Act, and potentially unenforceable, posing a risk to the Council. Further investigation revealed that Council could sign a management agreement with a CHP that held a current real estate agent's licence. At the time only Link Housing had a current real estate licence.

Council developed and signed an interim three-year contract with Link Housing for 4 units only. Council wished to get the 4 units tenanted as quickly as possible, to maximise their value to the community, reduce risks of vandalism and start generating rental income. As the value of the contract to manage the 4 units was low, the appointment of a community housing provider could be made under delegation.

Council intends to bring this legal issue to the attention of the State Government. Council has already spoken with Wendy Hayhurst from the NSW Federation of Housing Associations about the issue and she has agreed to work with Council in advocating to have the Act amended.

(b) Further Investigation Action to be Undertaken by Officers

THAT Council officers undertake research to investigate additional housing models and whether Housing Cooperatives meet the required criteria to be considered a Community Housing Provider.

12. Next Meeting: Monday 19 June 2017

Members requested that the agenda for the next meeting include consideration of private rental affordability and advocacy by Inner West Council. This includes:

- i. No cause evictions
- ii. Annual rent increases above 10% and actions that can be undertaken by Council, such as reviewing rental data and rising rents over the past 10 years
- iii. The important role of shared rental housing
- iv. Supply vs demand for housing
- v. Boarding houses – possible role for Council in adoption of a Boarding House Strategy, including preservation of current stock. Paul Adabie will lead discussion on this item at the August SRG meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8:00pm.