

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

20 July 2009

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 **WEST KENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY: PROGRESS UPDATE**

Summary

This report summarises progress made towards achieving the objectives set out in the West Kent Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. It also proposes a timetable for the review of the joint strategy and action plan.

1.1 **West Kent Homelessness Strategy Action Plan**

1.1.1 The *West Kent Homelessness Strategy: Towards 2010* was developed in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council, and was endorsed for adoption by Members in July 2007.

1.1.2 Progress against each objective in the Action Plan is summarised at **[Annex 1]**. It should be noted that during 2008, due to the very detailed nature of the Action Plan, ten objectives were prioritised over and above the remaining 25. These were objectives 1, 3, 4, 6, 13, 18, 24, 25, 26, and 27. For ease of reference they are also annotated on the attached Action Plan with an asterisk.

1.1.3 In terms of performance against the full action plan, of significant note is:

- § the reduction in the number of households accepted as homeless (objective one)
- § review of the allocations policy (objective 13)
- § the implementation of the Kent Choice-Based Lettings scheme and the Vulnerable Persons Strategy (objective 18)
- § the review of the Deposit Bond Scheme (Objective 24).

1.2 Review of West Kent Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan

- 1.2.1 The current joint homelessness strategy was developed as a three-year strategy in 2007 and would therefore have been due for review in July 2010. Progress against priorities in the strategy is monitored on a regular basis by a multi-agency group including the three local authorities plus local partners and stakeholders.
- 1.2.2 It is proposed that a full review of the homelessness strategy be deferred until July 2011, with a refresh of the action plan to cover the twelve month period from July 2010. One of the main advantages of this approach would be to align West Kent with the other Kent authorities that produced three year strategies from July 2008.
- 1.2.3 A view on this proposal has been obtained from the CLG Specialist Advisor for Homelessness who has confirmed that their only requirement is that homelessness strategies be renewed in accordance with the requirements of the *Homelessness Act 2002* - i.e. every five years from July 2003.
- 1.2.4 The fact that this duty is disapplied to the Council by virtue of its excellent status (see section 1.3) does not alter the commitment to maintaining a current homelessness strategy and action plan.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 The *Homelessness Act 2002* places a statutory duty on all local authorities to publish a homelessness strategy, unless this duty has been disapplied by the *Local Authorities Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) Order 2005*. This order disapplies the duty to local authorities that are rated as excellent.
- 1.3.2 The three West Kent authorities are all rated as excellent, and as such need not publish a homelessness strategy. However, none of the authorities consider the absence of a homelessness strategy to represent good practice.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 It is hoped that the development of a joint homelessness strategy for 2011 can be contained within existing budgets.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Failure to develop a homelessness strategy and action plan will compromise the Council's ability to effectively tackle homelessness.

1.6 Recommendations

CABINET is RECOMMENDED to:

- 1.6.1 **NOTE** the progress made in respect of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2007-10 (section 1.1).

1.6.2 **APPROVE** the timetable for the review of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy and action plan (section 1.2).

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: Janet Walton

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing

Councillor Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing