

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

19 July 2010

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);

- 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 & Communities Agency Update

1.2.1 The Council is working with the HCA and its west Kent partners in engaging in the Single Conversation process (now called the Local Investment Plan), which is detailed in separate paper to this Board.

1.3 HCA Proposed Core Housing Design and Sustainability Standards Consultation

1.3.1 As Members will recall, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) was consulting with its partners on potential future design and sustainability core standards.

1.3.2 The consultation sought “the views of stakeholders on options for core standards, their level, and how, if adopted, they should be applied and phased in to operation”. Although the consultation period has come to an end the paper can still be found on the HCA’s website here:

http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/public/documents/Consultation_All.pdf

1.3.3 The Housing and Planning teams responded jointly to this important consultation document, and the content is contained in **[Annex 1]**.

1.4 Kent & Medway Housing Strategy Update

1.4.1 Members will recall the emergence of 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 Members will recall that the first draft of the Kent & Medway Housing Strategy would be available in May, however there has been an extension of the deadline until October to allow the document to adapt to the post election environment and sub regional working context.

1.4.3 I will keep Members informed of the progress of the Kent & Medway Housing Strategy through future reports to this Board.

1.5 Coldharbour Update

- 1.5.1 In 2007 Communities & Local Government (CLG) announced their “Site Refurbishment Grant” for Gypsy & Traveller schemes. Members will recall that a subsequent Project Board was established comprising senior officers from KCC and the Council’s housing and planning teams to submit a bid to expand or refurbish the existing Coldharbour site in Aylesford.
- 1.5.2 Unfortunately the Minister’s announcement on the second bid round in February revealed that Coldharbour had been unsuccessful in obtaining funding. Based on feedback received from the HCA the Project Board submitted a revised bid for Coldharbour to the final bid round that closed in April.
- 1.5.3 However in May the HCA wrote to the Council announcing that the grant programme for new Gypsy & Traveller schemes was to be terminated as part of a wider range of cutbacks to address the budget deficit.
- 1.5.4 Housing and planning officers met with KCC in July to respond to the cancellation of the grant funding, and to discuss possible ways forward for the Coldharbour project.
- 1.5.5 Members will be updated on the outcome of the July meeting by further papers to this Board.

1.6 Legal Implications

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

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 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.

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 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