

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 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 Borough 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 initially awarded KCC £932,000 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 agreed to forward-fund the shortfall to enable the work to proceed as one contract In September 2012 a funding bid was submitted to the HCA to, and at the end of the year the HCA awarded the project the full amount sought of £549,000 and so the forward funding allocated was not needed.

1.2.5 Members are reminded that the purpose behind the expansion of the Coldharbour site is to address the pitch shortfall described in our Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment, and is therefore to help accommodate identified housing needs of our Gypsy and Traveller population. The scheme is progressing onsite and should be completed over the summer. The final details of the allocation process are still under discussion with KCC.

1.2.6 **Local Lettings Plans for Tonbridge Schemes**

1.2.7 Members will note that several affordable housing schemes are shortly due to complete in Tonbridge over the coming months. These include the Town & Country Housing Group development at Ashbys Yard, and the Moat schemes at The Red House site and Cannon Lane.

1.2.8 Officers have met both housing associations separately and at length to ensure robust local lettings plans are drafted that allow sustainable and manageable developments that also meet local housing needs and aspirations. As valued partners to the Council, each organisation was very keen to be involved in this important process and maximise the potential for each scheme to excel.

1.2.9 The local lettings plans are detailed operational documents agreed between the stock holding housing association and the Council that influence the allocations process, seeking to balance elements such as child densities and levels of economic activity between residents. For the Ashbys Yard scheme a mechanism has also been included to (where possible) maximise the potential for under occupying Russet Homes tenants in Tonbridge downsizing into this more suitable smaller accommodation, if they so wish.

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 arose in the village through one of our Registered Provider Partners, Moat, as described in previous papers to this Board. Following initial discussions with the lead and local Members, the Parish Council, ACRK undertook a survey at the end of last year. The survey work was very well received within Plaxtol, with the draft survey showing a very healthy response rate with supportive views, illustrating a “need” for seven affordable homes.

1.3.3 Moat have subsequently met with Plaxtol Parish Council and held a community event at the Memorial Hall to further explore delivering a small scheme of approximately seven houses, with the aim of submitting a detailed planning application to the Council later this summer

- 1.3.4 The next Rural Housing Needs Survey is hopefully to be in West Malling, Members will be update with further papers 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 though 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, with a final document available by June. The outcomes of the new study will be reported at future meetings of this Board.

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

Low Cost Home Ownership Product	Number of Households
	2012 Q4
Number of Enquiries	147
Number of Applications	139
First Time Buyers Initiative Sales	11
Newbuild Homebuy Sales	0
Resales	5

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 Financial and 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

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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