

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 18th May, 2009

Present: Cllr D J Cure (Chairman), Cllr Ms J A Atkinson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs B Brown, Cllr G Court, Cllr R D Lancaster and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Councillors Mrs Anderson, Baldock, Heslop and Worrall were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss Moloney and D Smith.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**SH
09/027 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Heslop declared a personal interest in the item on Choice Based Lettings as he was a trustee of the Bridge Trust.

**SH
09/028 MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on 23 February 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**SH
09/029 GLOSSARY**

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

**SH
09/030 PRESENTATION BY SHELTER ON THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON
HOUSING PROBLEMS DURING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN.**

Members received a presentation from Shelter giving their perspective on the housing problems being experienced during the economic downturn.

The main areas of concern for residents were debt surrounding council tax, rent and utilities payments with an increase in eviction from buy to let properties, repossessions, homeowners in negative equity, mortgage arrears and relationship breakdowns. The difficulties for those in private rented accommodation losing tenancies due to landlord repossessions and their limited legal rights were outlined.

Members recognised the importance of getting advice to those in need early whilst the benefits of the county court desk service, run in conjunction with the Borough Council, were acknowledged by Shelter.

The Advisory Board was reminded that Shelter operated a Mortgage Rescue Scheme and a Homeowners Support Scheme, designed for families experiencing an 'income shock' and welcomed referrals.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Shelter for their presentation, hard copies of which were available on request, and questions were invited.

In-depth discussion followed on building standards and the quality of affordable housing and the fact that RSLs did not purchase properties on private sector developments because of these factors. The difficulties of imposing higher restrictions to overcome these issues were recognised by Shelter.

The importance of adding to the supply of affordable housing and the benefits of having a development programme in place was noted. It was suggested worthwhile for some of the Borough Council's housing strategies and policies to be shared with Shelter for information.

Members were advised that the triggers behind homelessness were many and varied and difficult to predict and early intervention and advice was essential.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

**SH
09/031**

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION - DEPOSIT IN ADVANCE AND BOND SCHEME

Decision Notice D090060MEM

The joint report of the Director of Health and Housing and the Director of Finance set out proposals for ensuring that the Borough Council continued to offer an alternative to temporary accommodation enabling eligible customers to access good quality housing in the private rented sector, whilst minimising the level of financial exposure for the Council.

The report reminded Members that one of the main impediments to accessing accommodation in the private rented sector for people on low incomes was the need to pay a deposit. The current Rent and Deposit in Advance Scheme had enabled the Borough Council to avoid the long-term use of bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation for many homeless families. However, the potential cost of the scheme had become unsustainable. The scheme had recently undergone an internal audit with a comprehensive review of the Council's Rent and Deposit in Advance policy and its accompanying procedures.

Members were advised that the Department for Communities and Local Government had recently announced a one off payment of

£38,000 to supplement Tonbridge and Malling's homelessness grant, which would be used to offset homelessness and assist the funding of the Bond Scheme.

The Advisory Board accepted the fundamental importance of this Scheme not only to the Borough Council but to residents. The need to have robust systems in place to control levels of expenditure and protect budgets was recognised, as well as the need to ensure best practice in addressing homelessness prevention.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the review of the Rent and Deposit in Advance and the Deposit Bond Schemes, outlined in section 1.4 of the report, be endorsed;
- (2) the proposed budget for delivering the reviewed scheme for 2009/10, outlined in paragraphs 1.7.8 - 1.7.9 of the report, be approved;
- (3) authority be delegated to the Director of Health and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Chief Solicitor, to enter into a contract with the Supporting People Team that formally commits the Council to the Rent Deposit/Deposit Bond Scheme for people leaving Supporting People funded accommodation, as outlined in section 1.5 of the report;
- (4) the proposed approach for making best use of the additional Department for Communities and Local Government funding, outlined in paragraphs 1.7.4 - 1.7.5 of the report, be endorsed;
- (5) it be noted that the scheme would be subject to a further review in 18 months time;
- (6) the necessity to identify further funding or compensatory savings for 2010-2011, and subsequent years, be noted; and
- (7) the involvement of stakeholders, including private sector landlords and letting agents, in the scheme be encouraged through active engagement and communication and via various Boards and Forums.

