

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

20 February 2012

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 economic downturn.

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 continued to decrease in the current year 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
Total April – September 2011	26	24	6
October 2011	6	3	0
December 2011	2	1	1
January 2012	4	1	3

- 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.

1.3 Housing options approaches

1.3.1 The following table gives a breakdown of the outcomes of all recorded approaches to the housing options team.

Month	Contact Made	Advice Only	Prevented	Relieved	Open
October 2011	95	49	9	1	36
November 2011	92	57	4	5	26
December 2011	41	18	0	1	22
January 2012	73	27	8	0	38

Contact Made – Total number of customers approaching Options Team

Advice Only – Customer able to solve their own housing problems following advice and assistance from the Options team.

Prevented – Advice and assistance from the Options Team to secure accommodation to prevent customer from becoming homeless.

Relieved - Advice and assistance from the Options Team allowing customer to remain in their home, from where they have been threatened with homelessness.

Open – Continued advice and assistance to prevent or relieve homelessness.

1.4 Temporary accommodation

1.4.1 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
31.10.11	11	4	15
30.11.11	11	5	16
31.12.11	11	5	16
31.01.12	11	5	16

1.5 Housing register

1.5.1 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
October 2011	163	172	1,808 (includes 634 transfers)
November 2011	151	116	1,858 (includes 650 transfers)
December 2011	86	105	1,914 (includes 663 transfers)
January 2012	161	107	1,819 (includes 668 transfers)

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

Month	Homeseekers	Transfers	Total
October 2011	22 (71%)	9 (29%)	31
November 2011	23 (68%)	11 (32%)	34
December 2011	17 (59%)	12 (41%)	29
January 2012	19 (70%)	8 (30%)	27

1.6 Rough sleeper count

- 1.6.1 The department for Communities and Local Government published “Vision to end Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide” in July 2011 to tackle the problem of rough sleeping. One of the key priorities was to change the way that rough sleepers are counted. Previously only local authorities where there was a known, or suspected, rough sleeping problem were required to undertake a count. This meant that many rough sleepers were not acknowledged.
- 1.6.2 Now all areas across England are required to provide details of actual counts in areas where there are known rough sleepers, or robust estimates in other areas, to give a much clearer national picture.
- 1.6.3 A multi-agency estimated count was carried out on 19 October 2011 across West Kent, which was co-ordinated by Porchlight. The count included details of rough sleepers known to support and outreach services. The count revealed 19 rough sleepers, including two within Sevenoaks, 13 within Tunbridge Wells and four within Tonbridge and Malling.

- 1.6.4 The four rough sleepers recorded in this borough were all receiving services from the Porchlight outreach team at the time of the count. Since then, one has been resettled into supported housing, and two have made their own arrangements in the private sector. The fourth service user lost contact with Porchlight, but was known to be working in Tunbridge Wells.

1.7 First Stop pilot scheme

- 1.7.1 The Council is participating in Kent Housing Group's (KHG) creation of the Older Persons Protocol document. Part of this exciting project involves broadening the housing advice given by local authorities for older persons. To enable this, a small pilot is occurring in west Kent for three months involving First Stop. First Stop are part of the Elderly Accommodation Council (EAC) who are a long established charitable organisation who specialise in any housing issues and advice for the over 50's.
- 1.7.2 The Council's Housing Options Team will be involved along with equivalent officers from Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. The aspiration is that members of the public who approach their local authorities for assistance for older persons either for themselves or on behalf of someone else will receive the usual appropriate advice, but additionally (when appropriate) they will be signposted to First Stop. The EAC through First Stop provide at (no cost) a broad array of excellent housing advice, including describing the different types of schemes available, their locations, likely costs, and possible vacancies.
- 1.7.3 Tonbridge and Malling Housing Options Team are keen to increase the breadth of the housing advice and assistance offered in this area, to include applicants whose difficulties may be outside of the more standard housing options approaches, such as home owners who might be considering moving to accommodation with a care package suitable for their particular need.
- 1.7.4 It is anticipated that the pilot will begin by early March, following some local training with colleagues from First Stop. Members will be updated with progress through further reports to this Board.

1.8 Porchlight schools programme

- 1.8.1 Members will recall that Porchlight's schools programme for Kent started in April 2010, targeted at secondary schools, sixth form colleges and other youth groups and organisations such as Connexions.
- 1.8.2 We are very keen to continue supporting this scheme for the next financial year and are currently investigating funding possibilities. It has been suggested with our support that a proportion of the money received by Medway Council on behalf of Kent from DCLG to assist Kent authorities in delivering homeless prevention initiatives should be utilised in this way.

1.9 Locata homelessness module

- 1.9.1 Members will recall that in April 2011 we went live with an additional module to the Locata system which enables a more effective management of housing options cases and homelessness applications. This module links directly to the existing choice-based lettings system, which has increased efficiency within the housing options team by linking information, reducing duplication and also the time taken to prepare and submit statistical returns to Government.
- 1.9.2 A Capital Plan Post Implementation Review pro-forma in respect of this new module will be found at **[Annex 1]**.

Background papers:

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Nil

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Director of Health and Housing