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TONBRIDGE & MALLING
BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

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NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.

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14 February 2014

To: MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board to be held in the Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Monday, 24th February, 2014 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART 1 - PUBLIC

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of interest
3. Minutes

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To confirm as a correct record the Notes of the meeting of Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on Monday, 11 November, 2013

4. Glossary 9 - 20

Matters for recommendation to the Cabinet

5. Housing Assistance Policy 2014-2016 21 - 44
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Matters submitted for Information

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9. Private Sector Housing Update 57 - 62
10. Strategy and Enabling Update 63 - 78
11. Housing Needs Update 79 - 82
12. External Consultations 83 - 84
13. Urgent Items

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

Matters for consideration in Private

14. Exclusion of Press and Public

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

Matters submitted for Information

15. Service of Statutory Notices 85 - 86

(Reasons: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

16. Urgent Items

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

MEMBERSHIP

Cllr A G Sayer (Chairman)
Cllr D J Trice (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Ms J A Atkinson
Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy
Cllr Mrs B A Brown
Cllr C Brown
Cllr D J Cure
Cllr Mrs S Luck

Cllr M Parry-Waller
Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole
Cllr D W Smith
Cllr Ms S V Spence
Cllr Mrs Woodger

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 11th November, 2013

Present: Cllr A G Sayer (Chairman), Cllr D J Trice (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr C Brown, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr M Parry-Waller and Cllr Ms S V Spence.

Councillors Mrs Anderson, Balcombe, Baldock, Mrs Bates, Bishop, Bolt, N Heslop, Luker and Mrs Murray were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Smith and Mrs Woodger.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

SH 13/042 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor N Heslop declared an Other Significant Interest in the report regarding the Supporting People Programme on the grounds that he was a member of the Board of the Bridge Trust. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

SH 13/043 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on 22 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SH 13/044 **GLOSSARY**

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health submitted a glossary of terms used within the reports to the Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

SH 13/045 **ENERGY COMPANY OBLIGATION PROGRAMME**

Decision Notice D130132MEM

The joint report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Cabinet Member for Housing gave an update on the delivery of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding within the Borough and sought endorsement of the proposed roll-out of the project.

RECOMMENDED: That the approach to the roll-out of the ECO funding project within the Borough be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

SH
13/046 **SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The report set out details of the commissioning intentions of the Kent Supporting People programme for the period 2014-2017.

SH
13/047 **REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME**

The report provided an update on the implementation of revisions to the Council's housing allocation scheme to reflect local needs.

SH
13/048 **LANDLORDS FORUM UPDATE**

The report outlined the aims and operation of the West Kent Landlord Forums and updated Members on the event held on 9 October 2013.

SH
13/049 **STRATEGY AND ENABLING UPDATE**

The report provided an update on progress made by the Council's Registered Provider (RP) Partners to provide new affordable homes within the Borough and provided an update on various housing strategy initiatives.

SH
13/050 **HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE**

The report provided an update on the activity of the Housing Options team. It was noted that the number of households seeking housing advice had significantly increased as a result of the economic downturn.

SH
13/051 **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE**

The report provided updates on the private sector stock condition survey modelling exercise undertaken by the Building Research Establishment (BRE), the Collective Switching Scheme and other measures taken in support of the private rented sector.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

SH
13/052 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information the following matter be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

**SH
13/053**

**SERVICE OF STATUTORY NOTICES
(Reason: LGA 1972 - Sch 12A Paragraph 3 - Financial or business
affairs of any particular person)**

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out details of statutory notices served since the last meeting of the Advisory Board.

The meeting ended at 2035 hours

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION

**Decision Taken By: CABINET MEMBER FOR
Housing**

Decision No: D130132MEM

Date: 11th November 2013

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

Energy Company Obligation Programme

**(Joint report of Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and Cabinet Member for Housing)
(Annex 1)**

The report gave an update on the delivery of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding within the Borough and sought endorsement of the proposed roll-out of the project.

Following consideration by the Strategic Housing Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing resolved that:
The approach to the roll-out of the ECO funding project within the Borough be endorsed.

Reasons: As set out in the report submitted to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board of 11 November 2013.

Signed Cabinet Member for J Anderson
Housing:

Signed Leader: N Heslop

Signed Chief Executive: J Beilby

Date of publication: 15 November 2013

This decision will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of 5 working days after publication unless it is called in.

GLOSSARY

TERM	EXPLANATION
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	Housing which includes social rented, affordable rented, and intermediate housing, provided to specified, eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
ACRK	Action with Communities in Rural Kent – formerly the Kent Rural Community Council. An independent voluntary organisation which: provides direct advice and support to community organisations; stimulates community action, particularly voluntary action, and encourages good practice; develops and manages demonstration projects; provides professional support and advice to key service providers; and raises awareness of rural issues and influences decision makers.
BEST VALUE	The means by which the Council is held accountable for the efficiency and cost effectiveness of its service provision and its proposals to improve on those services.
BME	Black & Minority Ethnic groups
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau – voluntary organization providing advice to the public on employment, housing, immigration/nationality, consumer debt, and welfare rights.
CBL	Choice-Based Lettings - system for allocating social housing which provides an opportunity for people seeking social housing to choose which properties they wish to be considered for via a bidding process.
CEN	Creative Environmental Networks. They operate the local Energy Savings Trust Advice Centre and work in partnership with the local authorities across Kent on a number of initiatives.
CLSP	Community Legal Services Partnership – partnership which brings together organisations offering legal and advice services, such as solicitors in private practice, Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centres, local authority in-house services, as well as representatives of the Legal Services Commission. All the partners act together to improve access to, and delivery of, legal and advice services in their local community. More than 200 Community Legal Service Partnerships have been established across England and Wales.
CMHT	Community Mental Health Team

TERM	EXPLANATION
CORE	Continuous Recording of Lettings – independently compiled statistics of all Housing Association letting activity
COMMUNITY PLAN	Strategic document developed by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to improve local services and to meet the needs and aspirations of local people. The aim of the Community Plan is to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough.
CO2	Carbon dioxide – a major contributor to global warming.
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment – assessment process introduced by the Audit Commission in 2002 as a tool to form a judgement about the performance of councils and their arrangements for improving services.
DECENT HOMES STANDARD	To be defined as ‘decent’, a home must: meet current statutory minimum standard for housing; be in a reasonable state of repair; have reasonably modern facilities and services; provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant: This is a grant made available to disabled persons to provide adaptations to their property. It is a mandatory grant. The amount of grant awarded is subject to a test of resources of the relevant person.
DIYSO	Do-It-Yourself Shared Ownership – former scheme funded by the Housing Corporation to provide cash grants to assist people in housing need to purchase a share of a home on the open market on a part rent/part buy basis.
ECOHOMES	An environmental assessment method for homes (superseded by the Code For Sustainable Homes) which addresses a range of environmental impacts such as energy, transport, pollution, materials, water, land use and ecology, health and well-being,
EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the ways by which the Council will encourage empty home owners to bring the empty home back into use.

