

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD**

**16 July 2007**

**Report of the Director of Health and Housing**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 ENERGY EFFICIENCY – WARM HOMES IN THE BOROUGH**

**Summary**

**This report updates Members on the Warm Homes Initiative being undertaken by the private sector housing team in partnership with the Kent Energy Centre as part of their activity programme for 2007/08.**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 The Private Sector House Condition Survey (PSHCS) 2006 of housing in the Borough identified that those dwellings constructed before 1919 were found to be more likely to fail to meet the energy efficiency requirements of the Decent Homes Standard.
- 1.1.2 Similarly, the PSHCS and the English House Condition Survey 2004 identified that persons aged 55 years and above, and those on a low income are more likely to be in fuel poverty (where more than 10 per cent of their disposable income is spent on fuel bills).
- 1.1.3 On the strength of this evidence the Council developed a Warm Homes Assistance grant, targeting pre 1919 housing stock and the fuel poor. Details of the Warm Homes Assistance grant were presented to Members at the February 2007 meeting of this Board. The aim being to provide funding for adequate heating and insulation to homeowners.
- 1.1.4 This assistance is not available to housing associations or registered social landlords. It is only available if all other forms of funding have been investigated, for example the WarmFront grant available from central government.

**1.2 Warm Homes Initiative**

- 1.2.1 A separate but related initiative entitled 'The Warm Homes Initiative' involves a targeted promotional mail-out to those homeowners where there are a high proportion of pre 1919 constructed homes, older persons and those in receipt of benefits. It also includes visits by Kent Energy Centre (KEC) surveyors to

promote energy efficiency measures to coincide with Energy Savings week in October 2007.

- 1.2.2 In addition, two versions of a Warm Homes booklet have been developed in partnership with the KEC. The booklets provide referral information and key facts on fuel poverty, to help both Members and key agencies to direct vulnerable hard to reach residents to appropriate sources of help.
- 1.2.3 Both versions of the booklet give brief descriptions and contact details for appropriate agencies that can assist residents to improve the comfort of their home, for example utilising the Warm Homes Assistance grant, and reducing their energy costs. Additionally, the Members' version gives information on how fuel poverty links to existing strategies on a local, regional and national basis.
- 1.2.4 The Warm Homes booklet will be distributed to all Members during week commencing 30 July 2007. The general version will be distributed to parish councils, Council staff who undertake visits in the Borough, and other appropriate agencies/enquirers who provide an essential link between vulnerable, hard to reach people and the agencies that can help provide decent warm homes. A list of the areas of the Borough to be targeted by this initiative will be available to Members in due course.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

- 1.3.1 The Warm Homes Initiative will provide key persons with information to allow them to direct residents to appropriate services for energy efficiency and fuel poverty advice. It will also help residents to improve the thermal comfort and the energy efficiency of their homes, and as a consequence, reduce their household expenditure on energy costs.

### **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 councils are under a duty to reduce carbon emissions and hence improve energy efficiency of residential dwellings across the Borough.

### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 The Warm Homes Assistance grant is funded utilising the recent windfall allocation from the Regional Housing Board. The Warm Homes Initiative is funded as part of the Kent Energy Centre Activity Programme.

## **1.6 Risk Assessment**

### 1.6.1 None

Background papers:

contact: Hazel Skinner

Private Sector Housing Initiatives Report to this Board in May 2007.

Housing Assistance Policy Report to this Board in February 2007.

John Batty  
Director of Health and Housing