

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 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 planning 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 shows the Kings Hill and Leybourne Grange affordable housing from Russet Homes, and hence the delivery for this period is estimated to be lower than previous years, which had a very healthy level of performance. I hope Members will be encouraged to see that subsequent periods show a 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 Government's 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 HCA tasked each RP to submit a four year development package to Government which detailed the funding ask of each scheme, by Borough and County. The Council worked extensively with each of our RP Partners following the endorsement of the West Kent Local (including Maidstone) Investment Plan (LIP) to ensure that these packages were both robust and in line with our strategic expectations and aspirations.

1.2.2 The HCA is now in contract with each of the Councils RP Partners for the Affordable Homes Programme to April 2015. The contracts include "firm" schemes that have certainty of delivery earlier in the period, and "indicative" schemes that will come to fruition towards the end of the Programme's life.

1.2.3 The HCA understand that considerable time has passed since the original west Kent LIP (including Maidstone) was created, and are therefore looking to refresh its contents in further meetings between the four local authorities involved. The officers are comfortable with this approach and will report further progress on the LIP refresh through future papers to this Board.

1.2.4 Members will recall that the HCA's Affordable Homes Programme is based on the sweating a housing association's existing assets through the new affordable rent tenure. Affordable rent replaces social rent for housing associations new

provision within the 2011-2015 period, as well as certain proportion of their relets through natural turnover within their stock. Affordable rent is derived by calculating 80 percent of the local private sector market rent.

1.3 Older Persons Protocol

- 1.3.1 The Council continues to work with KHG in the creation of an Older Persons Protocol. This document is a key output of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy, and also links to the Council's Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009 -12.
- 1.3.2 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.
- 1.3.3 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.
- 1.3.4 The Council are keen to increase the range and quality of the housing advice and assistance offered in this area, to include applicants who's 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.
- 1.3.5 The Pilot should 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.

1.4 Coldharbour Project

- 1.4.1 Members will be aware of the ongoing project between Kent County Council and the Council in refurbishing and enlarging the existing Coldharbour Gypsy and Traveller site in Aylesford. The site currently consists of eight pitches, and in spring 2011 the HCA offered KCC the opportunity to obtain £932k of unused grant allocation for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller pitches from elsewhere in the country. KCC accepted this allocation, which was conditional upon the start of a scheme by April this year.
- 1.4.2 Although sizeable the allocation was not enough to cover the entire capital cost of the project. However, the necessary land was acquired and a new architect was appointed by the Project Board to design an acceptable new site that was

achievable to the available funding. This has resulted in a new site design for twenty six pitches, which was refined and developed working in partnership with local Members, along with a consultation event for the current site residents and wider Gypsy and Traveller community in Tonbridge & Malling.

- 1.4.3 The Council is glad to report that this has enabled the Project Board to submit a detailed planning application last September, which was determined very favourably in December leading to full permission for the 26 pitch site.
- 1.4.4 KCC have concluded a full tendering exercise to appoint a suitable contractor to build out the site, with 8 companies talking part. It is important to note there remains a capital funding shortfall between the HCA allocation and scheme costs, and this is despite KCC prudentially borrowing against the projected rental income from the additional pitch provision.
- 1.4.5 Members are reminded that the expansion of the existing Coldharbour scheme is to allow the Borough to meet the pitch shortfall described in our Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment, and is therefore to address the identified housing needs of our Gypsy and Traveller population.
- 1.4.6 The progress of the Coldharbour scheme will detailed in full through reports to the new Gypsy and Traveller Panel.

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.

Members will note 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) 2011

| Low Cost Home Ownership Product | Number of 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 Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) 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 resulting in unacceptable financial and reputational risk.

Background papers:

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Nil

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