

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD**

**12 November 2012**

**Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for  
Housing**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken  
by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK CONDITION SURVEY**

**Summary**

**This report proposes utilising a stock modelling service provided by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) for our next private sector stock condition survey and the development of a private sector stock condition database.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 At the May 2012 meeting of this Board we advised Members that we had been considering taking a different approach to the next private sector house condition survey. Rather than the traditional approach based on a sample survey of homes in the borough we were considering the benefits of a desk-top survey based on housing stock models.

1.1.2 The Council undertakes a private sector house condition survey in order to meet our statutory duties as required under the Housing Act 2004 to keep the housing conditions in our area under regular review. Also to provide an evidence base to support our Housing Assistance policy and any housing and health related strategies.

**1.2 Traditional approach**

1.2.1 The latest survey in 2006 undertaken by David Adamson & Partners Ltd involved a sample survey of approximately 1200 homes (approximately three percent of private dwellings in the borough). In a traditional survey households are selected at random and resident participation is voluntary. There can be difficulties in achieving sufficient access and some residents whose properties are selected dislike the idea of their house being surveyed.

1.2.2 The collected survey data is then analysed using statistical software packages and a report generated to provide a concise synopsis of the main findings of the survey programme and to review the issues emerging as they impact on private

sector housing strategy. A database of the raw survey data and analysed data is also provided.

- 1.2.3 Traditional house condition surveys are however resource intensive and more expensive than a desk top survey; the last survey undertaken cost £46,700.

### **1.3 Housing stock model approach**

- 1.3.1 A housing stock modelling approach produces a series of models describing the housing conditions in the area. It is a desk top model approach utilising data from National datasets, such as the English House Condition Survey. The model data is provided as a database and presented in document format containing spreadsheets and a series of maps illustrating the housing indicators across the borough mentioned below in 1.3.4.

- 1.3.2 The Building Research Establishment (BRE) provides a stock modelling service. The BRE is an independent and impartial consultancy owned by the BRE Trust; and has provided a large number of local authorities in England with this stock modelling service.

- 1.3.3 The BRE stock modelling approach is able to provide estimates on key housing indicators to each census output area, which can be seen as an advantage over the previous traditional house condition survey which provided information at Borough wide and to five sub levels.

- 1.3.4 The following housing indicators are included in the stock modelling exercise:

- Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazard;
- Category 1 hazard for excess cold;
- Category 1 hazard for falls;
- estimated Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating;
- presence of a household in fuel poverty;
- indication of disrepair in relation to the Decent Homes standard;
- presence of a vulnerable household where a member of the household is in receipt of an income or disability related benefit; and
- private rented dwellings.

- 1.3.5 The presence of category 1 HHSRS hazards indicates the residential accommodation does not meet the minimum standard for housing. The category 1 hazards for excess cold and falls gives a link with the key housing health related determinants for excess winter deaths and hip fracture in 65s and over. The SAP rating gives an indication of the energy efficiency rating of the property. These

indicators with the others mentioned in 1.3.4 provide useful information that we can use to evidence for any housing and health related strategies, and targeting of financial assistance under our Housing Assistance policy.

- 1.3.6 The initial stock modelling exercise/desk top survey will cost a basic fee of £16,000 exclusive of VAT with an additional fee of £1,980 to obtain tenure data from Experian. The Experian data gives the potential to identify private rented dwellings. This exercise would be undertaken over a six week period and does not require any information or input from the Council.
- 1.3.7 The desk top survey can be followed up with targeted street surveys in particular areas if necessary.
- 1.3.8 After the modelling exercise, for an estimated cost of £10,000 excluding VAT we can use the modelled data as a base for developing a private sector stock condition database. This would be a separate exercise, integrating the Council's own data with the modelled data. The database could then be regularly updated with local data and reduce the need for further house condition surveys.
- 1.3.9 All the above costs can be met from within available budgets.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

- 1.4.1 The latest guidance issued by the Audit Commission in 2009 recommended that local authorities utilise a combination of desktop and street surveys to gather reliable and informative data on housing conditions in their area.
- 1.4.2 Given the latest guidance, the quality of the data output, the lower cost and resource implications we propose to proceed with the BRE stock modelling exercise and develop a private sector stock condition database.
- 1.4.3 The BRE have undertaken stock modelling for 230 local authorities since 2003 and there are no other providers of this type of stock modelling exercise.
- 1.4.4 In order to proceed with the BRE, a waiver from the requirements in the Council's contract procedure rules to obtain three quotations for contracts in excess of £5,000 is required. This is on the basis there are no other providers of this service other than the BRE. This waiver has now been obtained from the Chief Executive, the Chief Solicitor and the Director of Finance as per the contract procedure rules.
- 1.4.5 Following completion of the stock modelling exercise and review of the modelled data and maps we will determine if there is a need to verify or supplement the information with further targeted street surveys.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Housing Act 2004 to keep the housing conditions in their area under regular review. This duty is usually met by

undertaking a house condition survey on a regular basis, approximately every five years.

- 1.5.2 Any contract made with the BRE for the provision of the stock modelling service and development of the private sector stock condition database will be subject to a contract with agreed terms and conditions between the two parties.

## 1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 Provision within the 2012/13 budget has already been included for the private sector house condition survey expenditure.

## 1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 Failure to review housing conditions in our area will result in a failing to meet our statutory requirements. It is also important to have up to date information so that any financial assistance offered to improve housing conditions is spent wisely and targeted to best effect to achieve the desired outcomes.

## 1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.8.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

## 1.9 Recommendations

**CABINET is RECOMMENDED to**

- 1.9.1 **ENDORSE** the use of the BRE to undertake a stock modelling service and develop a private sector stock condition database.

The Director of Health and Housing confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Hazel Skinner

Nil

John Batty  
Director of health and Housing

Councillor Jill Anderson  
Cabinet Member for Housing

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	N/A	

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*