

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

17 May 2010

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

1 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on the following:

- North & West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership funding for 2010/11 including the allocation for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.
- the waiting times for children's Occupational Therapy assessments; and
- the Disabled Facilities Grant spend for 2009/10 and the allocation and budget for 2010/11.

1.2 North & West Kent Private Sector Renewal Partnership

- 1.2.1 The allocation for the partnership for 2010/11 has been confirmed as £3,812,993. Across the region this allocation is the third highest out of a total of ten partnerships. Although it is slightly less than the 2009/10 allocation of £4 million it is not the anticipated cut of 20 per cent as was discussed towards the end of last year. It is also higher than the original indicative allocation for this year of £3,506,986 as was set out at the beginning of 2008/09 when the original bids were assessed. This is testament to the high spending levels that the partnership has achieved over the last two years and indeed it is clear that other partnerships that have not achieved high spend have received significantly less funding in this final year.
- 1.2.2 In addition to the allocation for 2010/11, the partnership has a further £100,706 to add to this in respect of an underspend on the part of one of the partners in 2009/10. The allocation for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is therefore expected to be £651,030.
- 1.2.3 I will give Members a full update on housing assistance expenditure and details of outcomes and achievements in 2009/10 at the next meeting of this Board in July 2010. A progress meeting with GOSE will also have taken place by then on which I will be able to update Members.

1.3 Children's Occupational Therapy assessments

- 1.3.1 As discussed at the last meeting of this Board I invited the Head of Specialist Children's Services to attend the meeting this evening. Unfortunately neither she nor representatives were able to attend. A meeting has since been set up with the Head of Specialist Children's Services, Sarah Hohler (Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education) and Leyland Ridings (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education) on 21 June 2010 to discuss this matter. Councillor Mrs Jill Anderson and Councillor Mark Worrall will attend to represent this Council as well as myself and my officers. I will of course update Members on the outcome of this meeting at the July board.
- 1.3.2 From the latest information provided by the Children's Occupational Therapy Service it is understood that as at the end of March 2010, 25 cases await an occupational therapy assessment with the oldest case dating back to October 2007. The service envisages 19 of these cases may require adaptations. I am pleased to report that an additional Occupational Therapist (OT) has now been recruited to cover the Tonbridge & Malling area on three days a week. At the time of writing this report the new OT was undergoing her induction and training. It is hoped that once she is fully up and running we will begin to see a reduction in the waiting list and times for children's assessments.
- 1.3.3 Whilst I remain keen to see these cases progress with the minimum of any further delay, I also recognise the inevitable additional financial pressure and work burden this will create on the Council's own resources in progressing this batch of schemes.

1.4 Disabled Facilities Grant spend for 2009/10 and allocation and budget for 2010/11

- 1.4.1 The total spend on (mandatory) Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) in 2009/10 was in the region of £632,700. This is a £138,700 overspend against the budget of £494,000. Members were made aware of the likely overspend at the February meeting of this Board. It was reported at that meeting that the overspend would be covered by the 2010/11 budget as has been the practice in previous years. However, having reviewed demand for this mandatory grant and the expected spend in 2010/11 it has been agreed with the Director of Finance that to do so would produce an unrealistic budget for 2010/11. Therefore, it is proposed that the overspend be met from the revenue reserve for capital schemes in order to give a more realistic base on which to move forward.
- 1.4.2 The Council's allocation from central Government for DFGs for 2010/11 is £410,000. This is an increase of £50,000 on previous year's allocations. With the Council's own funding from the Capital Plan of £201,000 this gives a total DFG budget for 2010/11 of £611,000. It is hoped that this is a more realistic budget to work with this year. Clearly it may be under significant pressure again if demand continues to increase and especially the children's cases referred to in paragraphs

1.2.2 and 1.3.3 materialise into DFG cases. Commitment against this budget will be closely monitored in liaison with finance colleagues and a review of the Capital Plan allocation for DFG work will take place as part of the Capital Plan review process later this year.

- 1.4.3 I am hopeful that we can repeat the agreement we successfully negotiated with Russet Homes in 2009/10 where we agree a notional allocation for their tenants' DFG applications and once reached Russet Homes take over the funding of adaptations to an agreed amount. In 2009/10 Russet Homes funded in the region of £150,000 of adaptations for their tenants which would otherwise have been legitimate DFG applications. Clearly this significantly eases the demand on the Council's budget. I am currently negotiating with Russet Homes on what the notional allocation should be for 2010/11. Members will recall that this was £350,000 for 2009/10 and I am hopeful that I can reduce this amount in order to work towards our intentions that there should be a more equitable split on spend between RSL tenants and the private sector. I will update Members at the next meeting of this Board on the outcome of our negotiations. I have proposed an allocation of £300,000 for Russet tenant schemes in 2010/11.
- 1.4.4 I will provide a full activity report on the DFG work including the Russet Homes activity at the next meeting of this Board.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 As detailed in this report.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 DFGs are a mandatory grant and valid applications have to be approved or refused within six months.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 Any delay in approving DFG applications which can be used to control commitment and spend against the budget may result in reduced customer satisfaction and hence the risk to the reputation of the Council.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 The broad range of policies progressed in this paper are making a positive contribution to improving the lives and living conditions of vulnerable households within the borough, thereby impacting the policy agenda in relation to healthy lifestyles, equality and diversity, safeguarding children and biodiversity/sustainability.

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 **CABINET** is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the proposal to meet the overspend on the DFG budget in 2009/10 from the Council's revenue reserve for capital schemes as part of the closure of accounts procedure.

Background papers:

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Nil

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