TERM	EXPLANATION
ENERGY EFFICIENCY	Energy Efficiency is about reducing energy consumption in the house by improvements to a property and/or by making lifestyle changes.
EEC	Energy Efficiency Commitment – funding provided by the fuel utility companies for energy efficiency improvements, mainly insulation, by approved installers. 100% grants are available for priority households in receipt of one of the principal income or disability-related benefits. Partial grants are available for other households. The value of EEC funding varies and is linked to the carbon savings of the installed measures.
ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS	English Partnerships is the national regeneration agency, supporting high quality sustainable growth across the country. They are the key delivery agency for urban renaissance and the government’s new Sustainable Communities agenda.
ESTac	Kent Energy Centre – a not-for-profit organization that is one of a network of local energy advice centres. The ESTac is funded primarily by the Energy Saving Trust and all thirteen of Kent’s local housing authorities. KEC works in close partnership with the authorities to help achieve the targets under HECA, provide free energy advice to all Kent households and reduce domestic energy consumption.
EVERY CHILD MATTERS	Central government programme aimed at transforming children’s services. The Children Act 2004 provides the legal underpinning for ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’. A series of documents have been published which provide guidance under the Act, to support local authorities and their partners in implementing new statutory duties. Well-being is the term used in the Act to define the five Every Child Matters outcomes which are: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

TERM	EXPLANATION
HOUSING CORPORATION	The public body that was previously responsible for funding new affordable housing and regulating the Housing sector, replaced by the Homes & Communities Agency.
HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY	Survey carried out by the Borough Council to determine the housing needs of the borough including the need for affordable housing.
HOUSING REGISTER	A list maintained by the Borough Council of households requiring affordable housing.
HSSA	– Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix – annual statistical return which local housing authorities are required to provide to central government.
TERM	EXPLANATION
IGP Grant	Innovation and Good Practice Grant – grant made available by the Housing Corporation to fund projects to promote innovation and good practice amongst Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and their partners.
JARP	Joint Assessment Referral Procedure: A panel of relevant statutory agencies and local housing providers formed to consider the housing and support needs of vulnerable people.
JPPB	The Joint Policy and Planning Board: Established across Kent representing all the local authorities, Social Services and Health Authority to prioritise, monitor and review the provision of supported housing.
KCC	Kent County Council
KASH	Kent Action to Save Heat – energy efficiency advice and promotion scheme operating across kent. The scheme is managed by CEN.
FLOATING SUPPORT	This kind of support is “attached” to the client rather than the property and can follow the client if they move to another address. It lasts for as long as the client needs it and then it “floats” away to the next person in need. The client does not need to live at a certain address to receive the support.
FUEL POVERTY	Where people cannot afford to heat their homes to an acceptable level at a reasonable cost i.e. 10-20% of their disposable income.

TERM	EXPLANATION
GOSE	Government Office of the South East: Regional operations for nine central Government departments. Structured through multi-disciplinary teams that include housing and regeneration.
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency is the new housing and regeneration agency for England launched in December 2008. The HCA joins up the delivery of housing and regeneration under one roof, bringing together the functions of English Partnerships, the investment functions of the Housing Corporation, the Academy for sustainable communities, and key housing and regeneration programmes previously delivered by CLG
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 – Requires local authorities to develop strategies leading to a ‘significant reduction’ in domestic energy consumption in their areas by 2010 and to report annually on progress made. A significant reduction is defined as 30%.
HIA	Home Improvement Agency – A not-for-profit organisation which assists older, disabled and other vulnerable people to have adaptations and repairs/improvements carried out to their homes to enable them to remain in their homes. Operated by in touch.
HOUSING ASSISTANCE GRANT	A discretionary grant made available by the Council under its Housing Assistance Policy to homeowners to fund repairs/improvements to their homes.
HiMP	Health Improvement Programme: Overall strategy in which health authorities work towards the improvement of the health of the nation. Within the HiMP there are particular targets for reducing heart disease, speeding up the treatment of cancers etc.
HNAS	Housing Needs and Affordability Study
HMOs	Houses in Multiple Occupation – Defined under section 254 of the Housing Act 2004. Generally where there is more than two non-related persons sharing a house where there is some sharing of facilities i.e. bathroom, kitchen.

TERM	EXPLANATION
HHSRS	Housing Health & Safety Rating System – new system for assessing housing conditions and determining enforcement action which replaced the fitness standard with effect from April 2006. An assessment of the dwelling will involve a physical survey of the property noting the hazards. There are 29 listed hazards which will be classified according to the likelihood of the harm occurring and the severity of the harm, as either category 1 or category 2 hazard, following a complex calculation.
HOME BUY	Scheme funded by the Homes & Community Agency to provide cash grants to assist people in housing need (including key workers) to purchase a home on the open market.
HOME REPAIR ASSISTANCE	A discretionary grant made available by local housing authorities under the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 to vulnerable householders to fund repairs/improvements to their homes. Repealed under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY	Survey carried out by the Borough Council to determine and assess the condition of housing within the borough including the cost of works needed to bring homes up to the Decent Homes Standard.
ESTac	Kent Energy Centre – a not-for-profit organization that is one of a network of local energy advice centres. The ESTac is funded primarily by the Energy Saving Trust and all thirteen of Kent's local housing authorities. KEC works in close partnership with the authorities to help achieve the targets under HECA, provide free energy advice to all Kent households and reduce domestic energy consumption.
KEEP	Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership – the consortium of all Kent local authorities working together to co-ordinate projects, share information, improve domestic energy efficiency and reduce domestic energy consumption.
KEY WORKERS	A key worker (as used for the purposes of the Key Worker Living (KWL) Programme) is someone employed by the public sector in a front line role delivering an essential public service in a sector where there are serious recruitment and retention problems: health, education and community safety sectors.

