

**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 STRATEGY & 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 2014/15. 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 2014/15. 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 and some may not proceed. 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 development programme for 2011/12 shows the Kings Hill and Leybourne Grange affordable housing from Russet Homes, and hence the delivery for this period 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 provider partner.
- 1.1.6 The dip in outturn for the 2011/12 period is 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 Coldharbour Project**

- 1.2.1 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 awarded KCC £932k of unused grant allocation for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller pitches from elsewhere in the country.
- 1.2.2 The necessary land was acquired and a new site design for twenty six pitches, which was refined and developed working in consultation with local Members, along with a consultation event for the current site residents and wider Gypsy and Traveller community in Tonbridge & Malling.
- 1.2.3 Following the granting of planning permission KCC concluded a full tendering exercise to appoint a suitable contractor to build out the site, with 8 companies taking part and concluding with Thomas Sinden being appointed, who started onsite in May.
- 1.2.4 It is important to note there remained a capital funding shortfall between the HCA allocation and scheme costs, and this was despite KCC prudentially borrowing against the projected rental income from the additional pitch provision.

- 1.2.5 Consequently KCC and this Council were willing to forward-fund the shortfall to enable the work to proceed as one contract, with the aim of submitting a retrospective bid to the HCA. KCC, through its Project Approval Group, has signed off their £240k contribution which was then considered and approved by the Cabinet Member. Tonbridge & Malling's Cabinet, at its meeting on 28 March, was asked to agree that the Council forward fund circa £240,000 as our contribution towards the funding shortfall for the 26 pitch site. That decision obtained approval at full Council on 17 April.
- 1.2.6 Since these decisions Members will be glad to learn that in September a funding bid was submitted to the HCA to reclaim the £480,000 forward funding made by both authorities. The outcome of this bid round and the announcement of any successful bidders is hoped to be made by the HCA by the end of the calendar year.
- 1.2.7 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.
- 1.2.8 A Capital Plan Post Implementation Review pro-forma in respect of the Council's project evaluation costs for this project is attached at **[Annex 2]**.
- 1.2.9 The scheme is progressing well onsite and should be completed this financial year. The continuing progress of the Coldharbour scheme will be reported to a future meeting of the Gypsy and Traveller Issues Panel.
- 1.2.10 **Rural Affordable Housing Schemes**
- 1.2.11 Members will recall that the Council has a rolling programme of Rural Housing Needs Surveys, as described within the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. These surveys are carried out with our partner Action With Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). The Paper seeks to update Members as to the approximate timing of the next set of surveys, which are for Addington, West Malling, and Plaxtol.
- 1.2.12 A survey for Plaxtol was not initially listed as part of the next phase of surveys, however the potential for a new small affordable housing scheme has arisen in the village. Initial discussions have been held between the lead and local Members, the Parish Council, along with the housing association exploring the possibility of a new scheme. It is clear that any additional affordable housing supply will need to be supported by a robust housing needs survey, and ACRK have been instructed to undertake this work in the coming months.
- 1.2.13 The local Members for Addington along with Addington Parish Council have requested that the new survey for this parish is conducted by ACRK in March 2013, with the survey for West Malling hopefully following this, to be completed later in the summer of 2013.

### **1.2.14 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment**

1.2.15 The Council's previous Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) as provided through David Couttie Associates is at the end of its useful life. In order to maintain robust housing needs data for the Gypsy and Traveller community the Council is currently in the process of commissioning a new GTAA through Salford University. It is worth noting that the same team at Salford University have just completed the GTAAs for both Sevenoaks and Maidstone, and are expected to perform similar studies for other local authorities within Kent.

1.2.16 The Council is working jointly with Ashford Borough Council and Gravesham Borough Council, but each district will end up with their own bespoke GTAA. The primary data collection phase for our study consisting of interviews with the Gypsy and Traveller community has already been completed by Salford University, and the Council is expecting our draft GTAA to be ready for consultation first out the three within the partnership.

1.2.17 The new draft GTAA should be available at the start of the new calendar year, and the outcomes of the new study will be reported at the Gypsy and Traveller Issues Panel.

### **1.3 Strategic Tenancy Strategy**

1.3.1 Officers from Tonbridge & Malling have now concluded leading on the work through the Kent Housing Group to create a Tenancy Strategy Framework for Kent. This document is to form the optional template for Tenancy Strategies around the county to be based upon, but in every instance tailored to, local needs and local strategic requirements.

1.3.2 The Council's draft Tenancy Strategy is detailed in a separate Paper to this Board.

### **1.4 Isles Quarry West Borough Green**

1.4.1 Members will recall that the in previous Paper to the Board I reported that the developer for the Isles Quarry West scheme (Crest Nicholson) was in the final stages of submitting a fresh planning application for this site. The application was likely to describe a 177 unit scheme across two phases, with the affordable housing consisting of 37 homes for affordable rent and 16 for shared ownership, provided by Russet Homes. Crest Nicholson were seeking to provide 25 homes for shared equity within the affordable element of the scheme.

1.4.2 The scheme has continued to evolve and consequently the I am now expecting a revised application for Isles Quarry West, whilst possibly featuring a marginally lower yield in overall units, may lose the phased approach to delivery of the affordable housing, which is to be welcomed in terms of certainty of delivery.

1.4.3 The Council has continued to work with both Crest Nicholson and Russet Homes to ensure that the scheme is targeted at meeting the local housing need through

the creation of bespoke local lettings plans and nomination agreements for all the affordable housing tenures. To ensure the affordable homes best serve the local housing need these lettings plans include provisions to target and prioritise households from the immediate and surrounding parishes, before (if required) considering housing those from the wider borough.

- 1.4.4 Members are reminded that as well as ensuring a truly local connection such initiatives also look to manage aspects of the allocations such as child density amongst the households living there.

## 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. The Report indicates a continuing high demand for low cost home ownership products which far outweighs current supply.

Table 2 – TMBC Homebuy Statistics Quarter 4 (January – March) 2011 and Quarter 1 (April – June) 2012

Low Cost Home Ownership Product	Number of Households	
	2011 Q4	2012 Q1
Number of Enquiries	101	93
Number of Applications	92	87
First Time Buyers Initiative Sales	5	8
Newbuild Homebuy Sales	0	2
Resales	1	1

## 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 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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