

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 5th January, 2009

Present: Cllr D J Cure (Chairman), Cllr R W Dalton (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A W Allison, Cllr C Brown, Cllr P J Homewood, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr A G Sayer, Cllr D W Smith, Cllr L A Withey and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Councillors Mrs Anderson, Balfour, Court, Heslop, Sullivan and Worrall were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms Atkinson, Mrs Simpson and Ms Spence.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**SH
09/001 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**SH
09/002 MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on 6 October 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With reference to Minute Number SH 08/050 relating to the Home Improvement Agency transfer to 'in touch', the Board was advised that premises had been secured in Kings Hill and it was anticipated that 'in touch' would be operating from this office by April 2009.

**SH
09/003 GLOSSARY**

The Director of Health and Housing submitted a glossary of terms used within reports to the Advisory Board.

**SH
09/004 PRESENTATION BY DAVID COUTTIE, HOUSING CONSULTANT,
ON THE STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT**

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board owing to the ill health of the housing consultant.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

SH
09/005

STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT REPORT

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board.

SH
09/006

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IMPACT ON HOUSING MARKET

Decision Notice D090001MEM

The Director of Health and Housing described the effects of the current economic downturn on the delivery of housing on significant sites within the Borough. Short term changes to the tenure and delivery of affordable housing which sought to secure a supply of affordable housing into the medium term were explained. Alternative tenures such as intermediate rent with the option for tenants to buy a shared ownership share at a later date were also considered.

Members were reminded that failure to secure sufficient investment in affordable housing could mean that the Council might be unable to deliver its local strategic housing priorities and meet its statutory obligations to the homeless and others in housing need.

The concerns regarding the negative impact of both falling property prices and the lack of suitable mortgage products for potential buyers was noted by Members who emphasised their strong desire to maintain affordable housing as a resource for local people within the Borough.

Members sought assurances that the broader and longer term issues arising from the economic downturn were being considered and recognised the frailty of the Section 106 planning system in being the major provider of affordable housing. The Borough's case was emphasised in needing increased funding for affordable housing and greater access to affordable mortgage borrowing to support residents.

Members thanked Officers, particularly the Senior Options Officer, Jane Rogers, for their hard work and commitment to helping tenants affected by the fire at Holborough. It was noted that residents had been well supported throughout the process with both tenants and Members being kept fully informed.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the ongoing impact of the economic downturn on the local housing market be noted;
- (2) the measures underway with housing association partners and developers in an effort to minimise the impact of the downturn on the supply of affordable housing be endorsed; and
- (3) the temporary arrangements to re-house residents displaced by the recent fire at the block of nine homes at Holborough Valley be noted.

UPDATE ON DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT FUNDING

Decision Notice D090002MEM

The report of the Director of Health and Housing updated the Board on the expenditure against the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget for 2008/09 and the actions to secure further funding and to control expenditure. In addition the report informed Members of an increased bid submission for 2009/10 funding.

Officers reported that potential additional funding for the rest of 2008/09 was available from GOSE, and that a bid would be submitted to take advantage of this.

The Director of Health and Housing advised that the DFG budget for 2008/09 was under continuing pressure and would be overspent. A significant contributory factor was the dedicated and fast track procedure in place to assist Russet Homes' tenants. Members were disappointed to learn that Russet Homes felt unable to contribute to an easing of the increased funding pressure on the DFG budget, either directly or indirectly or by agreeing to fund certain adaptations. The Director of Health and Housing was therefore invited to continue discussions with Russet Homes reminding them that the Borough Council had a responsibility to residents in all tenures and that the level of support given to Russet tenants could be seen as disproportionate.

Members felt that having to bid for increased funding was unsatisfactory and Government should be reminded that the need for disabled facilities grants was growing, while the funding allocation was not. The Director of Health and Housing was asked to consider pressing further the Borough Council's concerns and keeping local Members of Parliament informed on the difficulties which appeared to disadvantage residents.

RECOMMENDED: That

(1) the temporary suspension of DFG approvals, except in urgent cases, in order to assist the control of the expenditure and commitment be noted and endorsed;

(2) the disappointing position and approach taken by Russet Homes in respect of the request that they make a more meaningful contribution towards the cost of adaptations to the homes of their tenants be noted and the Director of Health and Housing be invited to continue discussions with Russet Homes to resolve the situation; and

(3) the increased 'bid' submitted as part of the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2008 for DFG funding in 2009/10 be noted and endorsed.

**SH
09/008**

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Decision Notice D090003MEM

Members were updated on how the North and West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership had performed since April 2008 and specifically what Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had achieved. The report outlined how the partnership had been operating and detailed some specific actions the Borough Council, as lead authority, intended to implement to protect future funding for the group. Also covered were the outcomes of a recent meeting with GOSE and an indication of how the programme would operate in 2009/10.

The Cabinet Member for Housing congratulated the Housing Service on their leadership of this Partnership recognising the level of responsibility and achievement.

RECOMMENDED: That

(1) the success of the North and West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership and within this the performance of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council be noted; and

(2) the proposed measures in paragraphs 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 of the report that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council intend to take as lead authority to protect and maximise current and future allocations from the Regional Housing Board be endorsed.

**SH
09/009**

DRAFT FIRE SAFETY PROTOCOL

Decision Notice D090004MEM

The report of the Director of Health and Housing updated Members on the Kent protocol for fire safety in housing between the Kent local housing authorities and the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority.

Following endorsement of the Kent protocol by all the local housing authorities in Kent and the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority the protocol would be adopted in early 2009. It was hoped that a launch event hosted by the KMFRA would then take place to promote the protocol to interested parties, for example the National Landlords Association and landlords.