TERM	EXPLANATION
LAA	Local Area Agreement – an agreement (alongside a Local Public Service Agreement) between the Kent local area and central Government. It was established through Kent County Council (KCC), working with the Kent Partnership and other local partners. The intention of the agreement is to drive further improvements to services to local people in Kent from 2005-08. The LAA comprises a set of 18 agreed outcomes with an ambitious work programme. Outcome 17 is 'to improve Kent residents' access to homes of excellent quality, in the right place, at the right time and at right cost', and includes targets for the delivery of new affordable homes across Kent.
LSVT	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer- Wholesale transfer of housing stock from a local authority to a housing association.
LDF	Local Development Framework – the Governments proposed replacement for the Local Plan.
LASHG	Local Authority Social Housing Grant – formerly capital grant funding paid by local housing authorities to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to support the development of new affordable homes. Grants paid by local housing authorities were reimbursed in full by the Housing Corporation. LASHG was abolished with effect from April 2003.
LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITY	Local authorities with the statutory responsibility for housing matters. In two-tier local government areas such as Kent (excluding Medway, which is served by a unitary local authority, Medway Council) the district/borough councils are local housing authorities.
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership – a body consisting of key local organisations whose aim is to drive, develop and deliver the Community Plan and its review. The Tunbridge Wells borough LSP is known as the Community Plan Partnership.
LOW COST HOME OWNERSHIP	A range of initiatives which result in housing for sale at a lower price than the average open market price. Includes schemes such as shared ownership.
ME	Minority Ethnic – people from black, asian and ethnic minority communities.
NLA	National Landlords Association. National organisation working with and for landlords. Work in partnership with local authorities in Kent to help deliver landlord forums and other initiatives.

TERM	EXPLANATION
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – central government department established in 2002 which had responsibility for national policy and guidance on local government, housing and planning. Replaced by the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) in May 2006
OT	Occupational Therapist – qualified professional who deals with cases where the service user has complex or multiple needs. OTs work in the community seeing people in their own homes where appropriate and assessing their needs according to their circumstances. The role of Kent County Council's OT Bureau is to assess the needs of people of all ages who have difficulty managing activities of daily living due to a physical disability or frailty for special equipment and/or adaptations to their home which will increase their control over the practical aspects of their everyday life.
PCT	Primary Care Trust: Part of the Health Authority with responsibility for primary care and general practitioner services.
PFI	Private Finance Initiative: Government scheme through which large capital projects can be financed.
PURCHASE & REPAIR	Scheme whereby a Provider of social Housing purchases a property on the open market and carries out repairs/improvements prior to reletting as affordable housing.
PSHCS	Private Sector House Condition Survey: The survey looks at the internal and external elements of a sample of homes throughout the borough to predict the work that will be needed and the cost of that work to bring homes in the borough to a decent standard.
PWLD	People with Learning Disabilities
PSL	Private Sector Leasing – scheme whereby private sector properties are leased by the Council for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.
RCGF	Recycled Capital Grant Fund – receipts accruing from the sale of equity stakes in shared ownership accommodation.
RSL	Registered Social Landlord – non-profit making housing organisation managing and developing affordable housing, now called Registered Providers.

TERM	EXPLANATION
RIGHT TO ACQUIRE	A scheme giving eligible tenants of registered social landlords the legal right to buy the home they currently rent.
RIGHT TO BUY	Government policy that allows tenants of local authorities to purchase their home from councils with stock.
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance: Notes issued by Government to indicate its planning policies for the regions.
RP	Registered provider of social housing in England, regulated by the TSA irrespective of the private, public, for profit or not for profit status.
RURAL EXCEPTION SITES	Small plots of land in or on edge of villages to meet local needs for affordable housing on sites which would not have been granted planning permission for open market housing.
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure is a measurement on a scale of 1 to 100, which indicates the energy efficiency of a property. The higher the rating the more energy efficient the property.
SECTION 106 (S106) AGREEMENT	Agreement under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 on development of land. Often used as a legally binding agreement between a local authority and developer for a percentage of affordable social housing in a development. Often at nil public cost.
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency established in 1998 coming into operation April 1999 to take the lead in promoting the sustainable economic development of the area.
SEERA	South East England Regional Assembly – grouping of all South East local authorities with economic and social partners (businesses, voluntary agencies) set up and funded by central government to promote the South East England region. SEERA is the regional planning body responsible for the South East Plan and, with effect from April 2006, the South East Regional Housing Strategy.
SMART	How targets should be set if they are to be effective - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely.
SOCIAL HOUSING	Subsidised housing provided by local authorities or housing associations.
SOUTH EAST REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD	The strategic public body responsible for allocating public funding to Registered Providers of Social Housing and local authorities for housing investment in the South East.

TERM	EXPLANATION
SCG	Specified Capital Grant – capital grant funded by central government and paid to local housing authorities to meet part of the cost of funding Disabled Facilities Grants
SHARED OWNERSHIP	A form of affordable housing where the householder buys a share of the property and rents the remaining share, traditionally from a Register Provider In some cases it is possible for the householder to buy further shares of the property up to 100% ownership. See also ‘Low cost home ownership’.
SMART TARGETS	Specific, measurable, achievable, resourced, time-bound targets.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document – document issued under the Local Development Framework (LDF) process setting out planning policy/guidance on a specific topic, eg affordable housing.
SPLA	Southern Private Landlords’ Association – a not-for-profit organisation representing residential landlords throughout Southern England. The Association actively seeks to achieve and maintain quality accommodation for rent and high standards of management in the private rented sector, whilst protecting and furthering landlords’ interests at both local and national level. SPLA offers landlords convenient access to a range of information, advice, services and support, which they would have difficulty finding elsewhere.
SHG	Social Housing Grant is capital grant to housing associations and other developing bodies to fully or partially fund social housing paid under S18 of the Housing Act 1996.
SUPPORTED HOUSING	Schemes for client groups needing additional support or care, e.g. people with learning difficulties, young at risk, frail elderly etc. Previously referred to, as special needs housing.
SUPPORTING PEOPLE	Grant for support services for vulnerable people to improve their quality of life and independence, providing people with housing related support services to remain independent or gain independence in their own home. Paid by central Government, administered by local authorities in partnership with NHS bodies and probation services.

TERM	EXPLANATION
TSA	Tenant Services Authority, launched alongside the HCA in December 2008, the TSA has taken over the Housing Corporation's responsibility for regulating housing associations and social landlords.
UNFIT HOUSING	A property was considered unfit for human habitation if it failed to meet one or more of the requirements of the fitness standard laid down in Section 604 of the Housing Act 1985 as amended by the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 and by reason of that failure was not reasonably suitable for occupation. The fitness standard was replaced by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which was introduced under the Housing Act 2004 in April 2006.
WARM FRONT	A central government-funded grant scheme (administered by EAGA) to provide heating and insulation to certain vulnerable households (e.g. over 60s, families with young children etc) where in receipt of one of the principal income or disability-related benefits. The Kent Energy Centre (KEC) can provide information on the qualifying criteria and make referrals to the scheme. Maximum grant available is currently £3,500 (or £6000 for oil central heating)
WINDFALL SITES	Sites not identified in development plan that may become available for development over the life of the plan.
YOT	Youth Offending Team – part of the Kent Youth Offending Service (YOS). There is a YOS in every local authority area in England and Wales. They are made up of representatives from the Police, Probation Service, Social Services, health, education, Drugs and Alcohol Team (DAT) and housing. Each YOT identifies the needs of individual young offenders by assessing them using a standardised national assessment guide. It identifies the specific problems that make the young person offend, as well as measuring the risk they pose to others.
ZONE AGENT	A Registered Provider of Social Housing (historically appointed by the Housing Corporation) to market low cost home ownership schemes (including those for key workers) across a sub-regional area. The zone agent deals with applications and assesses eligibility for such schemes. Moat Housing Group is the 'zone agent' for Kent.

