

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

10 January 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 **CLG CONSULTATION: LOCAL DECISIONS: A FAIRER FUTURE FOR SOCIAL
HOUSING**

Summary

This report presents the Council's draft response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation document *Local Decisions: A fairer future for social housing*, which was published on 22 November 2010.

1.1 **Background**

1.1.1 This document sets out the Government's plans for reforming the social housing system. It includes changes on tenure; the management of housing waiting lists; the homelessness duty; the introduction of a new "affordable rent" tenancy and changes to the council housing finance system. It also addresses measures to improve mobility, tackle overcrowding and under-occupation. The proposals aim to ensure that social landlords can make better use of social housing and target support where it is needed most.

1.1.2 The consultation is aimed at local authorities, housing associations, social housing tenants, people who are registered on social housing waiting lists and voluntary and community organisations. It comprises 30 key questions.

1.1.3 A full copy of the consultation document can be downloaded from the CLG web site at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/socialhousingreform>

1.1.4 A copy of the Council's draft response is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

1.2 **Summary of main proposals**

1.2.1 *Tenure*

- the end of secure lifetime tenancies with introduction of a new "flexible tenancy" for local authority and housing association tenants. A minimum

term of two years is proposed with landlords free to set a maximum fixed term;

- as announced in the Spending Review, the introduction of a new Affordable Rent model offering shorter term tenancies at 80 per cent of market rents;
- preserved security for existing secure and assured tenants;
- duty on local authorities to publish a strategic tenancy policy which will set out the “broad objectives” to be considered by all social landlords in an area when granting tenancies; and
- tenants to be given six months notice if their flexible tenancy is not to be renewed, and advice and assistance with finding a new home.

1.2.2 *Empty homes*

- as announced in the Spending Review, the investment of £100m to bring empty homes into use as affordable housing, and the possibility of empty homes becoming part of the *New Homes Bonus*.

1.2.3 *Allocating social housing*

- new powers for local authorities to determine which categories of applicant are eligible to joint the housing register;
- the retention of the *reasonable preference categories* as a means of ensuring that social housing continues to be prioritised for those that most need it; and
- the removal from the allocations framework of existing social tenants who are seeking a move and the introduction of a new national homeswap scheme to enhance mobility within the social housing sector.

1.2.4 *Homelessness*

- new powers for local authorities to discharge the main homelessness duty with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector, without requiring the applicant’s agreement.

1.2.5 *Overcrowding*

- the Government is seeking views on the reforms needed to tackle overcrowding.

1.2.6 *Reform of social housing regulation*

- confirmation that the review of the role and purpose of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the framework for social housing regulation will be implemented via the Localism Bill.

1.2.7 *Reform of council housing finance*

- the introduction of a transparent self-financing arrangement to replace the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system.

1.3 **Legal Implications**

1.3.1 None arising from this report.

1.4 **Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 None arising from this report.

1.5 **Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 None arising from this report.

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 **APPROVE** the consultation response for submission to Communities and Local Government by the due date of 17 January 2011.

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

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?	N/A	

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
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?		This report relates to a Government consultation on proposed reforms to the social housing system.

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.