

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

22 February 2010

### Report of 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) last year for bids under the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP).

Table 1 – Continuous Market Engagement Bids

RSL	Tenure	Scheme	No. Units	Grant	Bid Date
Church of the Holy Trinity	Almshouses bathroom enlargement and refurbishment project	Aylesford Almshouses	14	£112,000 (£8k per unit)	Jan 2010

## 1.3 Homes & Communities Agency Staffing Changes

1.3.1 In January the Homes & Communities Agency underwent a staffing and office restructure in the south east. Previously the HCA (and Housing Corporation before it) had been based in Croydon, but under the new structure the HCA staff relevant for Tonbridge & Malling will be based in Ashford.

1.3.2 The HCA will be meeting with the Council shortly to introduce their new team, and discuss the implementation of the Single Conversation, which is the new way in which funding priorities are set across the county.

1.3.3 The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank our previous long standing Area Investment Officers for the HCA, Heather Juman and Inez Hough, (along with all their team) for all their excellent assistance in the past. We would also like to wish them all the best for the future working in their new sub regions for the HCA.

## 1.4 Circle Anglia Group Development Team Update

1.4.1 The Council has recently received a letter from the Circle Anglia Group in relation to a proposed restructure of their development and regeneration function. Members will be pleased to note that although Russet Homes are part of the

Circle Anglia Group, their Development Team and associated staff will remain unaffected by the restructure, and will continue to work with the Council to provide high quality affordable housing.

## **1.5 Kent & Medway Housing Strategy Update**

- 1.5.1 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.
- 1.5.2 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”.
- 1.5.3 Since the last report to the Board, there has subsequently been a further Member’s Briefing and separate Stakeholder Briefing, attended by the Council’s Housing and Planning Officers. At these meetings Officers continued to robustly encourage an inclusive approach for the Strategy for all sub-regions, and that priorities in west Kent are not overlooked.
- 1.5.4 A draft of the Kent & Medway Housing Strategy will be available for consultation in March 2010.

## **1.6 Incentives to address under-occupation within social housing**

- 1.6.1 Members will recall that the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-2012 contains objective 4, to “develop positive incentives to address the under-occupation of family homes in the social rented sector”. This objective included the commitment to report progress to this Board in February 2010.
- 1.6.2 We continue to work with our RSL Partners to tackle under-occupation, and one method we are seeking to explore is the potential to address the issue through local lettings plans. These could provide opportunities for the re-housing of local tenants that are under occupying their accommodation to smaller units on new developments. This would free up larger family housing for those households who desperately need it.
- 1.6.3 Lettings plans such as those described above that seek to address issues of under-occupation in the borough will be constructed in full cooperation with our RSL partners.
- 1.6.4 The Council is also working with a newly formed Officer Working Group within the established Housing Strategy Sub-Group that is focusing on reducing under-

occupation. The Housing Strategy Sub-Group is an Officer group consisting of all the Housing Strategy and Enabling staff across Kent.

## **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:

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Nil

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