

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

18 May 2009

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS UPDATE

Summary

All local housing authorities and social housing landlords are required by Government to introduce Choice-based lettings (CBL) for the allocation of social rented housing by 2010. This report informs Members of the implementation of CBL in Tonbridge and Malling with effect from 27 April 2009.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Members will recall that CBL is delivered in Kent by *Kent Homechoice*. This is a partnership of the twelve district, borough and city councils, and the majority of the county's stock-holding Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The twelve authorities have implemented CBL in various phases across Kent from July 2008, with Tonbridge and Malling going live in the final phase.

1.1.2 Over the past four months, a detailed implementation programme has been followed to ensure the smooth transition to CBL. This included a number of well attended briefings for staff, Members, customers and other stakeholders, a CBL Open Day and training for front-line staff.

1.2 Vulnerable applicants

1.2.1 An important part of the process was the identification of vulnerable households who may not be able to participate in CBL due to disability, frailty, isolated locality or difficulties in accessing information or placing bids. Every applicant was sent a questionnaire to help to identify those who may need assistance with the bidding process or wish to nominate an agency, relative or carer to bid on their behalf. Applicants identified as needing assistance will be carefully monitored to ensure that they are actively participating in the bidding process for suitable properties as they become advertised.

- 1.2.2 Approximately 160 questionnaires were returned, and all applicants returning one were contacted to establish what additional assistance would be required. Most of these were given a more detailed explanation of the bidding process, and as a result felt confident in their ability to understand and participate in CBL. A small minority will need to be closely monitored and given appropriate assistance.

1.3 Data Transfer

- 1.3.1 Data was successfully transferred from the Universal Housing database to the Locata system operated by Kent Homechoice, incorporating the changes in the allocations scheme to a banding scheme. All applicants were sent a welcome pack from Locata, including a detailed user guide giving details of where to obtain a copy of the fortnightly property freesheets, and a step by step guide to all of the bidding methods.
- 1.3.2 Tenants of Russet Homes were previously registered on a separate Transfer List maintained by Russet Homes. The Transfer List has now been closed, and all current transfer applicants have joined the Council's Housing Register. In accordance with Russet Homes transfer led approach, a proportion of properties advertised each fortnight will only be available for Russet tenants.

1.4 Locata Activity Reports

Source of bids made per edition of freesheet

Issue No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Coupon	42	82	24	29	46	44	49	51	148	171	104
Phone	22	40	8	31	42	30	52	43	88	64	58
SMS	47	38	22	35	32	29	29	30	61	74	45
Staff	54	134	21	65	42	81	53	53	156	125	126
Web	861	1162	647	1111	979	1265	1196	1342	2679	2929	3137
Grand total	1026	1456	722	1271	1141	1449	1379	1519	3132	3363	3476

Issue No.	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total bids	% of bids
Coupon	127	122	220	191	209	240	245	173	2317	3.57%
Phone	104	93	118	89	156	163	124	166	1491	2.30%
SMS	70	33	111	83	134	115	107	95	1190	1.84%
Staff	265	191	303	235	391	392	444	297	3428	5.29%
Web	3853	2885	4786	4350	5504	5317	6175	6213	56391	87.00%
Grand total	4419	3324	5538	4948	6394	6227	7095	6944	64817	100.00%

Breakdown of bids by bid method against age of oldest household member

Age Band	Coupon	Web	Telephone	SMS	Staff	Number of Bids
16-19	0.67%	95.01%	0.67%	1.46%	2.20%	2404
20-29	1.61%	92.68%	0.98%	1.71%	3.02%	20880
30-39	2.59%	91.16%	1.34%	1.78%	3.13%	14414
40-49	3.89%	86.15%	2.94%	2.28%	4.68%	10736
50-59	5.31%	79.28%	5.42%	2.88%	7.11%	5685
60-69	10.23%	73.61%	3.97%	1.24%	10.96%	4615
70-79	9.00%	70.34%	5.63%	0.19%	14.83%	2077
80-89	6.69%	58.81%	7.96%	0.11%	26.43%	942
90-99	0.00%	44.62%	7.69%	10.00%	37.69%	130
Average	3.50%	87.26%	2.30%	1.83%	5.09%	61883

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 All local housing authorities and social landlords are required to introduce CBL by 2010

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 The development of CBL through Kent Homechoice has been significantly more cost-effective than developing a Tonbridge and Malling specific scheme, which would have resulted in far higher development and running costs.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 None arising from this report

Background papers:

contact: Lynn Wilders

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing