

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

16 July 2007

**Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for
Housing**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 PLANNING FOR THE DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN RURAL
AREAS**

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress made in enabling the provision of affordable rural housing and seeks approval for a two-year programme of rural housing needs surveys.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board on 17 July 2006, Members agreed to endorse a parish-led approach to commissioning rural housing needs surveys with Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). A letter was therefore sent to all the parish councils inviting them to receive a presentation from ACRK and to decide whether a rural housing needs survey would help, in the longer term, in addressing the local need for affordable housing.

1.1.2 Six parishes had presentations and the following five have confirmed their interest in a survey being undertaken:

Addington (700 population)

East Peckham (3,100)

Hildenborough (4,500)

West Malling (2,350)

West Peckham (350)

1.2 Funding the Programme of Surveys

1.2.1 For surveys conducted on parish populations below 3,000 ACRK make no charge. However, a charge is levied on populations of 3,000 or more, given the increased

volume and cost of survey work. To offset these costs 50 per cent is funded by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

- 1.2.2 The situation we have therefore is that three of the parishes interested could be surveyed at no charge but there would be a charge for the remaining two larger parishes, with the actual costs dependent on size. Following discussion, ACRK has agreed to conduct the two-year programme of surveys for a total cost (after deducting a contribution from DEFRA) of £4,000. This could be split over two years – i.e. £2k per annum. It is proposed to approach the two larger parishes for a contribution towards these costs. The Council may be able to make a contribution from Planning Delivery Grant. However, to ensure the rolling programme continues to be funded in the longer term, the resource implications would need to be factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

1.3 Two-Year Survey Programme

- 1.3.1 The following programme has provisionally been agreed with ACRK:

<u>Year 1 (2007/08)</u>	<u>Year 2 (2008/09)</u>
Addington	Hadlow
East Peckham	Hildenborough
West Peckham	West Malling

- 1.3.2 Officers will need to approach those parishes with populations in excess of 3,000 to secure a financial contribution towards the cost of those surveys.

1.4 Conclusion

- 1.4.1 Failure to plan for the affordable housing needs of rural communities could impact on the long term social sustainability and economic viability of an area. The Housing and Market Needs Assessment Survey and the parishes themselves have identified a need for affordable housing in rural areas. A programme of rural housing needs surveys is therefore required to determine more precisely the nature of this need.
- 1.4.2 The Local Development Framework (LDF) exceptions policy would provide the planning basis on which to proceed on the strength of justified housing need although the careful selection and acceptability of specific sites will be critical as will the willingness of landowners to bring sites forward.
- 1.4.3 We will continue to promote the development of affordable housing in rural areas with those parishes who have not currently expressed an interest in undertaking a local survey.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 Under the law relating to bias in decision making, Members, especially those who are members of parish councils, will need to exercise particular care when dealing with specific proposals which will subsequently come before an Area Planning Committee of which they are a member. Individual Members can obtain advice on their particular circumstances from the Council's Monitoring Officer.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The initial programme of surveys relies upon a financial contribution by parish councils with populations over 3,000.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 None arising from this report.

1.8 Recommendations

Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- 1.8.1 **ENDORSE** the two-year programme of rural housing needs studies as set out in this report; and
- 1.8.2 **CONSIDER** the ongoing costs of commissioning rural housing needs surveys during the next budgetary cycle.

The Director of Health and Housing confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Lawrence Dey

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing

Councillor Mrs Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing