

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 STRATEGY AND ENABLING UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress being made by the Council's Registered Provider (RP) Partners in providing new affordable housing in the Borough, and summarises the programmes for 2010/11 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 RPs 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 and beyond. The table identifies:
- the scheme address;
 - RP Partner;
 - start on site (SoS);
 - total number of units to be provided (rent and/or shared ownership);
 - detailed split of rent and shared ownership units;

- 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 Local Investment Plan

- 1.2.1 The Council has continued to engage with our west Kent partners in moving forward the Local Investment Plan (LIP). Members will recall that the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) have been working with local authorities and their development partners in the Local Investment Plan (LIP), formally known as the Single Conversation. This is the vehicle for making investment decisions nationwide for affordable housing.
- 1.2.2 The LIP occurs within various prescribed sub regions, and this borough is part of the west Kent sub region which also includes Sevenoaks District Council, Maidstone Borough Council, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- 1.2.3 The LIP is the key output of the process, and describes which projects and schemes are prioritised across the sub region, in accordance with agreed shared aims and objectives. The west Kent local authorities agreed to obtain endorsement of the LIP by their own Members, which was achieved through the last report on this matter to this Board.
- 1.2.4 The LIP is now finalised and endorsed by all west Kent authorities, and the HCA is moving forward with the next stage of the process.
- 1.2.5 Members will be aware that originally the next stage was to entail the creation of a Local Investment Agreement (LIA), as detailed in the previous report to this Board. The purpose of the LIA was to set out the mechanisms by which the priorities in the LIP will be delivered, containing a summary of each authority's contributions (if any), the funding asks of the HCA, along with the outcomes we wish to achieve. This stage of the process has now been abolished.
- 1.2.6 The HCA has instead asked each RP to submit a four year development package to Government which will detail the funding ask of each scheme, by Borough and District. The Council has been working with each of our RP Partners to ensure that these packages are both robust and in line with our expectations and aspirations as detailed with the LIP.
- 1.2.7 This has involved Housing and Planning officers meeting with the HCA again in 2011 to ensure that the list of schemes being discussed are as up to date and accurate as possible.

- 1.2.8 The HCA are shortly to issue to each RP a “Framework” that acts as guidance for the submission of their packages, but this document is not yet available and will therefore be detailed along with other related LIP matters through future papers to this Board.

1.3 Kent & Medway Housing Strategy Update

- 1.3.1 Members will recall the emergence of the Kent 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 stated ambition for the project is to develop a “fit for purpose Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway that provides strategic direction, innovation and actions as a response to the huge diversity of housing need and opportunities across Kent and Medway”.
- 1.3.2 The Strategy sets out a series of key asks of Government, including seeking new ways of financing infrastructure (Tax Investment Financing); incentivisation of public land disposals; diversification of shared ownership models; encouraging investment in the private rented sector; greater powers to find bespoke local solutions and funding of “retrofit” solutions in the existing stock.
- 1.3.3 The original draft was written prior to the 2010 General Election and further work was undertaken to reflect the changes that were subsequent to this. A second consultation draft of the Strategy was brought to the Kent and Medway Leaders’ Group in September 2010, where Leaders agreed to the document being issued for a further two-month consultation. The draft was further revised to reflect the feedback received and to highlight recent government proposals, which came forward as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review and will feature in the forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill.
- 1.3.4 It is proposed that implementation of the Strategy will be delivered by Kent Housing Group (KHG) on behalf of the Kent Forum, working together with other cross-Kent networks such as Kent Planning Officers Group and the Joint Policy and Planning Board for Housing.
- 1.3.5 The Kent Forum agreed that the Housing Strategy will be published in May 2011 with the title “Better homes: localism, aspiration and choice - A housing strategy for Kent and Medway”. The Kent Forum suggests that further iterations of the Strategy will be developed to reflect the fast moving legislative and policy environment moving forward.

1.4 Young Persons Scheme Update

- 1.4.1 The construction of the Young Persons Scheme in Tonbridge is progressing well on site, with completion targeted for March 2011. The tender process for the support provider for this scheme has also now concluded, with Porchlight being selected.

1.4.2 The Council continues to meet with our partners for this important project, and will keep Members up to date with future reports to this board.

1.5 Low Cost Home Ownership Initiatives

1.5.1 The Homebuy Agent Moat provides a report for Tonbridge & Malling, as shown in Table 2 below.

1.5.2 For the previous quarter (October to December 2010) Members will see that the level of interest in low cost home ownership initiatives remains high, compared to the actual number of sales, which remain low compared to previous years. This reflects the downturn in the housing market and wider economy.

Table 2 – TMBC Homebuy Statistics Quarter 3 October – December 2010

LCHO Product	No. Households
Number of Enquiries	79
Number of Applications	64
Homebuy Direct Sales	0
First Time Buyers Initiative Sales	5
Newbuild Homebuy Sales	3
Resales	7

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. RPs 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:

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Nil

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