

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

7 January 2008

**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 HOUSING STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE & REVISED ACTION PLAN

Summary

This report updates Members on the good progress made in delivering those targets contained in the action plan to the Housing Strategy 2005-2008. A revised action plan is proposed for 2008/09 while the review of the Housing Strategy is undertaken.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This report updates Members on the progress made against each target contained in the action plan up to 30 September 2007. The current Housing Strategy and Action Plan comes to an end at the end of March 2008. At the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board on 16 July 2007, Members agreed to defer the review of the Housing Strategy until 2008/09. A revised action plan is therefore proposed to reflect new areas of service delivery and to bring the existing plan up to date.

1.1.2 It is good practice to keep our many partners apprised of progress in meeting our targets. Three progress reports were circulated to stakeholders in November 2005, October 2006 and February 2007. The updated action plan and revised action plan will be distributed to partners in January 2008 following Members' endorsement; comments on service delivery will then be invited.

1.2 Update on Progress in Meeting Existing Action Plan Targets

1.2.1 Progress made against each target can be found in the update document at **[Annex 1]** of this report which provides a position statement as at 30 September 2007. The updated action plan and revised plan for 2008/09 will be distributed to partners this month following Members' endorsement.

- 1.2.2 We hope Members will be generally pleased with performance. Where performance has been exceeded we have set more challenging targets. Similarly some targets have been revised down or deleted where we now have more up to date information – for example, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) where the Private Sector House Condition Survey and the introduction of mandatory licensing has made it clear that the number of HMOs in the Borough needing to be prioritised for an annual inspection is less than the current target.

1.3 Comments on Revised Targets

- 1.3.1 A number of targets have been deleted. In some cases this is because the respective BVPI has been deleted e.g. 'Reduce the average length of stay in bed and breakfast' (BVPI 183a). In other cases, the targets have been deleted because they reflect performance of our partners e.g. the role of the HomeBuy Agent in managing the HomeBuy database that records interest from key and essential workers in the borough. Additionally, some of the targets covered areas where it is difficult to influence performance e.g. mediation and advocacy targets given the fact that these interventions are not appropriate in all instances.

Priority 1: Provision of Affordable Housing

- 1.3.2 The revised targets have been amended to reflect the government's definition of affordable housing. The two existing affordable housing targets have been refined to reflect the Governments planning definitions, namely social rent and intermediate affordable housing. The term 'intermediate housing' covers a range of low cost affordable housing products including shared ownership and discounted housing for sale.
- 1.3.3 It is suggested that the existing target number 3 which seeks to target 20 per cent of new low cost home ownership provision (e.g. shared ownership) towards key and essential workers, is dropped. While the target has been exceeded over the life of the strategy it has proven incredibly difficult to track performance. This is because of the new Homebuy products introduced by the government and the county wide application arrangements (reported to the Board in October 2006) which mean we are reliant on information updates from the Kent Homebuy Agent (Moat Housing Group). The amended target number 2 (see **[Annex 2]**) will make it easier for your officers to compile the data and will be clearer for Members to track performance. The Council has entered into a nominations agreement with Moat Homes to ensure that the Housing team are still able to prioritise the applicants nominated to developing RSLs for New Build HomeBuy properties. Priority is given to applicants living or working in the Borough to ensure assistance continues to be targeted at local employees.

Priority 2: Tackling Homelessness

- 1.3.4 The revised targets seek to take account of the Council's new responsibilities from 1 April 2008 with the return of homelessness and the housing register from Russet Homes. Targets have therefore been included to track performance in reducing

the level of homelessness acceptances and an increased emphasis on reducing the use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation. Members should note that the substantive actions under this priority are now incorporated within the Joint West Kent Homelessness Strategy. Future reports to the Board will advise Members of progress and performance.

Priority 3: Private Sector Renewal and Energy Efficiency

- 1.3.5 A new target has been added to track performance in approving disabled facilities grant applications to achieve parity with the standard for housing assistance grants.
- 1.3.6 In light of the Council's key priority around climate change a new target has been added to achieve renewable energy schemes in the borough.
- 1.3.7 The housing assistance grant has been disaggregated so that Members can better understand where capital investment is being directed across the three key strands of the grant policy;
- helping first time buyers;
 - creating warm homes; and
 - improving homes up to the 'Decent' standard.

Priority 4: Assisting Vulnerable Households

- 1.3.8 An additional target has been added to enable those that are ready to do so, to move on from a supported housing environment.

Addressing Crime Reduction

- 1.3.9 These remain unchanged.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Housing Strategy is a statutory requirement under section 7 of the Local Government Act 2003.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 None

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 None

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 That **CABINET** is requested to **NOTE** progress in performance against the targets contained in the current Housing Strategy Action Plan and to **ENDORSE** the revised action plan as set out at **[ANNEX 2]** for the period 2008/09.

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