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Joint Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and Cabinet Member for Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY 2014-2016

Summary

This report proposes changes to the Housing Assistance policy to reflect the recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of the policy in light of the medium term financial strategy. The changes also aim to target the available assistance to reflect the Council's key strategic priorities.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Council has supported improvements in the private housing sector for many years. However, there continue to be homes in a poor state of repair and people living in homes which are of poor quality. Through our Housing Assistance Policy the Borough Council aims to focus resources to encourage home owners to improve their homes while providing financial support for the most vulnerable and most in need.
- 1.1.2 Recent developments such as welfare reform changes, local authorities being able to discharge homeless duty into the private rented sector, increased fuel prices and the developing links between public health and housing, has raised the importance of housing assistance more than ever.
- 1.1.3 As such, Housing Assistance plays an important role in meeting some of the Council's key strategic priorities:
- Health and Well Being;
 - Children and Young People;
 - Community Safety; and
 - Housing
- 1.1.4 The quality of the home has a significant impact on health. A warm, dry and secure home is associated with better health. Housing-related hazards that

increase the risk of illness include damp, mould, excess cold and structural defects that increase the risk of an accident (such as poor lighting, or lack of stair handrails).

- 1.1.5 In addition to basic housing requirements, other factors that help to improve well-being include the neighbourhood, security of tenure and modifications for those with disabilities. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) has calculated that nationally poor housing costs the NHS at least £600 million per year.
- 1.1.6 The over arching aim of the Council's "Mind the Gap" initiative is that it will help us focus on addressing the root causes of ill health in areas where the Borough Council has a remit, either directly or with our partners, for providing services and support to our residents, based around the wider determinants of health. Examples of the areas of service that have a health dimension are:
- Housing – homelessness, affordable housing, housing options, housing standards and conditions in the private sector; and
 - Advice and support – welfare reform, benefits, targeted interventions, e.g. fuel poverty, troubled families programme.
- 1.1.7 It is recognised that the primary responsibility for repairing and maintaining a property rests with the owner. However, the Council has certain statutory responsibilities to fulfil and should take steps to protect and assist vulnerable members of the community whilst also providing advice to all residents to help them maintain their own homes.
- 1.1.8 Through the Housing Assistance policy the Council will help improve the health, safety and wellbeing of residents in private sector housing within the borough that are affected by poor housing standards or disadvantaged through social deprivation, disability and vulnerability. To achieve these aims, three areas of assistance have been identified as priorities for the use and targetting of resources: Home Improvements, Warm Homes, and Home Safety Checks.

1.2 Home Improvements

- 1.2.1 It is well established that the condition of a person's home can have a negative impact on their health. Deficiencies in the home can lead to health problems, which in turn can influence community stability, crime, environmental issues and increase costs for health providers.
- 1.2.2 If a category 1 hazard is identified in a private sector property the Council has a duty to take action under the Housing Act 2004. The most common hazards found are excess cold and the potential for falls. The indirect health impacts of cold housing are widely documented. Dexterity can be negatively affected resulting in an increased risk of injury through falls. The average cost to the state of a fractured hip is £28,665. In many cases the cause of a fractured hip is a fall in the home. The recent BRE Housing Stock Modelling exercise commissioned by

the Council indicated 8 per cent of properties contain serious fall hazards. Once an older person has had a fall it can impact on their self confidence and can result in social isolation, an increased fear of falling again, depression and reduced quality of life.

- 1.2.3 The ability to access Housing Assistance funding to reduce the hazard of a fall in the home through improved lighting or an additional handrail helps to prevent the high cost to the state and helps the resident live a safer, independent life in their own home. The Localism Act enables the Council to discharge its duty to house homeless households by an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. With the high level of demand for social housing the private rented sector plays an ever more important role in meeting housing need. Clearly we need to ensure that the properties we are using to discharge our duty, as well as ones where we are helping priority need clients to access via the Council's rent deposit bond scheme, are a good standard. The private sector housing team plays a key role in ensuring these properties are safe and warm. The Housing Options team have a limited number of agents/landlords who will work with the Council in taking clients who are in receipt of Local Housing Allowance and this partnership needs to be encouraged and protected. The ability to access funding (which is repayable by the landlord on sale of property) to assist a landlord to improve his property can help to ensure that potential lettings do not fall through and ensure families are moved out of bed and breakfast accommodation as quickly as possible.
- 1.2.4 Furthermore, homes that are currently empty are an important resource to help meet housing need at a time when the demand for social housing far exceeds the supply. Advice, assistance and incentives will be offered to owners of properties to help bring properties back into use. Conditions of assistance will require that homes brought back into use are used to both prevent homelessness and discharge the Council's homeless duties
- 1.2.5 The Council has a responsibility to improve the standard and quality of private sector housing so that it meets the current statutory minimum standards for housing in accordance with Housing Act 2004. This assistance will help the Council achieve these aims.

1.3 Warm Homes

- 1.3.1 Living in a cold home can affect an occupant's mental health. For example, the anticipation of a high fuel bill can increase stress not only for the bill payer, but for all members of a household who "go without" in order to maintain energy payments. The reality for many households can be "heat or eat". The level of a home's energy efficiency can affect a person's life chances, children's motivation and educational attainment. Having to choose to spend the family budget on heating or food has an effect on nutrition and maintaining a healthy diet.
- 1.3.2 Fuel poverty continues to be an issue for residents within Tonbridge & Malling. The recent BRE Housing Stock Modelling exercise commissioned by the Council

indicated 10 per cent of households are fuel poor. The ability to ensure that homes are adequately heated and insulated through provision of efficient heating systems and appropriate insulation remain an important part of the Housing Assistance policy particularly in the case of vulnerable households. Wherever possible residents are and will continue to be referred to other funding schemes where they exist for heating and insulation. However we have recent experience that schemes under the Government's new flagship scheme for energy efficiency – the Energy Company Obligation – are not fully funding measures, even for vulnerable residents dependent on benefits. The ability of the Council to be able to pay the contributions on behalf of the residents ensures the installation of an efficient heating system is achieved.

1.4 Home Safety Assistance

- 1.4.1 Home safety assistance protects the occupier's health, safety and security. Health inequalities arise from differences in the social and economic conditions in which people are born and live. Poor housing conditions, overcrowding and affordability will have an adverse affect on public health and well being and exacerbate health inequalities. Making modifications to improve home safety, can lead to enhanced health that not only benefits the individual but also brings wider social and economic benefits.
- 1.4.2 A key driver for this assistance is to reduce the rate of emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people and older people. Vulnerable families and older people will be provided with a home safety risk assessment, advice and support and the installation of equipment including child safety gates, fireguards, window restrictors, bathmats, cupboard locks, and will also involve checking smoke alarms, electrical safety, carbon monoxide detectors and fire escape advice.
- 1.4.3 This assistance through the provision of safety measures will also enable victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own home where it is safe for them to do so and where it is their choice and prevent homelessness. Security equipment will be installed such as door chains, viewers, window locks and personal safety alarms.

1.5 Review of the Housing Assistance Policy

- 1.5.1 The matters outlined in this report provided a focus of the recent Scrutiny Review. Consequently, it is proposed to amend the existing Housing Assistance policy to reflect the three key areas identified in 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4, and a copy of the draft Housing Assistance policy is included at **[Annex 1]**.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 The Council is not under a statutory requirement to provide financial assistance for private sector renewal but if the Council is to provide financial assistance it is required to publish a policy on how it intends to use the powers under the

Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002 to provide housing assistance.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 The Home Improvements assistance and Warm Homes assistance funding will be repayable to the Council when the property is sold. The amount of repaid funding coming back to the Council varies from year to year but when this occurs, the repaid funding is then available for reinvestment into the Housing Assistance budget.
- 1.7.2 At the 28 January 2014 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the appropriate level for the Housing Assistance budget was considered to be £90,000. The annual net cost to the Council within the Capital Plan will be £60,000 as £30,000 of the budget will be made up of assumed grant repayments. This provides a saving of £46,000 per year compared to the existing base allocation and still enables the delivery of the three key areas of Home Improvements, Warm Homes and Home Safety Checks as discussed earlier.
- 1.7.3 Any shortfall in repaid funding will come from the Housing Assistance Reserve, similarly any excess or under spend on the annual budget will be transferred to the Housing Assistance Reserve. The Housing Assistance Reserve will be capped and once this is exceeded the difference will be retained in general reserves.
- 1.7.4 The Housing Assistance policy will be reviewed in 2016 in line with the capital plan budget and it is hoped that once the new policy has had the opportunity to bed in, the benefits to health and well being can be demonstrated to enable future alternative sources of funding to be found.

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 As a statutory Housing Authority the Council has a duty to review and report on the housing conditions in the area. It is important that where funding is offered to improve housing conditions it is spent wisely and to best effect to achieve the desired outcomes.
- 1.8.2 Failure to provide housing assistance to private sector homeowners may contribute to rising levels of poor quality private sector housing and result in households with limited incomes exposed to risks to their health and safety.

1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.9.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.10 Policy Considerations

- 1.10.1 The Housing Assistance Policy changes will make a positive contribution to targeting financial assistance to those most in need to improve their living

conditions, thereby impacting the policy agenda in relation to housing, healthy lifestyles, safeguarding children and sustainability.

- 1.10.2 The changes will also contribute to achieving the desired outcomes in the Council's health inequalities action plan 2012 – 2015 contained in "Mind the Gap" and the Council's key corporate priorities.

1.11 Recommendations

- 1.11.1 **CABINET** is **RECOMMENDED** to **AGREE** the Council's revised Housing Assistance Policy as detailed in this report.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Linda Hibbs/Hazel
Skinner

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and
Environmental Health

Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The funding is available to all customers who apply, providing they meet the eligibility criteria therefore we do not believe it will have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The potential outcome for all equality groups, often vulnerable, is the chance to improve their home and give them the opportunity to stay in their home much longer than may be achievable without the help of this funding, therefore improving the quality of life and well being.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.

**REGULATORY REFORM (HOUSING
ASSISTANCE) (ENGLAND AND WALES) ORDER
2002**

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE
POLICY 2014-16**

Housing Assistance Policy 2014-2016

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Housing Assistance Policy 2014-2016

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document details how Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (“the Council”) intends to use its power under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to improve the quality of privately owned homes for those most in need.
- 1.2 In addition it includes the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).
- 1.3 It sets out the range of financial assistance that the Council will make available, together with the eligibility criteria and conditions that will be applied to each form of assistance.

2 Key Priorities and Aims of the Policy

- 2.1 Through the policy the Council will help improve the health, safety and wellbeing of residents in private sector housing within the Borough that are affected by poor housing standards or disadvantaged through social deprivation, disability and vulnerability.

The aims of the policy are:

- To help residents maintain their independence
- Help residents achieve better housing and living conditions
- Help address housing need through better use of the private sector

3 Achieving the aims

- 3.1 The primary responsibility for maintaining private sector housing rests with the owners of individual properties. However, the Council recognises that some owners will not have the necessary resources to fully carry out this responsibility.

Accordingly the Council through the work of its Private Sector Housing Team will offer practical, professional and impartial advice to ensure that the aims of the policy are met.

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Assistance will be offered under four headings:

1. Disabled Facilities Grants
2. Home Improvements
3. Warm Homes
4. Home Safety

4 Links to the Council's Strategic Priorities

4.1 The Council's vision is of "An organisation that provides excellent public services, good value for money and effective community leadership". This Housing Assistance Policy plays an important role in meeting some of the Council's key priorities, namely:

- Health and Well Being
- Children and Young People
- Community Safety
- Housing

4.2 The Housing Strategy action plan sets out priorities and actions to tackle identified housing needs in the Borough. Some of these priorities will be delivered in part by this policy. These are:

- Private sector renewal and energy efficiency
- Assisting vulnerable households
- Addressing crime reduction

5 Funding and Resources to Implement the Policy

5.1 The net capital budget for funding works under the policy is set out in the Council's Capital Plan. It is anticipated that monies recovered under repayment conditions or any breach of conditions will be repaid into the Housing Assistance capital reserve budget thus allowing money to be "recycled". The promotion of this policy and assistance available will be proportionate to the available capital budget.

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With the exception of Disabled Facilities Grants, the amount of assistance given each year will be dependent upon the level of capital resources available for housing interventions through the Council's Capital Programme.

6 Policy Review and Monitoring

- 6.1 This policy will commence on the 1st April 2014 and be reviewed on an annual basis. Outcomes from the Housing Assistance policy will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

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7 Types of Assistance Available

7.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

Type of Assistance	Disabled Facilities Grant
Purpose/Key outcomes	A mandatory grant to enable people with a disability to continue to live independently in their own homes by funding adaptations needed to facilitate access to the property or its amenities; or to assist people to move to more suitable accommodation to meet their needs.
Eligibility Criteria (Applicant)	Applicant must be over 18 years of age with a 'qualifying' interest in the property as defined in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Applicant subject to a statutory test of resources unless the DFG is to meet the needs of a child with a disability.
Eligibility Criteria (Property)	The adaptation works need to be 'reasonable' and 'practicable' as defined in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
Conditions	If the applicant is an owner occupier and their grant is over £5,000, the amount over £5,000 is repayable up to a maximum of £10,000 if the property is sold within 10 years of grant completion.
Maximum Assistance	Maximum £30,000 for adapting existing home or maximum £5,000 if providing funding to assist person to move to more suitable accommodation.

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7.2 Discretionary Home Improvements Assistance

Type of Assistance	Home Improvements Assistance
Purpose/Key outcomes	A discretionary assistance to reduce the risk of a fall in the home of a vulnerable person; prevent hospitalisation or re-housing by carrying out repairs or improvements to deal with significant risks to health or safety to allow a vulnerable occupant to remain in their home. To fund improvements to rental properties to prevent homelessness and allow the Council to discharge its homeless duties. To bring long term empty properties (empty longer than six months) back into use.
Eligibility Criteria (Applicant)	<p>Applicant must be over 18 years of age.</p> <p>For owner occupiers or tenants with a repairing obligation in receipt of a means tested benefit, private sector landlords or empty home owners.</p> <p>Other forms of funding have been fully investigated and exhausted.</p> <p>Applicant not in Council Tax arrears.</p>
Eligibility Criteria (Property)	<p>The dwelling house must be at least ten years old.</p> <p>Where the Private Sector Housing officer considers essential works are necessary to eliminate significant risks to current occupiers health and safety or considers improvements are necessary to facilitate occupation to prevent homelessness.</p>
Conditions	Repayable on sale of the property.
Maximum Assistance	Maximum £10,000

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7.3 Discretionary Warm Homes Assistance

Type of Assistance	Warm Homes Assistance
Purpose/Key outcomes	A discretionary assistance to ensure that homes are adequately heated and insulated through provision of efficient heating systems and appropriate insulation.
Eligibility Criteria (Applicant)	<p>Applicant must be over 18 years of age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner occupiers or tenants with a repairing obligation in receipt of a means tested benefit, OR • Owner occupiers or tenants with a repairing obligation who live within an area being targeted by the Council for insulation improvements under Energy Company Obligation funding, OR • a private sector landlord working with the Council by accepting nominated tenants. <p>Other forms of funding have been fully investigated and exhausted.</p> <p>Applicant not in Council Tax arrears.</p>
Eligibility Criteria (Property)	<p>The dwelling house must be at least ten years old.</p> <p>Property fails to provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort as defined under the Decent Homes Standard.</p>
Conditions	Repayable on sale of the property.
Maximum Assistance	Maximum £10,000

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7.4 Discretionary Home Safety Assistance

Type of Assistance	Home Safety Assistance
Purpose/Key outcomes	A discretionary assistance to reduce accidents, improve security and enable victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own home where it is safe to do so by providing advice, support and the installation of child safety and security equipment.
Eligibility Criteria (Applicant)	<p>Applicant must be over 18 years of age.</p> <p>For owner occupier or private sector tenant who is vulnerable; or has been referred by crime prevention or health professional; or referred by a health visitor where property occupied by a child under the age of 5.</p> <p>Other forms of funding have been fully investigated.</p>
Eligibility Criteria (Property)	Property identified as a risk by a trained assessor, health professional, Police, Crime Reduction Unit or health visitor.
Conditions	Not repayable
Maximum Assistance	Maximum £1,000

The definition of a means tested benefit is that used for the Government's Energy Company Obligation funding, which includes State Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support and Working Tax Credit.

7.5 Assistance is not available for the following:

- a) Those dwellings that fall outside the definition of residential premises in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 Chapter 1 paragraph 1 (4) or those dwellings that fall outside of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- b) Cosmetic repairs such as redecoration or cleaning

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- c) Finishing DIY jobs started by the owner or others, unless there are extenuating circumstances
- d) Works which would normally be covered by a household insurance policy regardless of whether you have a policy or not
- e) Works which have already been completed.

7.6 The Council retains the right to apply a maximum amount payable in respect of individual approvals for assistance. The Council retains the right at any time to introduce a mechanism for further prioritisation of assistance under this policy to reflect budgetary requirements at the time.

7.7 Should any loan scheme cease and loans are no longer paid or are called in then any assistance towards those schemes will cease.

8 Process for Applying for Housing Assistance under this Policy

8.1 The Council will provide all the relevant forms to be completed to apply for assistance under this policy. These forms should be submitted, as a complete application, to the Council when all the information required as detailed in the eligibility criteria is available. If all the information required is not provided the application will not be treated as complete and will not be considered for approval.

8.2 The Council will notify an applicant for assistance whether their application is approved or refused. The notification will be in writing as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event, no later than three months after a complete application is received. Financial assistance will be approved by officers authorised by the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health.

8.3 If the application is approved, the notification will also specify the works, which are eligible for assistance, the value of the assistance and the form that the assistance will take.

8.4 If the application is refused, the Council will explain the reasons for the refusal and the procedure for appealing against the decision.

Housing Assistance Policy 2014-2016**9 Conditions Attached to Assistance under the Policy****9.1 Eligibility conditions**

9.1.2 To make an application for housing assistance the eligibility criteria for the assistance must be met.

9.1.3 An application for assistance shall be in a form prescribed by the Council and shall include ALL of the following:

- a) A completed application form including details of the applicant, the property, financial information (where necessary) and a signed declaration by the applicant. Where the applicant has an owner's interest all other persons with an owner's interest are required to sign the declaration also.
- b) Full particulars including, where relevant, plans and specifications, of the works for which assistance is sought ("the eligible works").
- c) At least two estimates from different contractors showing a breakdown of the cost of carrying out the eligible works, unless the Council otherwise agrees to only one estimate, in any particular case. Please note that estimates from contractors with a known connection to the applicant are not acceptable.
- d) Full particulars of any professional fees and other charges/expenses which relate to the preparation for and carrying out of the eligible works.
- e) Consent in writing from all the owners of the dwelling and any tenant, to the carrying out of the eligible works.
- f) A declaration to be signed confirming agreement to the housing assistance conditions and to repay the assistance if the conditions are breached.
- g) A declaration to be signed confirming the property is to be used as a dwelling.
- h) If the applicant is a landlord, a written agreement to make available for letting the dwelling as a residence throughout the period referred to in the detailed housing assistance scheme following the date of completion of works or such other period of time as may be agreed between the applicant and the Council.

9.1.4 Where the dwelling to which an application relates is a shared ownership property, the applicant should, unless extenuating circumstances apply, have lived in the

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property for at least five years before the date of application for assistance. This does not apply to a disabled facilities grant.

9.1.5 Where the dwelling to which an application relates is a mobile home/caravan or houseboat, the following eligibility criteria will apply:

- the applicant should, unless extenuating circumstances apply, for example if the applicant is deemed as vulnerable because of health risks and/or age, have lived in the mobile home/caravan or houseboat for at least five years before the date of application for financial assistance. This does not apply to any assistance provided to adapt a property to meet the needs of a disabled person; and
- the mobile home/caravan or houseboat should be on an authorised site or mooring which is for permanent residential use; and
- financial assistance will not be provided where the works required are to meet the requirements of a caravan site licence under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

9.1.6 Cases that fall outside of this policy but which exhibit special extenuating circumstances will be reported to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health for a decision.

9.2 Payment conditions

9.2.1 Loan payments will be paid in accordance with the conditions detailed in any agreement with the Council and any loan provider.

9.2.2 The following conditions apply to ALL applications for assistance under this policy.

The assistance will only be paid if:

- a) Other sources of funding have been fully investigated, such as by Government funded schemes.
- b) The housing assistance works are completed within twelve months from the date of approval or such further period extended as agreed by the Council following notification in writing

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- c) The works are carried out in accordance with such specifications as the Council determines
- d) The contractor, on whose estimate the assistance was based, unless the Council agrees otherwise in writing, carries out the associated works
- e) The works are executed to the satisfaction of the Council
- f) The Council is provided with an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt for payment of works and any other professional fees and other charges. An invoice, demand or receipt from the applicant or a member of his/her family is not acceptable.

9.3 Repayment conditions

9.3.1 Where indicated, those types of housing assistance that require repayment will be registered as a local land charge on completion of works. No interest on the original assistance will be charged. This will ensure that assistance is recycled to fund future assistance.

9.3.2 The following conditions apply to applications for assistance under this policy:

- a) If the Council becomes aware that the applicant(s) was not actually entitled to the assistance at the time when the assistance was agreed then no further payments of assistance shall be paid. The Council may demand re-payment of the assistance already paid together with interest, at a reasonable rate determined by the Council.
- b) If an owner of the dwelling to which an application relates ceases to be the owner before the works are completed he or she shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of assistance that has been paid.
- c) If an owner of the dwelling to which an application relates ceases to be the owner within the specified condition period the Council may demand repayment of the relevant amount of assistance that has been paid to the applicant.

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- d) If the owner of the dwelling to which the application relates ceases to be the owner within the required condition period due to their death the condition period will continue to be in force, if the property is occupied by one of the beneficiaries.
- e) For landlord assistance if the owner of the dwelling to which the application relates ceases to let the dwelling in accordance with the agreed period the Council may demand repayment of the amount of assistance that has been paid.
- f) Where the assistance is to fund an interest payment on a loan scheme agreed by the Council, should the applicant default on a loan payment the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health in consultation with the Director of Finance and the loan provider will determine whether to demand the repayment of the interest; as specified in the agreement between the Council and the loan provider.

9.3.3 Where the Council has the right to demand repayment but there are extenuating circumstances, for example where the financial circumstances of the applicant are such that chasing the debt would cause severe hardship, they may determine not to demand repayment or to demand a lesser amount. This decision will be made by the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health in consultation with the Director of Finance.

9.4 Other Conditions

9.4.1 The following conditions apply to applications for assistance under this policy

- a) If the Council is satisfied that owing to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant, the cost of the assisted works has increased or decreased the amount of assistance may be re-determined and the applicant notified accordingly.

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- b) If the Council is satisfied that unforeseen works are necessary *to* complete the works to a satisfactory standard after work has commenced, the amount of assistance may be re-determined and the applicant notified accordingly.
- c) The responsibility for instructing the contractor and supervision of the works rests with the applicant or their agent, if appointed.

Where the Council approve an application for assistance, it may impose additional conditions. These may include:

- a) The applicant to make a contribution towards the cost of the assisted works
- b) The right of the Council to nominate tenants to the accommodation
- c) The right of the Council to recover specialised equipment when it is no longer needed
- d) The appointment of managing agents to let the living accommodation
- e) The living accommodation is to be maintained in good order after the assisted works have been completed.
- f) The energy efficiency of the property is to be improved to the latest recommendations, which may go beyond that required under the Decent Homes Standard.

9.4.2 Breach of any of these additional conditions, where imposed, shall give the Council the right to demand repayment of assistance in full.

9.4.3 Any assistance provided under this policy which is repayable on breach of condition will be a local land charge.

10 Advice available under the Policy

10.1 Advice on all aspects of this policy and assistance scheme will be available from Officers of the Council. Advice will be available verbally, in writing and via home visits, as appropriate.

10.2 In addition, the Council works with a Home Improvement Agency service that can provide advice and assistance on improving/adapting homes to people aged over

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55 and/or who are disabled. For more information please contact the Private Sector Housing team at the Council.

11 Appeals and Complaints

- 11.1 Where housing assistance is refused the applicant can appeal against the decision, in writing, to the Private Sector Housing Manager. Appeals should be received within 28 days of a decision being issued. Appeals will be determined within a further 28 working days.
- 11.2 Any complaints regarding any aspects of this policy should be directed in the first instance to the Private Sector Housing Manager within the Housing Service.
- 11.3 If a satisfactory response is not obtained or the issue involves the Private Sector Housing Manager, the complaint should be referred to the Chief Housing Officer.
- 11.4 In addition, if a satisfactory response is still not obtained following 11.1 to 11.3, a complaint can be made using the Council's formal complaints procedure.

12 Applications outside of the Policy

- 12.1 Applications that fall outside of this policy, and where extenuating circumstances are exhibited, for example the applicant was determined by the Private Sector Housing Manager to be incorrectly advised, will be reported to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health for his consideration and determination.

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13 Key Service Standards Related to the Policy

13.1 The following table outlines the key service standards that relate to this policy

Service Area	Target
Initial enquiry regarding housing assistance	To respond to applicants within 5 working days
Calculation of initial Test of Resources	To advise applicants of any contribution they may have to make towards the cost of work (where appropriate) within 5 working days of receiving a completed enquiry form.
Provision of specifications with details of eligible works	To advise applicants of any eligible works with specifications within 10 working days of the first visit.
Comments on proposals for work provided by agents	When an agent sends plans and specifications for comment a response will be provided within 10 working days either supporting the scheme or giving reasons for refusing it.
Approvals of housing assistance	When all the necessary information has been provided, to approve the application within 28 working days of receipt.
Payments	When the work has been satisfactorily completed and an appropriate invoice received payments will be processed within 10 working days.

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Joint Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and Cabinet Member for Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 PREFERRED PARTNER STATUS FOR GOLDING HOMES

Summary

This report seeks endorsement to making Golding Homes a Preferred Registered Provider Partner to the Council.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Golding Homes owns and manages 6,300 homes for 20,000 residents in and around the mid Kent area, having been established in 2004 following the transfer of council housing stock from Maidstone Borough Council. Known originally as Maidstone Housing Trust they have invested more than £100m in regenerating their homes and estates, with a commitment to developing 585 new affordable homes for rent and shared ownership by 2015 across Kent.

