

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

21 February 2011

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on the following:

- **the Disabled Facilities Grant spend to date in 2010/11;**
- **the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation for 2011/12;**
- **the waiting times/list for children's Occupational Therapy assessments;**
- **the West Kent Landlord Forum; and**
- ***in touch* Home Improvement Agency Advisory Board minutes.**

1.2 Update on Disabled Facilities Grant spend in 2010/11

1.2.1 Members are reminded that the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget for 2010/11 is £611,000. This is made up of £410,000 Government allocation and £201,000 Council funding.

1.2.2 At the last meeting of this Board Members were advised of a risk of an overspend against the DFG budget and the introduction of delay on grant approval of owner occupied and private tenant applications to control the overall spend.

1.2.3 To date approximately £496,000 has been spent with a further £211,000 committed. I would expect to actually spend a further £110,000 of this commitment in the remaining two months of the financial year.

1.2.4 Latest projections would suggest spend for the year 2010/11 will be on or around the budgeted figure of £611,000. The introduction of the delay to certain approvals has allowed control of spend to date however Officers are now beginning to approve owner occupied and private tenant applications again as it is highly likely any spend incurred will be in the 2011/12 year.

1.3 Update on the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation for 2011/12

- 1.3.1 Members are aware that we receive an annual central Government allocation towards the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget. We have been informed by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that there will be a small change to the allocation methodology for the financial year 2011/12.
- 1.3.2 In 2011/12 there will be £180 million available to be distributed as DFG to local authorities which is an extra £11 million more than in 2010/11. Under the proposed new methodology all local authorities will, as a minimum, receive what they were allocated in 2010/11. The extra £11 million will be shared between the local authorities using a relative needs weighted index developed by the Building Research Establishment. Details of the index will be made available on the DCLG website shortly. At the time of writing this report the index was not available so it is not clear if Tonbridge & Malling B.C. will benefit from any increase in allocation. If there is any further news a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
- 1.3.3 Therefore, our allocation for DFGs in 2011/12 should be at least £410,000. With the Council's contribution of £201,000 this would again give us a budget of £611,000. The Capital Plan will be adjusted accordingly in due course in the light of actual spend in 2010/11.

1.4 Update on the waiting times/list for children's Occupational Therapy assessments

- 1.4.1 Members are aware of the ongoing dialogue with Kent County Council regarding the waiting times for children's Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments in Tonbridge & Malling.
- 1.4.2 Further to the last report to this Board an update was provided to Cabinet on 15 December 2010 where it was reported that KCC had been successful in employing a locum OT to help deal with the backlog. Unfortunately further to that meeting the person who had accepted the post withdrew. I understand that continuing attempts have been made to recruit another locum and a further interview was due to be held early February 2011. I will update Members at the meeting.
- 1.4.3 Both Officers and the Cabinet Member for Housing have raised again with Kent County Council the possible exploration of transferring OT resources from adult services to children's services to help with the backlog. I understand this is being considered further by KCC. I also understand that children's services will be moving back with adults from 11 April 2011 into a directorate called Families and Social Care so future flexibility may be easier.

- 1.4.4 The latest figures we have from KCC on waiting times/numbers are as at 21 January 2011 there were 12 children who had been screened and were awaiting a full OT assessment. Of these cases, five are priority A cases, six are priority B cases and one had yet to be determined. The oldest referral dates back to February 2009.

1.5 Update on the West Kent Landlord Forum

- 1.5.1 A West Kent Landlord Forum was held on 26 January 2011 at Sevenoaks D.C. Members are reminded this is a partnership between Sevenoaks D.C., Tonbridge & Malling B.C., Tunbridge Wells B.C. and the National Landlords Association to deliver landlord forums/fairs across West Kent.
- 1.5.2 Approximately 35 to 40 landlords attended the forum and heard presentations from Housing Benefit Officers on the proposed changes to Local Housing Allowance, an accountant on tax allowances, Housing Officers on how local authorities can help landlords find tenants and Citizens Advice Bureau on how they can help tenants maintain tenancies.
- 1.5.3 The evaluation feedback indicates landlords continue to find the forums useful and holding them two or three times a year appears to be the right formula.
- 1.5.4 The next forum will be held at Tunbridge Wells B.C. on 23 May 2011 with a landlord fair being held at Tonbridge & Malling B.C. on 03 October 2011.

1.6 *in touch* Home Improvement Agency Advisory Board minutes

- 1.6.1 The minutes from the last *in touch* Home Improvement Agency Advisory Board meeting on 01 November 2010 are attached at **[Annex 1]**. This was the first meeting of the Board covering the four local authority areas that the Mid & West Kent agency now operates in.
- 1.6.2 Unfortunately the proposed meeting for 25 January 2011 was cancelled. The next Advisory Board meeting is planned for 10 May 2011.

1.7 Legal Implications

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

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.8.1 As explained in the report.

1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 The ongoing delays in OT assessments for children in Tonbridge & Malling may put at risk those families in need of works to adapt their home.

Background papers:

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Nil

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