

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 9th November, 2009

Present: Cllr D J Cure (Chairman), Cllr Ms J A Atkinson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr Mrs E M Holland, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr D W Smith and Cllr Mrs C J Woodger.

Councillors Mrs Anderson, Balfour, Bolt, Coffin, N Heslop and Worrall were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Court and Mrs Simpson.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**SH
09/060**

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Worrall declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Private Sector Housing Update item on the grounds that he was a recipient of grant and withdrew from the meeting during its discussion.

Councillor N Heslop declared a personal interest in any items that might refer to the Bridge Trust on the grounds that he was a member of their Board.

**SH
09/061**

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on 20 July 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**SH
09/062**

GLOSSARY

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

**SH
09/063**

HOUSING SERVICE STRUCTURE CHART

The Director of Health and Housing submitted a Housing Service Structure chart for Member's information.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

**SH
09/064**

HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-2012:ACTION PLAN

Decision Notice D090149MEM

The joint report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing presented an updated draft of the Housing Strategy 2009-2012 Action Plan for final approval and implementation, following consultation with key partners and stakeholders.

Members welcomed the co-operation of registered social landlords in the development of local letting plans aimed at achieving a balanced community whilst meeting social need.

RECOMMENDED: That the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-2012 be approved.

**SH
09/065**

STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT 2008

Decision Notice D090150MEM

The joint report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing gave details of a proposed response to the recommendations of the 2008 West Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Members discussed the implications of a potential county-wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment and whether there would be any impact upon funding and resource for the borough.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council's approach to addressing the recommendations of the West Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment be noted and endorsed on the basis outlined in the report, subject to ensuring that the Borough Council maintains a rightful share and prioritisation of resources and funding.

**SH
09/066**

SEVERE WEATHER PROCEDURE FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS

Decision Notice D090151MEM

The joint report of the Director of Health and Housing and the Cabinet Member for Housing set out the proposed procedure for offering emergency accommodation to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather in the winter months.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed procedure, as outlined in the report, for the provision of services to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather in the winter months be endorsed.

SH
09/067

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE

Decision Notice D090152MEM

Members were provided with an update on progress by the Private Sector Housing Team to improve the housing conditions of residents and bring empty housing back into use. There continued to be pressure on the Disabled Facilities Grant budget and it was noted that Kent County Council would continue to be urged to give priority to outstanding children's assessments. In addition the Government Office of the South East would be advised of the importance of addressing these issues and of a budget shortfall in an effort to secure additional funding.

It was noted that a temporary waiting list was being maintained for some Housing Assistance Grants whilst a decision was reached on whether additional funding would be secured through under spends from elsewhere within the partnership or funded as part of the contract with Creative Environment Networks.

Members expressed concern at the long delays still being experienced by children in getting OT assessments and adaptations approved and asked that the importance of addressing this issue be emphasised to Kent County Council. The difficulties surrounding a funding shortfall were also discussed.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the actions being taken by Kent County Council to clear the backlog of children's cases awaiting assessment by an occupational therapist be noted;
- (2) the measures put in place to maintain the Housing Assistance Grant programme within budget be endorsed; and
- (3) the use of the under spend in Warm Homes Assistance to offset any overspend on Hard to Heat Homes Assistance during 2009/10 be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

SH
09/068

BUILDING BETTER LIVES: GETTING THE BEST FROM STRATEGIC HOUSING

The report considered the Audit Commission's National Report: 'Building Better Lives: Getting the best from strategic housing' (September 2009) which presented the findings of research into the strategic housing function of local authorities. It outlined the background to the report and identified its key findings.

Members noted that failure to consider this research could compromise the quality of the Council's Housing Service or judgements made

externally on the Service.

Members discussed the recommendations surrounding effective partnerships and funding, recognising that the Borough Council had already negotiated and established successful partnerships with registered social landlords and local strategic partners.

SH
09/069

HOUSING AND REGENERATION ACT 2008

Members were informed of the key components of the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act. The Act was in two distinct sections, the first describing the creation of the Homes and Communities Agency and the delivery of more affordable homes. The second described the creation of the Tenant Services Authority which sought to empower tenants and give them more choice over their housing environment.

