

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

21 February 2011

**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 REVIEW OF THE WEST KENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Summary

This report presents the draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy for the period 2011-2016. It has been developed in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council and partner agencies that provide advice and services to households across West Kent.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Members will recall that the current West Kent Homelessness Strategy, *Towards 2010* was endorsed for adoption in July 2007. Originally developed to cover a three-year period, it would have been due for review in July 2010. However, in July 2009 approval was given to deferring the review for one year and proceeding instead with a refresh of the original action plan. The action plan was duly reviewed and it was approved in July 2010 to cover the twelve months to July 2011.
- 1.1.2 In September 2010 the three West Kent authorities commissioned consultants WK Consulting to co-ordinate and lead a review of homelessness across West Kent; and to develop and write a homelessness strategy and action plan for implementation by July 2011.
- 1.1.3 The development of the draft strategy has been closely overseen by a project team of senior staff from within the housing service of each authority; and in consultation with the housing options teams, key partners and stakeholders including current and former customers.
- 1.1.4 It will be noted that parts of the draft strategy are not fully completed. Specifically the Foreword (which will be added to the final version following the forthcoming two-month consultation); an outstanding case study to section six; and parts of the draft Action Plan which will be completed by officers during March and April.
- 1.1.5 A copy of the draft strategy is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

1.2 Next Steps

1.2.1 The draft strategy will be made available for further comment by key partners and stakeholder during March and April. It will also be made available on the web sites of the three authorities during this period.

1.2.2 Thereafter it will be finalised and submitted to Members for approval:

- Strategic Housing Advisory Board – 7 June 2011;
- Cabinet – 22 June 2011; and
- Council – 12 July 2011.

1.3 Legal Implications

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

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 None arising from this report

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Failure to review the Homelessness Strategy will compromise the Council's ability to effectively tackle homelessness.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 **CABINET** is **RECOMMENDED** to **ENDORSE** for the purpose of consultation the draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy which is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

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

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	A full Equality Impact Assessment of the draft strategy has been undertaken. It identified that key priority five (to meet the needs of the diverse range of people affected by homelessness), needed to specifically recognise that: § Domestic violence is not gender-specific § People with disabilities includes those with learning disabilities and sensory deprivation. These issues will be addressed in the final version of the draft strategy.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	N/A	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		The impacts noted above will be reflected in the final version of the strategy. A revised Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken once the draft strategy has been out to consultation. Both will be submitted to the Diversity Steering Group.

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.