

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

9 November 2009

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 STRATEGY AND ENABLING UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress being made by the Council's Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners in providing new affordable housing in the Borough, and summarises the programmes for 2009/10 to 2011/12. The report goes on to describe the progress on housing strategy matters.

- 1.1.1 The effective negotiation, planning and delivery of affordable housing forms one of the key priorities of the Council's housing service. Allied to this is the need to track and monitor the progress of RSLs in delivering new schemes. Failure to secure a steady supply of new homes has a direct knock-on effect on the levels of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation or bed and breakfast. Members will be aware that the Council is under a duty not to house homeless families with children in bed and breakfast except in an emergency, and then for a period not exceeding six weeks.
- 1.1.2 While we are dependent on our partners to ensure timely delivery of new housing, the Council also has a role to play in tracking performance. This is important to ensure that any difficulties arising on new schemes are highlighted early on and corrective action taken.
- 1.1.3 Set out at **[Annex 1]** is a monitoring spreadsheet showing the completed schemes in the year to date and the development programme to 2011/12. The table identifies:
- the scheme address;
 - RSL provider;
 - start on site (SoS);
 - total number of units to be provided (rent and/or shared ownership);
 - detailed split of rent and shared ownership units;

- expected date of completion; and
- information on progress.

1.1.4 Members should be aware that details on some schemes may alter where planning permission has yet to be secured. The number of units to be provided is therefore an indicative figure for strategic purposes, pending confirmation of final scheme details. As new schemes come forward these will be also be added to the schedule.

1.2 Homes and Communities Agency Funding Allocations

1.2.1 Members will be aware that the Homes & Communities Agency moved to a system of Continuous Market Engagement (CME) this year for bids under the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP).

Table 1 – Continuous Market Engagement Bids

RSL	Tenure	Scheme	No. Units	Grant	Bid Date
Town & Country Housing Group	32 Social Rent 60 Shared Ownership	Ashby's Yard	92	£6,134,000	September 2009

1.3 Homes and Communities Agency HomeBuy Direct Funding Allocations

1.3.1 Members will recall that in September 2008 the Government announced the creation of "HomeBuy Direct". This product is an equity loan that is designed to help applicants buy outright a newly built property on selected schemes. The loan is equally funded by the Homes and Communities Agency and the developer, and used by applicants in addition to their conventional mortgage loan and any savings.

Table 2 – HomeBuy Direct Allocations

Developer	Tenure	Scheme	No. Units	Grant	Bid Date
Persimmon	Market	Carpenters Lane, Hadlow	6	£216,900	September 2009

1.4 Kent & Medway Housing Strategy Update

1.4.1 Members will recall the emergence of the Kent Housing Strategy, which is now titled the Kent & Medway Housing Strategy. The development of the Strategy itself is a commitment in the Kent Regeneration Framework, and is being led by a Housing Task Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of Medway Council and

which reports to the Kent Economic Board (KEB). The Director of Health and Housing also attends the KEB Housing Task Group.

- 1.4.2 The stated ambition for the project is to develop a “fit for purpose Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway that provides strategic direction, innovation and actions as a response to the huge diversity of housing need and opportunities across Kent and Medway”.
- 1.4.3 The Chief Executive of Medway Council presented a report describing the parameters of the strategy and the involvement of the Task Group to the Kent Chief Executive’s meeting in June 2009. A briefing on the purpose and processes involved in developing the strategy was presented to the Leaders and Chief Executives meeting (LACE) on the 28th September 2009.
- 1.4.4 The Kent Housing Group organising a briefing on 13 October for lead Members in Kent, that was also attended by David Edwards the South East Regional Director of the HCA. The briefing was an opportunity for lead Members across the County to be engaged in the strategy development process and to voice various thoughts and concerns about the direction and content of the Strategy. This Council was represented by the Leader, Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation.
- 1.4.5 A Strategic Housing Advisor has been appointed to support the KEB Housing Task Group who is currently in the process of orchestrating various “Task and Finish Groups” to complete the actions on the document’s strategic themes. A consultant has also been appointed to undertake the supporting Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Kent that will be used for the evidence base.
- 1.4.6 A draft of the Kent & Medway Housing Strategy is scheduled for consultation in March 2010.

1.5 Rural Housing Needs Surveys

- 1.5.1 Members will recall that the Council commissioned the group *Action With Communities in Rural Kent* (ACRK) to work with local parish councils to perform a rolling programme of Rural Housing Needs studies in the Borough. The initial reports for West Malling and Addington have both now been submitted to those parish councils.
- 1.5.2 In September ACRK presented the findings of the detailed West Malling report to representatives of the West Malling Parish Council and local Members. It was agreed that the initial report highlighted significant housing need in the ward, but that a second more detailed study was required before advancing any wish to scope an affordable housing scheme.
- 1.5.3 This second study aims to gather more robust data better able to meet the stringent requirements of the Council’s development control policies, and seek to evidence an affordable housing solution that is the best fit for the identified need.

1.6 RSL Customer Feed Back on 2008/09 schemes

- 1.6.1 The Council is keen to monitor the feedback from residents moving into the new schemes built by RSL Preferred Partners. It would seem that different housing associations have different internal approaches as to how best gauge the strengths and weaknesses of a given development through the eyes of their tenants.
- 1.6.2 Town & Country Housing Group (T&CHG) have a policy that seeks an 80 per cent return rate on customer satisfaction surveys within 18 months of all new residents moving in. Consequently it is too early for T&CHG to provide the full set of information we are seeking for the schemes in our borough. However, this information will be made available to future meetings of this Board.
- 1.6.3 Hyde Housing ask their residents to mark out of 10 whether they were satisfied generally with the quality of their new home, and the average score for the Leybourne Park scheme was 6.6. Hyde Housing also asked if the contractor attending the home to resolve any defect issues is courteous, efficient and punctual. The average score for this element was 5.4, with Hyde reporting that this is slightly lower than they would normally expect.
- 1.6.4 Russet Homes had a variety of responses from tenants housed in their recent schemes. For the Severn Close development in Tonbridge of 10 properties, seven tenants responded, and it was clear that the tenants liked the light, spacious rooms and storage areas, but they were less pleased with the contractor in relation to responding to defects. That contractor has since gone into administration.
- 1.6.5 For the Brionne Gardens bungalows in Tonbridge all six households returned their questionnaires. It was clear that bungalows themselves were a very popular unit type, and residents complimented the spacious rooms and storage. However, there had been a problem with damp and some loft areas needed further insulation. As a result remedial works were implemented and all the issues were rectified.
- 1.6.6 Russet Homes received a variety of responses from tenants moving into their new homes on Kings Hill. There was overwhelming support for the design of the units, but there was some feedback that some homes had poor sound insulation resulting in neighbours being able to hear each other, along with others feeling that their gardens would have been better if they were slightly larger.
- 1.6.7 Moat Homes issue a survey to all tenants moving into new build units, but its completion is not mandatory or required within a certain time frame, which has consequently led to a low response rate. However, the surveys that were returned (all for The Kilns development in Ditton) showed very high levels of satisfaction.

1.7 Legal Implications

- 1.7.1 The Council needs to secure a sufficient supply of affordable housing to meet its statutory duties.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.8.1 The National Affordable Housing Programme is the means by which public subsidy is secured for the delivery of affordable housing. RSLs must adhere to strict value for money and design considerations imposed by the HCA.

1.9 Risk Assessment

- 1.9.1 Failure to secure sufficient investment in affordable housing could mean that the Council is unable to deliver its local strategic housing priorities and meet its statutory obligations to the homeless and others in housing need.

Background papers:

contact: Chris Knowles

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing