

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

12 November 2012

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

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 The number of people contacting the housing options team for advice remains high and is expected to increase as many families will undoubtedly be affected by the Government's proposed changes to the benefit system and resultant reduction in income due to benefit capping. It will be noted that the number of formal homelessness applications increased in September however it is too early to say if this trend will continue. The Housing Options Team remain committed to preventing families from becoming homeless.

Month	New homeless applications	Duty to house accepted	Duty to house rejected
Total 2010/11	95	38	63
Total 2011/12	55	37	19
April 2012	4	0	1
May 2012	3	1	2
June 2012	1	1	0
July 2012	5	2	3
August 2012	5	2	3
September 2012	9	5	4
Total 2012/13 to date	27	11	13

- 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 may not be reached during the same calendar month as it was made.

1.3 Housing options approaches

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

2012/13	Contact Made	Advice Only	Prevented	Relieved	Open
April	41	9	5	1	26
May	68	34	12	2	16
June	49	30	6	0	13
July	44	20	8	0	16
August	61	19	4	0	38
September	46	15	7	0	31
Total	309	127	42	3	140

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
31.1.12	8	5	13
29.2.12	6	5	11
31.3.12	6	3	9
30.4.12	6	6	12
31.05.12	5	3	8
30.06.12	5	3	8
31.07.12	5	3	8
31.08.12	5	5	10
30.09.12	5	6	11

1.4.2 It will be noted that the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation continues to remain stable, which is testament to the success of the preventative agenda. But homelessness casework has undoubtedly become more complex. No two cases are the same, and the majority require considerable officer input in order to prevent homelessness and secure the right long-term solution for the customer.

1.5 Reform of the homelessness legislation

1.5.1 Members will recall from the last meeting of this Board in July 2012 that the Localism Act 2011 allows local authorities to discharge their duties to homeless households by way of an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.

1.5.2 The relevant sections of the Localism Act 2011 came into force on 9 November 2012 alongside the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012. A policy for implementing these provisions is currently being developed and will be incorporated into the revised housing allocations scheme.

1.6 Housing register

1.6.1 Demand for social housing remains at a high level, with increasing numbers of households 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
January 2012	161	107	1,819 (includes 668 transfers)
February 2012	152	112	1,916 (includes 644 transfers)
March 2012	138	95	1,897 (includes 649 transfers)
April 2012	143	74	1,945 (includes 681 transfers)
May 2012	144	219	1,833 (includes 648 transfers)
June 2012	141	96	1,827 (includes 642 transfers)
July 2012	168	106	1,921 (includes 663 transfers)
August 2012	157	72	1,876 (includes 651 transfers)
September 2012	164	144	1,906 (includes 655 transfers)

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

Month	Homeseekers	Transfers	Total
January 2012	19 (70%)	8 (30%)	27
February 2012	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	16
March 2012	21 (72%)	8 (28%)	29
April 2012	24 (71%)	10 (29%)	34
May 2012	44 (68%)	21 (32%)	65
June 2012	25 (76%)	8 (24%)	33
July 2012	16 (53%)	14 (47%)	30
August 2012	21 (57%)	16 (43%)	37
September 2012	23(66%)	12(34%)	35

1.7 Legal implications

- 1.7.1 The Council has a legal duty to provide accommodation for households that are homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need. In the absence of suitable permanent accommodation, bed and breakfast and other forms of temporary accommodation must be made available instead.

1.8 Financial and value for money considerations

- 1.8.1 None associated with this report.

1.9 Risk assessment

- 1.9.1 There is a significant risk that levels of homelessness, and the consequent use of temporary accommodation will increase as a result of the economic downturn.

Background papers:

Nil

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