**SH
09/032**

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP

Decision Notice D090061MEM

The Director of Health and Housing provided an update on what Tonbridge and Malling had achieved through the North and West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership since April 2008. The funding position for 2009/10 was confirmed and the actions being taken by the Borough Council, as the lead authority, to protect future funding for the partnership was explained.

Members congratulated Officers on their performance in the bid activities and thanked them for providing strong leadership in leading initiatives.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the good performance in delivering on the bid activities be noted; and
- (2) the approach to maximising the spending of the Partnership, explained in section 1.3 of the report including the role of the memorandum of understanding, be endorsed.

**SH
09/033**

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

Decision Notice D090062MEM

Members were updated on the final spend against the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget in 2008/09. The progress achieved through constructive dialogue with Russet Homes and their willingness to seek a solution to the growing budgetary problem and significant demands they placed on the DFG budget was outlined.

Members welcomed the proposal of a notional allocation to Russet Homes enshrined within a partnership agreement which would be reviewed after one year. This review would also assess whether the arrangements were creating a backlog of cases leading to additional pressure on the 2010/11 budget.

Members expressed concern at learning of the difficulties experienced by children waiting for occupational therapist assessments and adaptations, with waiting lists currently at two years. Members agreed that this situation was unacceptable and welcomed the Director of Health and Housing's offer of pursuing the issue and seeking a position statement from Children's Social Services. A report updating the position would be provided at the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the overspend against the 2008/09 DFG budget of £67,000 and how this will be met be noted;
- (2) the proposed notional allocation of £350,000 of the 2009/10 DFG budget on Russet Homes properties be noted and endorsed; and
- (3) the ongoing work to improve and adapt procedures at Russet Homes to reduce the demand on the DFG budget and to secure a long term viable solution to this issue be noted.

SH
09/034

SUPPORT TO HOUSEHOLDERS AFFECTED BY THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Decision Notice D090063MEM

The joint report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing summarised the Council's response to recent correspondence from the Chartered Institute of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association Group about support to householders affected by the economic downturn.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the measures summarised in the report as the Council's response to the current downturn in the local housing market be endorsed; and
- (2) regular update reports from the Director of Health and Housing be submitted to the Advisory Board.

SH
09/035

HOUSING STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE

Decision Notice D090064MEM

Members received the joint report of the Director of Health and Housing and the Cabinet Member for Housing which presented the draft Housing Strategy currently being developed as part of the 2009-2012 Sustainable Community Strategy. The report also summarised progress made towards achieving the objectives set out in the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2008-2009; proposed a timetable for the review of the Action Plan which would deliver the 2009-2012 Housing Strategy and proposed a number of short-term objectives and targets for the period prior to the adoption of the reviewed Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the draft Housing Strategy, outlined in section 1.2 of the report, be endorsed for the purposes of consultation;
- (2) the progress made in respect of the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2008-09, outlined in section 1.3 of the report, be noted;
- (3) the timetable for the review of the action plan that will deliver the 2009-2012 Housing Strategy, as outlined in section 1.4 of the report, be approved; and
- (4) the short term objectives for the period to September 2009, as outlined in section 1.5 of the report, be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

SH 09/036 YOUNG PERSONS ACCOMMODATION

Members noted the report which provided an update on the Council's proposals to provide supported housing for young people at risk.

SH 09/037 ALLOCATIONS SCHEME UPDATE

The Director of Health and Housing reported on the implementation of the amended housing allocations scheme in conjunction with the introduction of Choice Based Lettings.

SH 09/038 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS UPDATE

The report of the Director of Health and Housing reminded Members that all local 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 informed Members of the implementation of Choice-based lettings in Tonbridge and Malling with effect from 27 April 2009.

Members expressed concern that elderly and vulnerable residents might be impeded from submitting bids by lack of internet access. The ways of assisting vulnerable households in this situation were outlined including the possibility of having bids placed on their behalf by organisations. The Advisory Board was advised that Choice Based Lettings bids and processes were dealt with by one member of the housing team to provide continuity.

SH 09/039 GYPSY & TRAVELLERS - COLDHARBOUR SITE

Members were updated on the progress of the Coldharbour Project Board which was investigating various proposals for refurbishing and enhancing the current site in Aylesford.

SH 09/040 DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The report of 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 programmes for 2008/09 and 2009/10.

Officers were asked to consider that if any affordable housing units became available on a development they be offered to existing RSL partners active in the Borough, to ensure the Council benefited from nomination rights, rather than having external involvement.

Members suggested that a report on the different types of shared ownership schemes operated by the various RSLs be presented to a future meeting of the Advisory Board.

**SH
09/041**

SERVICE OF STATUTORY NOTICES

Members noted the statutory notices served since the last meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board.

**SH
09/042**

EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

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

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

**SH
09/043**

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

No items were considered in private.

The meeting ended at 2058 hours

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

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

Decision No: **D090060MEM**

Date: **18th May 2009**

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Homelessness Prevention - Deposit in Advance and Bond Scheme

**(Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and the Director of Finance)
(Annex 1)**

The report set out proposals, following a comprehensive review of the Council's Rent and Deposit in Advance policy, for ensuring that it continued to offer an alternative to temporary accommodation, enabling eligible customers to access good quality housing in the private rented sector, whilst minimising (as far as possible) the level of financial exposure for the Council.

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

- 1) the review of the Rent and Deposit in Advance and the Deposit Bond Schemes, outlined in section 1.4 of the report, be endorsed;
- 2) the proposed budget for delivering the reviewed scheme for 2009/10, outlined in paragraphs 1.7.8 - 1.7.9 of the report, be approved;
- 3) authority be delegated to the Director of Health and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Chief Solicitor, to enter into a contract with the Supporting People Team that formally commits the Council to the Rent Deposit/Deposit Bond Scheme for people leaving Supporting People funded accommodation, as outlined in section 1.5 of the report;
- 4) the proposed approach for making best use of the additional Department for Communities and Local Government funding, outlined in paragraphs 1.7.4 - 1.7.5 of the report, be endorsed;
- 5) it be noted that the scheme would be subject to a further review in 18 months time;
- 6) the necessity to identify further funding or compensatory savings for 2010-2011, and subsequent years, be noted; and
- 7) the involvement of stakeholders, including private sector landlords and letting agents, in the scheme be encouraged through active engagement and communication and via various Boards and Forums.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 18 May 2009.

Signed Cabinet Member for Mrs J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 22 May 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: D090061MEM

Date: 18th May 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Private Sector Renewal Partnership

(Report of the Director of Health and Housing)

The report provided an update on what Tonbridge and Malling had achieved through the North and West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership since April 2008. The report confirmed the funding position for 2009/10 and the actions being taken by the Borough Council, as the lead authority, to protect future funding for the partnership.

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

- 1) the good performance in delivering on the bid activities be noted; and
- 2) the approach to maximising the spending of the Partnership, explained in section 1.3 of the report including the role of the memorandum of understanding, be endorsed.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 18 May 2009.

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RECORD OF DECISION

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

Decision No: D090062MEM

Date: 18th May 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Disabled Facilities Grants

(Report of the Director of Health and Housing)

The report provided details of the final spend against the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget in 2008/09. It also updated the position on the discussions with Russet Homes regarding the significant demand being placed on the DFG budget.

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

- 1) the overspend against the 2008/09 DFG budget of £67,000 and how this will be met be noted;
- 2) the proposed notional allocation of £350,000 of the 2009/10 DFG budget on Russet Homes properties be noted and endorsed; and
- 3) the ongoing work to improve and adapt procedures at Russet Homes to reduce the demand on the DFG budget and to secure a long term viable solution to this issue be noted.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 18 May 2009.

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RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Housing

Decision No: D090063MEM

Date: 18th May 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Support to Householders Affected by the Economic Downturn

**(Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing)
(Annex 1)**

The report summarised the Council's response to recent correspondence from the Chartered Institute of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association Group about support to households affected by the economic downturn.

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

- 1) the measures summarised in the report as the Council's response to the current downturn in the local housing market be endorsed; and
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Housing**

Decision No: **D090064MEM**

Date: **18th May 2009**

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Housing Strategy Progress Update

(Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing)

(Annex 1)

(Annex 2)

(Annex 3)

The report presented the draft Housing Strategy that was currently being developed as part of the 2009-2012 Sustainable Community Strategy. It also:

~ summarised progress made towards achieving the objectives set out in the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2008-2009;
~ proposed a timetable for the review of the action plan which would deliver the 2009-2012 Housing Strategy; and
~ proposed a number of short-term objectives and targets for the period prior to the adoption of the reviewed Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

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