

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD**

**25 February 2013**

**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 2011/12 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 is 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 was subsequently granted planning permission. Following a comprehensive tender process Thomas Sinden were appointed the contract to deliver the scheme and started construction last May.
- 1.2.3 Members will recall that 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.
- 1.2.4 Consequently KCC and this Council were willing to forward-fund the shortfall to enable the work to proceed as one contract, and in September a funding bid was submitted to the HCA to reclaim this forward funding made by both authorities. The outcome of this bid round was announced in December and I am pleased to be able to report the HCA awarded the project the full amount sought of £549,000.

- 1.2.5 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 help address the identified housing needs of our Gypsy and Traveller population. The scheme is progressing onsite and should be completed over the summer.

### **1.3 Rural Affordable Housing Schemes**

- 1.3.1 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).
- 1.3.2 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. Following initial discussions with the lead and local Members, the Parish Council, along with the housing association exploring the possibility of a new scheme, ACRK were instructed to undertake a new survey at the end of last year.
- 1.3.3 I can report that the survey work was very well received within Plaxtol, with the draft survey showing a very healthy response rate with supportive views. Officers are working with colleagues from ACRK to finalise the survey's data, the outputs of which will be reported back in more detail to this Board.

### **1.4 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment**

- 1.4.1 As reported at the last Board, the Council's previous Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was at the end of its useful life. In order to maintain robust housing needs data for the Gypsy and Traveller community the Council commissioning a new GTAA through Salford University, the same team that had just completed the GTAA's for both Sevenoaks and Maidstone.
- 1.4.2 The Council continues to work jointly with Ashford Borough Council and Gravesham Borough Council, but with each district ending up with their own bespoke GTAA. An advanced draft of the new GTAA is nearing completion, and the outcomes of the new study will be reported at a future meeting of the Gypsy and Traveller Issues Panel together with a more detailed update on the Coldharbour scheme.

### **1.5 Tenancy Strategy**

- 1.5.1 The Localism Act 2011 states that every local housing authority in England must prepare and publish a "Tenancy Strategy" setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing for its district are to have regard in formulating Tenancy Policies.
- 1.5.2 We have now concluded our work on the external consultation for the draft Tenancy Strategy, as detailed in a separate paper to this Board.

- 1.5.3 The draft Tenancy Strategy was very positively received by partners and stakeholders, reflecting the high degree of stakeholder engagement during its creation. The consultation feedback was supportive, and no amendments or revisions were required to the draft Strategy.

## 1.6 Low Cost Home Ownership Initiatives

- 1.6.1 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 2 & Quarter 3 2012

Low Cost Home Ownership Product	Number of Households	
	2012 Q2	2012 Q3
Number of Enquiries	86	82
Number of Applications	82	76
First Time Buyers Initiative Sales	15	13
Newbuild Homebuy Sales	1	0
Resales	0	0

## 1.7 Legal Implications

- 1.7.1 The Council needs to secure a sufficient supply of affordable housing to meet its statutory duties.

## 1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.8.1 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.

## 1.9 Risk Assessment

- 1.9.1 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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