SH
09/070

HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

The Director of Health and Housing updated Members on the activity of the Housing Options, Homelessness and Housing Register Services.

Members noted that the ongoing provision of the free sheet publication for Choice Based Lettings was being reconsidered. It was explained that most applicants throughout Kent chose to bid via the internet and the removal of the free sheet was recognised as a key factor in reducing costs. Members were reassured that no-one, especially vulnerable people and hard to reach groups, would be excluded from accessing services and that personalised information sheets would be made available to vulnerable users. The benefit of providing 'bespoke' information to local residents was outlined with appropriate support mechanisms being available.

SH
09/071

STRATEGY AND ENABLING UPDATE

The report updated Members on the progress being made by the Council's Registered Social Landlord partners in providing new affordable housing in the Borough, summarised the programmes for 2009/10 to 2011/12 and described the progress on housing strategy matters.

Discussion followed on the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy with Members raising concerns that funding could be diverted away from West Kent. Confusion was also expressed at County involvement especially as responsibility for the housing function rested with district councils, who developed and implemented individual housing strategies for this purpose. The need to remind the County Council that areas of deprivation requiring support could be found throughout the county was acknowledged as highly important.

**SH
09/072** **COLDHARBOUR GYPSY SITE**

The Director of Health and Housing updated Members on the Coldharbour Project Improvement Board's recent actions in seeking to expand the existing provision at the Aylesford site.

**SH
09/073** **EXTERNAL CONSULTATION**

Members noted the external consultations responded to since the last meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

**SH
09/074** **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

**SH
09/075** **SERVICE OF STATUTORY NOTICES
(Reason: LGA 1972 - Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business
affairs of any particular person)**

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

The meeting ended at 2109 hours

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Housing

Decision No: D090149MEM

Date: 9th November 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Housing Strategy 2009-2012:Action Plan

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

Following consultation with key partners and stakeholders the report presented an updated draft of the Housing Strategy 2009-2012 Action Plan for final approval and implementation.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-2012 be approved.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 9 November 2009.

Signed Cabinet Member for Mrs J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 13 November 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: D090150MEM

Date: 9th November 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008

(Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing, Cabinet Member for Housing, Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure and Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation)

The report gave details of a proposed response to the recommendations of the 2008 West Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that the Council's approach to addressing the recommendations of the West Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment be noted and endorsed on the basis outlined in the report, subject to ensuring that the Borough Council maintains a rightful share and prioritisation of resources and funding.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 9 November 2009.

Signed Cabinet Member for Mrs J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

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RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Housing

Decision No: D090151MEM

Date: 9th November 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Severe Weather Procedure for Rough Sleepers

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

The report set out the proposed procedure for offering emergency accommodation to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather in the winter months.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that the proposed procedure, as outlined in the report, for the provision of services to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather in the winter months be endorsed.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 9 November 2009.

Signed Cabinet Member for Mrs J Anderson
Housing:

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR

Housing

Decision No: D090152MEM

Date: 9th November 2009

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Private Sector Housing Update

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

(Annex 1)

(Annex 2)

The report provided an update on progress by the Private Sector Housing Team to improve the housing conditions of residents and bring empty housing back into use. There continued to be pressure on the Disabled Facilities Grant budget and it was noted that Kent County Council would continue to be urged to give priority to outstanding children's assessments. In addition the Government Office of the South East would be advised of the importance of addressing these issues and of a budget shortfall in an effort to secure additional funding.

It was noted that a temporary waiting list was being maintained for some Housing Assistance Grants whilst a decision was reached on whether additional funding would be secured through under spends from elsewhere within the partnership or funded as part of the contract with Creative Environment Networks.

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

- 1) the actions being taken by Kent County Council to clear the backlog of children's cases awaiting assessment by an occupational therapist be noted;
- 2) the measures put in place to maintain the Housing Assistance Grant programme within budget be endorsed; and
- 3) the use of the under spend in Warm Homes Assistance to offset any overspend on Hard to Heat Homes Assistance during 2009/10 be endorsed.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 9 November 2009.

[Councillor Worrall declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a recipient of grant and withdrew from the meeting during its consideration.]

Signed Cabinet Member for Mrs J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: M Worrall

Signed Chief Executive: D Hughes

Date of publication: 13 November 2009

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