

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

20 May 2013

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

Summary

The Council's Housing Options team continues to promote the prevention of homelessness and seeking to meet the housing needs of local residents. The number of households seeking advice and/or applying for social rented accommodation remains at a significant level, particularly as a result of the economic downturn.

1.1 Housing options and prevention of homelessness

1.1.1 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 changes to the benefit system and resultant reduction in income due to benefit capping. The Housing Options Team are committed to preventing families from becoming homeless. You will note the additional column below monitoring the time taken to process a homeless application. Good practice suggests Local Authority's should take no more than 33 days to complete their investigations.

Month	New homeless applications	Duty to house accepted	Duty to house rejected	Average No of days to process applications
January 2013	6	3	3	9
February 2013	10	7	3	15
March 2013	2	2	0	25
April 2013	4	0	4	14

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.

1.2 Housing options approaches

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

2013	Contact Made	Advice Only	Prevented	Relieved	Open
January	51	24	9	0	18
February	45	14	4	0	27
March	39	9	0	0	27
April	69	14	2	0	53

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.

1.3 Temporary accommodation

- 1.3.1 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
31.01.13	5	10	15
28.02.13	5	13	18
31.03.13	4	11	15
30.04.13	4	9	13

- 1.3.2 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.

1.4 DCLG Homelessness Funding

- 1.4.1 Members were reminded at Strategic Housing Advisory Board on 25 February 2013 that Kent and Medway local authorities received funding of £577K from

Department of Community and Local Government (DCLG), to enable Kent Authorities to bolster their front line provision for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping locally.

- 1.4.2 The Kent grouping which includes, Medway, Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Swale, Thanet, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells, decided that the best way to ensure that the needs of this client group are met in a consistent manner across Kent and so avoiding migration to areas with more services available is to appoint a Specialist Service Provider, it is proposed to call this service the Kent Advice Service for Single Homeless (KASSH).
- 1.4.3 Pre-Qualification Questionnaires were sent to seven organisations expressing an interest to tender by Medway Council who are leading the procurement process. All seven organisations returned the questionnaires and were considered suitable to be able to provide the service and so were sent a further Invitation to Tender. These invitations are due to be returned by 4 June 2013.

1.5 No Second Night Out

- 1.5.1 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council recognises that rough sleeping is a complex issue. The recent tragedies in Aylesford which saw the untimely death of 2 young men known to be rough sleeping in the local area has highlighted the need for early intervention and suitable provision for this client group where possible to prevent any further tragedies.
- 1.5.2 Every night, someone sleeps rough for the first time. The longer they stay out, the worse their problems become and the harder they are to overcome. No second night out is a simple standard, putting the right services in place so no one spends more than a single night on the streets.
- 1.5.3 This idea which was pioneered in London and other major cities has led to a dramatic fall in the number of new rough sleepers.
- 1.5.4 In partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, we have applied to the Kent Housing Group Innovation Fund 2013 for funding to enable the three authorities to provide a 'Crash Pad' type facility similar to larger local authorities who are operating 'No Second Night Out' schemes across the UK.

This initiative is currently in the very early stages of planning and negotiation. Members will be kept up to date as it progresses.

1.6 Gold Standard

- 1.6.1 On 9 April 2013 Housing Minister Mark Prisk announced a new Gold Standard that will set the bar for Local Authority Homelessness services. The Government

is investing £1.7 million in a programme of support and training to Local Authority's to enable them to gain Gold Standard status.

1.6.2 The scheme which is designed to help Councils learn from each other to deliver the best possible service and ensure that those facing the threat of losing their home get the support they need.

1.6.3 To reach Gold Standard Status, Local Authorities will need to meet key commitments including;

- offering a comprehensive prevention service, with advice and support for single people as well as families in need;
- working with local agencies to provide employment, education and training opportunities;
- helping householders facing the threat of repossession by providing access to mortgage rescue scheme; and
- adopting a local no second night out scheme to help prevent new rough sleepers from becoming entrenched in to a street lifestyle.

An initial meeting of representatives from the 13 Kent authorities has been held here at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to establish how many would be interested in achieving the standard. Interest is high so a further meeting has been arranged to which a National Practitioner Support Service, Specialist Adviser will be invited.

1.7 Housing Register

1.7.1 Demand for social housing remains at a high level. The number of applications received for year 2012/2013 has increased by 5.9 per cent compared to the previous year. 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 2013	128	178	1,736 (includes 629 transfers)
February 2013	207	51	1,761 (includes 629 transfers)
March 2013	173	59	1,773 (includes 628 transfers)
April 2013	Awaiting data	Awaiting data	1,664 (includes 603 transfers)

1.7.2 Applications are regularly reviewed, and those who either fail to respond to their annual review, or have moved since their original application are cancelled. We have recently undertaken a review of the housing register that has resulted in approximately 250 applications being removed.

1.7.3 The following table gives the breakdown of applicants who have been housed through choice based lettings:

Month	Homeseekers	Transfers	Total
January 2013	15(56%)	12(44%)	20
February 2013	19 (70%)	8 (30%)	27
March 2013	24 (75%)	8 (25%)	32

1.8 On-line Registration

1.8.1 There are currently eight Kent Authorities who have gone live with online registration. Ashford Borough Council, Dartford Borough Council, Dover District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Medway Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Swale Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council will not adopt on-line registration until late 2013.

Background papers:

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Nil

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