

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

6 October 2008

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

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 USE OF REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD FUNDING 2006-08

Summary

This report updates Members on how the Regional Housing Board (RHB) funding for 2006-08 was spent in improving the condition and energy efficiency of the private sector housing stock within the Borough.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Members will be aware of the windfall capital allocation totalling £503,000 the Council received in 2006/07 and 2007/08 of from the Regional Housing Board (RHB). We were one of 22 local authorities to receive funding on the back of the results of our Private Sector House Condition Survey (2000) which indicated levels of unfitness in the private sector above the criteria set by the RHB.

1.2 Progress

1.2.1 The total expenditure for 2006-07 on discretionary housing assistance grants was £86,000. Following the introduction of the new housing assistance policy which included the Warm Homes Assistance and First Time Buyers grants, expenditure increased in 2007-08 to £377,000. This resulted in a total spend of £463,000 for the 2006-08 period.

1.2.2 The underspend from the allocation for 2006-08 has been carried over to this financial year to provide additional funding for the 2008-09 housing assistance grant expenditure.

1.2.3 As reported to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) in July this year, the success of our housing assistance policy is linked to the thorough assessment of the issues affecting our private sector. Significant to this assessment was the findings from the private sector house condition survey. This provided the baseline evidence for our different forms of financial assistance particularly the Warm Home Assistance grant. This funds an energy efficient source of heating and effective insulation e.g. cavity wall and loft insulation, to those people or whose properties meet certain criteria, such as

- persons aged over 55 years; or
- persons in receipt of one or more income or disability related benefit; or
- properties constructed pre 1919 and in council tax bands A-D.

1.2.4 The breakdown of how the RHB funding was spent and the return to GOSE on improving private sector stock is shown in **[Annex 1]**,

1.3 Conclusion

1.3.1 The adoption of the housing assistance policy based on local evidence has enabled us to tailor financial assistance to target local housing conditions and help those identified as being in need. This combined with the systematic approach to promotion of our various forms of financial assistance has resulted in the significant increase in uptake during the 2007-08 period and hence the improvements to residents homes. Failure to ensure grant funding is properly and prudently spent in furtherance of the Councils policies to address improvements needed in the private sectors stock would adversely affect the Council's reputation and ability to secure future funding.

1.3.2 The progress made by the Council in assisting residents improve their homes, and the further development of the Council's housing assistant policies., has provided an excellent platform for the activities for which grant funding from has been awarded by the RHB for the period 2008-11.

Background papers:

contact: Hazel Skinner

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing

Councillor Mrs Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing