

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

7 June 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 2013/14. 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 2013/14. 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.
- 1.1.5 Members will note that the projected development programme for 2011/12 currently only lists the Kings Hill affordable housing from Russet Homes, and hence the delivery for this period is estimated to be very low. However, Members will see that subsequent periods show a very high yield of affordable housing connected to schemes that have both planning permission and a commitment to delivery from the developer and housing association partner.
- 1.1.6 The dip in outturn for the 2011/12 period is likely connected to the preceding downturn in the housing market and wider uncertainties connected to grant funding for affordable homes and the governments emerging housing and planning policy frameworks, and is therefore not limited just to Tonbridge & Malling. However viewed over the wider Comprehensive Spending Review period of 2011 to 2015 the programme remains very healthy.

1.2 Registered Provider Framework Submissions (LIP)

- 1.2.1 Members will recall that the Council has continued to engage with our west Kent partners in moving forward the adopted Local Investment Plan (LIP) with the HCA. This is the Government's vehicle for making investment decisions nationwide for affordable housing.
- 1.2.2 The HCA tasked each RP to submit a four year development package to Government by the start of May which detailed 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 were both robust and in line with our expectations and aspirations as detailed within the LIP.
- 1.2.3 Last week the HCA released to each local authority (for approval) the latest milestone key output for this process. This document consists of the draft combined lists of every RPs submitted schemes for the borough that both seek new funding and are targeted to complete before by April 2013.
- 1.2.4 The Council have approved and returned this document to the HCA (the combined Framework submissions bid for Tonbridge & Malling), which was broadly in line with our LIP aspirations. It is important to note the absence of Russet Homes from the list of bidding RPs. However, as seen in the attached **[Annex 1]** monitoring spreadsheet, Russet Homes do not have any homes

seeking new funding that are estimated to complete by 2013, despite their extensive development programme in the Borough.

- 1.2.5 Officers will report further progress on the LIP and other Framework related 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 was 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 was 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 Strategy was launched by the Leader of KCC Paul Carter on 17 May at Princes Park in Dartford, with the title “Better homes: localism, aspiration and choice - A housing strategy for Kent and Medway”. Keynote speakers at the launch included Sir Bob Kerslake, Permanent Secretary of Communities and Local Government and Terry Fuller, Director of the East and South East at the Homes and Communities Agency. The event was attended by the Councils officers and lead Members.
- 1.3.4 The 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. 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 Construction of the Young Persons Scheme in Tonbridge has finished, and the Russet Homes scheme is now fully occupied and being managed by Porchlight. Members will be delighted to know that of the first nine young people being assisted, four are from Tonbridge & Malling, with a continuing commitment to ensure the project assists those from this Borough.

1.4.2 Members were invited to an informal tour of the building in April when the new tenants started to move in, with the chance to inspect the excellent facilities and meet the support provider, Porchlight.

1.4.3 Russet Homes and Porchlight are planning a formal launch event for this exciting scheme on 16 June to which Members of this Board will be invited.

1.4.4 **Under-occupation Update**

1.4.5 The Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-12 contains Objective 3, "Develop positive incentives to address the under-occupation of family homes in the social rented sector", with a commitment to report progress to this Board by June 2011. The Council continues to work with Kent Housing Group's Strategy and Enabling sub-group to advance this objective, with the first meeting of an under occupation steering group occurring in late May, lead by officers from Canterbury City Council. Progress on this emerging work will be reported back to Members in subsequent Papers to this Board.

1.4.6 **Registered Provider Feedback For New Schemes Completed 2009/10**

1.4.7 The Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-12 contains Objective 4, "Evaluate feedback obtained by RSLs from residents on new affordable housing delivered within the borough" with a commitment to report progress to this Board by June 2011. The Council continues to seek (from the Registered Providers that carry out this function) the views of those living in new homes built by our housing association partners, but does not have any information to report at this time.

1.4.8 **Older Persons Review**

1.4.9 The Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009 -12 contains Objective 5, "With west Kent partners, undertake a review of accommodation for older people in order to ensure that it meets current and future needs and aspirations" with a commitment to report progress to this Board by June 2011. The Action plan describes how the Council will evaluate the possibility of merging this work with the KCC-funded Kent-wide work that is being undertaken in response to the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy. Housing officers from this Council remain highly involved in this work, and will report back to Members in subsequent Papers to this Board.

1.5 **Low Cost Home Ownership Initiatives**

1.5.1 The Homebuy Agent Moat provides a report for Tonbridge & Malling on low cost home ownership initiatives, as shown in Table 2 below.

1.5.2 For the previous quarter (January to March 2011) 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.

- 1.5.3 The actual number of enquiries and applications is significantly higher than the previous quarter, even though the number of sales is lower.

Table 2 – TMBC Homebuy Statistics Quarter 4 January – March 2011

LCHO Product	No. Households
Number of Enquiries	107
Number of Applications	99
Homebuy Direct Sales	0
First Time Buyers Initiative Sales	0
Newbuild Homebuy Sales	2
Resales	0

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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