Members welcomed this initiative recognising the importance of endorsing the protocol, especially as an effective tool against duplication of work.

RECOMMENDED: That the fire safety in housing Kent protocol between local housing authorities and the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority be noted and endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

**SH
09/010**

UPDATE ON HOUSING NEEDS SERVICE

The Director of Health and Housing updated Members following the return in-house on 17 March 2008 of the homelessness and housing register services, previously provided under contract by Russet Homes.

Members were advised that the Supporting People grant allocation referred to in the report at 1.4.1 had been confirmed as a £60,000 one off payment to assist vulnerable people.

Members thanked the Housing Service for the excellent work, advice and assistance provided to residents on a range of housing issues, recognising that the difficulties faced by local people in the current circumstances were likely to increase.

The significant achievement in temporarily reducing to zero the number of homeless households accommodated in bed and breakfast was acknowledged by Members.

The Advisory Board asked the Director of Health and Housing to remind the two local Members of Parliament of the difficulties facing homeowners in the Borough, especially as the Government's recently announced 'rescue schemes' appeared incapable of addressing real problems experienced by residents as the price cap threshold was ineffective in this Borough.

**SH
09/011**

UPDATE ON CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Members were reminded that all housing authorities and social housing landlords were required by Government to introduce Choice-based lettings for the allocation of social rented housing by 2010. The report of the Director of Health and Housing set out the progress in implementation of CBL through the Kent CBL Partnership following the signing of the Kent Choice Based Lettings Deed of Agreement.

A full Member briefing providing more information on Choice Based Lettings would be arranged in the near future.

**SH
09/012**

ENERGY EFFICIENCY UPDATE

The report of the Director of Health updated Members on the recently submitted twelfth annual progress report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs detailing the Council's progress on energy efficiency during 2007/08. A 28.95 per cent improvement in reducing energy usage across the Borough had been made during the period April 1996 to March 2008. The Council met its interim target to achieve a three per cent annual improvement in energy efficiency across all housing sectors. The report also gave details of a forthcoming Energy Saving Trust mailing campaign and the Council's Warm Homes Initiative.

Members were encouraged that the Council continued to demonstrate commitment to promoting affordable warmth through the energy initiatives outlined in the report. The results of the recent HECA survey confirmed that the Council had successfully met the energy saving performance target identified in the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

**SH
09/013**

DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Director of Health and Housing updated Members on the progress being made by the Council's Registered Social Landlord partners in providing new affordable housing in the Borough and summarised the programme for 2008/09 and 2009/10.

**SH
09/014**

EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

The external consultations responded to since the last meeting of the Advisory Board were noted by Members.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

**SH
09/015**

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

No items were considered in private.

The meeting ended at 2030 hours.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR
Housing**

Decision No: D090001MEM

Date: 5th January 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Economic Downturn Impact on Housing Market

(Joint report of Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing)

The effects of the current economic situation on the delivery of housing on significant sites in the borough were described. Short term changes to the tenure and delivery of affordable housing which sought to secure a supply of affordable housing into the medium term were explained.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that:

- 1) the ongoing impact of the economic downturn on the local housing market be noted;
- 2) the measures underway with housing association partners and developers in an effort to minimise the impact of the downturn on the supply of affordable housing be endorsed; and
- 3) the temporary arrangements to re-house residents displaced by the recent fire at the block of nine homes at Holborough Valley be noted.

As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 5 January 2009.

Signed Cabinet Member for J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 09 January 2009

This decision will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of 5 working days after publication unless it is called in.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR
Housing**

Decision No: D090002MEM

Date: 5th January 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Update on Disabled Facilities Grant Funding

(Joint report of Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing)

The report gave an update on the expenditure against the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget for 2008/09 and the actions taken to secure further funding and to control expenditure. In addition details were given of an increased bid submission for 2009/10 funding.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that:

- 1) the temporary suspension of DFG approvals, except in urgent cases, in order to assist the control of the expenditure and commitment be noted and endorsed;
- 2) the disappointing position and approach taken by Russet Homes in respect of the request that they make a more meaningful contribution towards the cost of adaptations to the homes of their tenants be noted and the Director of Health and Housing be invited to continue discussions with Russet Homes to resolve the situation; and
- 3) the increased 'bid' submitted as part of the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2008 for DFG funding in 2009/10 be noted and endorsed.

As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 5 January 2009.

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RECORD OF DECISION

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR
Housing**

Decision No: D090003MEM

Date: 5th January 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Housing Assistance

(Report of Director of Health and Housing)

The report updated the position on performance of the North and West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership since April 2008 and, specifically, the achievements of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. The report detailed some specific actions the Borough Council, as lead authority, intended to implement to protect future funding for the group. Reference was also made to the outcomes of a recent meeting with GOSE and an indication given of how the programme would operate in 2009/10.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that:

- 1) the success of the North and West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership and within this the performance of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council be noted; and
- 2) the proposed measures in paragraphs 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 of the report that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council intend to take as lead authority to protect and maximise current and future allocations from the Regional Housing Board be endorsed.

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Housing

Decision No: D090004MEM

Date: 5th January 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Draft Fire Safety Protocol

**(Report of Director of Health and Housing)
(Annex 1)**

The report gave an update on the Kent protocol for fire safety in housing between the Kent local housing authorities and the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that the fire safety in housing Kent protocol between local housing authorities and the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority be noted and endorsed.

As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 5 January 2009.

Signed Cabinet Member for J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

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