

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

19 May 2008

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE

Summary

This report sets out the timetable for the production of a new Housing Strategy covering the period 2009-2012. This coincides with the review of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy this year.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the meeting of the Board last July, Members agreed to defer the review of the Housing Strategy until this year. The two key reasons for this were the return of housing register and homelessness service in-house and the government's White Paper '*Strong and Prosperous Communities*' that suggested local housing strategies should be co-ordinated with the development of the local sustainable community strategy (SCS). The review is timely as Members will be aware that the Council's SCS is also under review this year.

1.1.2 The current Housing Strategy 2005-08 has come to an end but a revised action plan was endorsed by Members in January 2008 to cover the intervening period until the new strategy is adopted.

1.2 Housing Strategy Document

1.2.1 Consideration has been given to whether there is a need for a stand alone housing strategy or whether any broad housing strategy elements should be included in the revised SCS. Previous discussions with the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) signalled a change in direction in favour of a greater focus on high quality action plans flowing from strategic priorities set out in community strategies. Additionally, the 'Fit for Purpose' test which was the benchmark that strategies had to meet will no longer be applied.

1.2.2 GOSE has recently confirmed that our approach is "*at the leading edge of current thinking on this issue and in advance of the guidance from government.*" The new housing strategy guidance for local authorities that has been under development is undergoing some finalisation and should be published by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in the summer. Early indications are that a new style of

strategy founded on our strategic housing role is needed. The strategic housing role is an important element in the context of 'place shaping' described as "*the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens.*" Central and local government are seeking to maximise the contribution that housing can play in shaping places so this concept needs to be a common thread that runs through the housing strategy and SCS building on good practice in this area. Three specific aspects of the strategic housing role in place shaping are:

- understanding how housing markets and neighbourhoods work, including the need for a rational and holistic approach;
- partnerships within authorities that build a corporate response, partnerships with the private sector that create capital value, and partnerships with communities that build social capital; and
- delivery, building up from a secure platform of understanding and partnership working, but also scanning the policy horizon and doing things differently so as to have the biggest impact for the future.

1.2.3 The housing strategy needs to be anchored in the SCS drawing its evidence and context from this overarching strategy. It will be important, however, to ensure that the SCS presents housing as a powerful thread or theme, including acknowledging the many links and agendas it crosses over/contributes to.

1.2.4 A further consideration is how the district-level document and action plan will take account of those of our west Kent neighbours, reflecting a sub-regional picture. We await further guidance on this issue to understand how much prominence this should be given but will be best placed to address this following the emergence of the sub-regional picture as evidenced by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) study results, due this July.

1.2.5 It is proposed, therefore, to formulate a concise housing strategy document, presenting an action plan drawn up to reflect local priorities and solutions. A focus will be maintained on the following key priorities:

Key Housing Priorities

- 1) Provision of Affordable Housing;
- 2) Tackling (and preventing) Homelessness;
- 3) Private Sector Renewal and Energy Efficiency;
- 4) Assisting Vulnerable Households; and
- 5) Addressing Crime Reduction

1.3 Timetable

1.3.1 The new strategy needs to be adopted by April 2009. The following implementation timetable is, therefore, suggested:

June 2008	Draft framework, contextual information, data collection etc.
July 2008	First draft of Strategic Housing Market Assessment findings available Consult with stakeholders on key priorities and outline document
August 2008	CLG guidance published
August/Sept 2008	Prepare first draft
6 October 2008	Draft strategy to Strategic Housing Advisory Board
7 October 2008	Housing Forum consultation event
23 February 2009	Final draft to Strategic Housing Advisory Board
24 February 2009	Final draft to Policy Overview Committee
1 April 2009	Final version to Cabinet & adoption

1.3.2 Members are requested to note the proposed timetable and approach under consideration.

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 From a reputational view point as well as ensuring our housing strategy continues to provide a sound basis from which we plan to meet housing need, it is important that we maintain a leading edge position in strategy development and service delivery terms.

Background papers:

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Nil

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