

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

7 November 2011

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on the activity of the Housing Options and Housing Register Services.

- 1.1.1 Following the return of homelessness and housing register services from Russet Homes in March 2008, a number of significant improvements in service delivery have been sustained, particularly in relation to homeless prevention and temporary accommodation. The number of households seeking advice and/or applying for social rented accommodation remains at a significant level, particularly as a result of the ongoing recession.

1.2 Housing options and prevention of homelessness

- 1.2.1 Although the number of people contacting the housing options team for advice remains high, the number of formal homeless applications taken each month has decreased in the last six months and is a relatively low proportion of the total.

Month	New homeless applications	Duty to house accepted	Duty to house rejected
Total 2010/11	95	38	63
April 2011	4	3	1
May 2011	2	3	0
June 2011	8	3	2
July 2011	5	6	1
August 2011	3	4	2
September 2011	4	5	0

- 1.2.2 The applications listed in columns three and four are not necessarily the same as those in column two. This is because a decision on a homelessness application not may be reached during the same calendar month it was made.

- 1.2.3 On 1 April 2011, a number of local authorities within the Kent Homechoice partnership, including Tonbridge and Malling, went live with an additional module to the Locata system to manage housing options cases and homeless applications. The following table gives a breakdown of the outcomes of all recorded approaches to the housing options team.

Month	Advice only	NFC	NPR	Open	Dup	Prev	Rel	WD	Total
Apr 2011	23	7	7	37	0	15	2	1	92
May 2011	33	16	1	19	2	24	1	1	97
June 2011	15	9	2	33	0	10	1	1	72
July 2011	17	6	5	14	1	9	0	0	53
Aug 2011	21	4	1	15	1	5	0	0	47
Sept 2011	18	0	0	43	0	3	0	0	66

NFC – no further contact

NPR – homelessness not prevented or relieved

Open – Live cases for that month

Dup – duplicate entry/error

Prev – homelessness prevented

Rel – homelessness relieved

WD – application withdrawn

- 1.2.4 Previously, data regarding housing options approaches and outcomes was recorded on a simple database. This module is a valuable enhancement to the Locata system, as it links to the choice based lettings system, and provides more detailed management and workflow reports and statistics.

1.3 Temporary Accommodation

- 1.3.1 The following table gives the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation at the end of each month.

Date	Number in Temporary Accommodation (AST)	Number in B&B	Total
31.5.11	9	4	13
30.6.11	10	5	15
31.7.11	10	6	16
31.8.11	11	8	19
30.9.11	13	2	15

1.4 Housing Register

- 1.4.1 Demand for social housing remains at a high level, with increasing numbers seeking a move on medical or welfare grounds. The table below shows the number of applicants joining and leaving the housing register, including homeseekers (those applying for their first social tenancy) and transfers (existing social tenants applying for a move):

Month	Applications Received	Applications Cancelled	Number on Housing Register
Total : April 2010 – March 2011	1,785	2,297	
April 2011	104	277	1,833 (includes 624 transfers)
May 2011	152	163	1,812 (includes 621 transfers)
June 2011	166	180	1,803 (includes 623 transfers)
July 2011	138	93	1,777 (includes 610 transfers)
August 2011	150	108	1,874 (includes 648 transfers)
September 2011	149	122	1,918 (includes 664 transfers)

- 1.4.2 Applications are regularly reviewed, and those who either fail to respond to their annual review, or have moved since their original application are cancelled.
- 1.4.3 The following table gives the breakdown of applicants who have been housed through choice based lettings:

Month	Homeseekers	Transfers	Total
Total: April 2010 – March 2011	350 (66%)	184 (34%)	534
April 2011	22 (67%)	11 (33%)	33
May 2011	40 (78%)	11 (22%)	51
June 2011	20 (67%)	10 (33%)	30
July 2011	19 (54%)	16 (46%)	35
August 2011	36 (69%)	16 (31%)	52
September 2011	26 (55%)	21 (45%)	47

- 1.4.4 Since April 2009, 1,247 households have been housed in Tonbridge and Malling via the choice based lettings system. The table below shows the details of these applicants by banding and bedroom need.

Band	Bedrooms	Total
A	1 (including studios)	69
	2	29
	3	24
	4	6
	5	1
A Total		129 (10% of total)
B	1 (including studios)	200
	2	216
	3	72
	4	18
	5	1
B Total		507 (41% of total)
C	1 (including studios)	243
	2	111
	3	155
	4	9
C Total		518 (42% of total)
D	1 (including studios)	53
	2	26
	3	13
	4	1
D Total		93 (7% of total)
Overall Total		1,247

1.5 Locata targeted housing options module

- 1.5.1 Since 2008, 30 per cent of all households who have bid for homes on Kent Homechoice have been housed through choice based lettings. This represents over 14,500 lets in three years throughout Kent and Medway.
- 1.5.2 There are currently almost 45,000 households in Kent who are registered for social housing. However the majority of registered households are not successful in obtaining a social housing tenancy. Therefore many people could benefit from knowing what other housing options are available to them. The Kent Homechoice Partnership has recently agreed to fund an extension to the Locata system to provide an additional targeted housing options resource for customers using the choice based lettings website. This provides additional information and advice, tailored to customers' specific needs. It is anticipated that this will be rolled out in the next few months at no further cost to any individual authority or landlord member of the partnership.
- 1.5.3 Targeted housing options uses the details we currently hold on housing applicants to tailor the housing options presented to them. So, for example, a single older person logging onto Kent Homechoice could be offered information including:

- Winter Warmth;
- Retirement housing survey;
- Council tax single person discount;
- Sheltered housing vacancies;
- Extra care housing development;
- Age UK; and
- Welfare benefits for older people.

1.5.4 The targeted housing approach allows councils and landlords to conduct 'campaigns' that can be seen by as many or as few customers as the partner chooses. If a landlord was wishing to promote a particular initiative to encourage underoccupiers to downsize, the system can target those tenants who would qualify for any incentives. This may take the form of an advert, which the tenant could click for more details.

1.6 Locata review module

1.6.1 Housing registers need to be kept up-to-date to ensure that unnecessary expense is not being wasted in managing applications that are no longer required. A regular check on whether households still wish to be registered for housing will also give partners a clearer picture of housing need in their area, and the true numbers on their waiting lists.

1.6.2 Locata Housing Services Ltd has developed a review module that allows partners to manage their re-registration processes, including:

- integrated with choice based lettings member records;
- ability to send out reviews by letter or email;
- set review periods according to your policy;
- automatic journal records created on review;
- ability to filter members by category and remove individual records from review; and
- reinstate function and full review history.

1.6.3 The Kent Homechoice Partnership has recently agreed to fund this additional module at no further cost to any individual authority or landlord member of the partnership.

1.7 Kent Homechoice Mobility Vanguard project

- 1.7.1 Members will recall from a previous report to this board on 7 June 2011 that Kent Homechoice has been successful in its bid submission to the government to develop one of a number of mobility vanguard projects to introduce a national home swap scheme, which will make it easier for tenants to see possible exchange partners and will increase tenants' choice and control over where they live.
- 1.7.2 It was announced on 18 October that Kent Homechoice received £71,750, to develop mutual exchange services for Kent on digital TV. This should assist tenants who are unable to access the on-line mutual exchange service which was launched last year, and already has over 6,000 tenants registered.

1.8 West Kent Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2011-2011

- 1.8.1 Members will recall that the previous 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.
- 1.8.2 **[Annex 1]** provides an update on progress against targets set in the 2010-2011 action plan.

Background papers:

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Nil

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