

**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 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE**

**This report updates Members on the following:**

- **Green Deal;**
- **Additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding;**
- **Private Sector Stock Condition Survey; and**
- **Changes to the Russet repairs and maintenance contracts.**

**1.1 Green Deal**

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware that Green Deal is a new finance framework to support the installation of energy efficiency measures in homes and businesses with no upfront cost to the owner/occupier. The upfront capital is provided through a loan which is repaid in instalments through savings made via the energy bill. The 'Golden Rule' requires that the finance repayment for the energy saving measures should not exceed the expected cost savings. There will be interest paid on the loan and the rate will vary between providers. The interest rates are currently expected to be in the region of 6 to 7.5 per cent. Repayment terms could be up to 25 years depending on the lifetime of the product installed.
- 1.1.2 Some homes or householders will be eligible for a non-repayable grant to cover the cost of some or the entire Green Deal plan. These will be funded via the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). This is a fund estimated to be in the region of £1.3billion per year from the six largest energy companies. This replaces the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) funding.
- 1.1.3 Green Deal has now been launched and an awareness campaign is underway.
- 1.1.4 Within Kent, the Kent & Medway Green Deal Partnership has been set up to enable Kent to maximise the amount of funding coming into Kent particularly through ECO and to secure additional benefits from a large scale programme of

retrofit such as local jobs, opportunities for SMEs, local economic growth and training including apprenticeships.

- 1.1.5 Seven pilot areas have been identified in Kent for initial action under ECO. None of the pilot areas are within Tonbridge & Malling. These areas were chosen on the basis of incidence of solid wall, deprivation, fuel type and benefit levels.
- 1.1.6 There will also be the cross cutting themes of rural areas and affordable warmth and we hope to take advantage of these schemes.
- 1.1.7 Kent County Council recently announced a limited number of free Green Deal assessments and it is intended to collate information about this process to help inform any future work around procuring for a Green Deal provider in Kent.
- 1.1.8 The exact workings of both Green Deal and ECO are still under scrutiny and we will learn details as we go along. I will of course keep Members of this Board updated.

## **1.2 Additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding**

- 1.2.1 In early December 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government announced additional funding available for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programmes for 2012/13.
- 1.2.2 An additional £40 million was made available nationally. All local authorities received some additional funding and it was distributed using a relative needs weighted index.
- 1.2.3 Tonbridge & Malling B.C. received an additional £74,808 taking the total DFG budget for 2012/13 to £693,000. I am confident that this additional funding can be committed, if not spent in this financial year. Members will of course be updated on the 2012/13 activity and spend against the DFG budget at the May meeting of this Board.
- 1.2.4 Members will recall the hugely beneficial funding partnership with Russet resulting in the Council offering an annual DFG facility of £250,000 to meet the costs of tenant adaptation schemes in their stock. Russet match fund this facility, the effect of which is to add an additional £250,000 per annum to the budget available for Tonbridge and Malling residents. This arrangement has the added benefit of ensuring older residents and residents with disabilities in the private sector also have access to the major part of the funding available through the Council. The Director of Health and Housing met recently with the new Managing Director of Russet, Denise Reeves, to offer the same facility for 2013/14. The Director of Health and Housing has now received confirmation from Denise that the Circle Board has approved the continuation of this arrangement for 2013/14.

### 1.3 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey

- 1.3.1 At the November 2012 meeting of this Board, Members endorsed the use of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to undertake a private sector stock modelling service and develop a private sector stock condition database.
- 1.3.2 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 following housing indicators across the borough:
- 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.
- 1.3.3 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 1.3.2 provide useful information that we can use as the evidence base for any housing and health related strategies, and targeting of financial assistance under our Housing Assistance policy.
- 1.3.4 Negotiations between the BRE and the Council on the terms and conditions of the contract are nearly complete and once agreed the stock modelling service and development of the private sector stock condition database can proceed. Once the service is underway it takes approximately six weeks to have initial modelled data and maps.
- 1.3.5 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. The findings from the stock modelling data and maps will be reported to Members at a future meeting of this Board.

#### **1.4 Changes to the Russet repairs and maintenance contracts**

- 1.4.1 As from 17:00 on the 1 March 2013 Keepmoat will take over the response repairs contract from Mears. Similarly from 1 April 2013 the planned maintenance works contract, for example for new kitchens and bathrooms, will be managed by United House.
- 1.4.2 Both Keepmoat and United House are contractors for the Circle South East region; which covers the three Circle group partners, Russet, Merton Priory Homes and Mole Valley who are based in Dorking.
- 1.4.3 Keepmoat will have a base at Tonbridge but the call centre will be a regional one and is based at Merton Priory Homes. Russet is aware this is a move away from the current local call centre but they will be closely monitoring performance for their tenants. Russet tenants will continue to be able to use the existing telephone number 0800 197 2880 to report repairs and from the 1 March 2013 Russet will have an additional low cost mobile number 0300 500 444 for reporting repairs.
- 1.4.4 Russet is currently running a transition process that means Mears will be making appointments for Keepmoat so that hopefully the transition period for the change of contractors is as smooth as possible for tenants. A leaflet advising of the change of contractor is due out to all Russet tenants week beginning 18 February 2013.

#### **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 DFGs are a mandatory grant and valid applications have to be approved or refused within six months.
- 1.5.2 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.

#### **1.6 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.

Background papers:

Nil

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