1.1.2 Golding Homes are the largest social landlord in Maidstone, and includes **Golding Vision** which supports the Registered Provider in building sustainable communities through its programme of community development. Working in partnership with other agencies Golding invest £250k on community developments which focus on 4 key priorities:

- Children & Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Economic Development and Environment

1.1.3 In terms of repairs and maintenance Golding Services is a wholly subsidiary company of Golding Homes and works in partnership with MITIE Property Services Ltd to deliver services to all their residents and leaseholders.

1.2 Current Stock in Tonbridge & Malling

1.2.1 Golding Homes have existing stock in two locations within the borough. Firstly there are 23 rented flats at the Leybourne Park development in Larkfield, for which

there is a dedicated Local Lettings Plan in place and to which the Council enjoys full nomination rights. Along with owner occupied homes this scheme also contains properties owned and managed by another of the Council's Preferred Registered Provider Partners, Hyde.

- 1.2.2 More recently Golding Homes have taken on the ownership of 142 rented properties at the Royal British Legion Village in Aylesford, which they have purchased as a stock transfer from Housing 21 at the end of last year.
- 1.2.3 This transfer follows consultation with existing residents, along with approval by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) who regulate Registered Providers. All of the residents have been sent information on the changes and were invited to a "Welcome" event where they could meet their new Neighbourhood Advisors and other staff, and find out more about Golding Homes.

1.3 Preferred Partner Status

- 1.3.1 Members will be aware that the Council operates a list of Preferred Registered Provider Partners, currently containing ten organisations, all of which are regulated by the HCA. Each is fully partnered to Kent Homechoice for the Choice Based Lettings processes and also able to service their stock within the borough in a robust manner.
- 1.3.2 Registered Providers that are Partners in this manner are able to engage with developers on new opportunities within the borough, or pursue their own sites, both with engagement with officers. In this way the Council has a high level of confidence that new homes being built will best address the nature of local need and that the nomination and access rights are in accordance with the appropriate policies, such as our Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 1.3.3 By working with Registered Providers with stock in Tonbridge & Malling the Council is better able to coordinate strategic work and communicate effectively on matters such as welfare reform, or government funding for new properties. This will also include being consulted in detail on documents that are to influence Registered Providers core business in the future, such as our forthcoming Local Plan.
- 1.3.4 Preferred Registered Provider Partners are invited to attend our Housing Association Liaison Panels, which is the prime opportunity to engage with lead Members and officers regarding a broad range of strategic and operational subjects in relation to their ongoing work and future aspirations within the borough.
- 1.3.5 Officers have met with Golding Homes at strategic and operational levels regarding both the transfer of stock from Housing 21, their wider development aspirations for Tonbridge & Malling and practical issues relating to stock management. These have been very productive and welcome discussions and consequently Members are invited to make Golding Homes a Preferred

Registered Provider Partner. This will involve inviting the organisation to an inaugural meeting at the next round of Housing Association Liaison Panels being held in the Spring.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) is the means by which public subsidy is secured for the delivery of affordable housing, with Registered Providers adhering to strict value for money and design considerations imposed by the HCA. However, the Registered Providers must also understand and work to the local strategic requirements of the Council, and partnering mechanisms such as these are a robust way of securing this.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 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. By working in partnership with Registered Providers the Council is better able to operate in a robust manner.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 **CABINET is RECOMMENDED to Endorse** Golding Homes as a Preferred Registered Provider Partner to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Chris Knowles

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and
Environmental Health

Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	Securing Golding Homes as a partner will assist the Council in achieving the highest quality and broadest range of affordable housing moving forward, including compliance with agreed design aspects such as wheelchair accessibility and equality of the allocation and nomination processes for all aspects of the community.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY STATUTORY GUIDANCE DECEMBER 2013

Summary

This report updates Members on the provisions of “Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England” which was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 31 December 2013.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities the power to take a more flexible approach to managing social housing by deciding who will qualify in their area. We have recently reviewed our housing allocation scheme and introduced two qualifying criteria which mean that all applicants must have a verified housing need and a local connection in order to be included on the Council’s housing register.

1.1.2 The stated purpose of the supplementary guidance is “*to assist housing authorities to make full use of the flexibilities within the allocation legislation to better meet the needs of their local residents and their local communities*”. Local authorities are required to have regard to this guidance alongside the previous guidance issued in June 2012 when exercising their functions relating to the allocation of social housing.

1.2 Local connection

1.2.1 The supplementary guidance states that it is appropriate, proportionate and in the public interest to restrict access to social housing to applicants who can demonstrate a close association with their local area. The Secretary of State encourages local authorities to adopt a residency requirement as part of the qualification criteria, to include a minimum period of residency of at least two years.

1.2.2 Our housing allocation scheme provides several broad categories of local connection, including employment in the borough or close family members living

in the borough as well as residence and other special reasons. In respect of the residence qualification, applicants currently need to be living within the borough, or have previously lived here for either six out of the last twelve months or three out of the last five years.

1.3 Housing allocation scheme review

- 1.3.1 The housing allocation scheme is due to be reviewed in September 2014. As part of the review we will be seeking the views of our partner Registered Providers as to how the current scheme is operating for them and be analysing the impact that tightening the eligibility criteria has had on lettings. This detailed analysis will be very important to ensure that our allocations policy is refined to meet those in housing need and secure the best and most appropriate use and management of the housing stock. Members will be invited to consider the residency criteria alongside any other amendments to the scheme in a future report to this Board.

1.4 Right to Move

- 1.4.1 The supplementary guidance refers to the Government's intention to introduce a 'Right to Move' policy for social tenants seeking to move to take up employment or be closer to their work. DCLG will be consulting on options for implementing this policy in spring 2014 and Members will be informed of the progress of this in due course.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None arising from this report.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 None arising from this report.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

contact: Lynn Wilders

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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24 January 2014

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1 THINK HOUSING FIRST: KENT- WIDE HEALTH INEQUALITIES ACTION PLAN FOR HOUSING

Summary

This report updates Members on the recently launched health inequalities action plan called “Think Housing First”. It has been developed by Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing) and Kent Housing Group to set out the role of the housing sector in reducing health inequalities across Kent.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Poor health does not arise by chance and is not simply attributable to genetic make-up, unhealthy lifestyles or lack of access to medical care. It is heavily dependent on the differing social and economic conditions of local communities. These are referred to as the wider determinants of health.
- 1.1.2 Boroughs and Districts are at the frontline in the delivery of both statutory and discretionary services to improve the health of their communities. It is evidenced that the health inequalities gap is widening. The Health Inequalities Action Plan “Mind the Gap” looks at all the various themes affecting health outcomes such as obesity, alcohol consumption, smoking and cold homes. District Housing departments were consulted and inputted into the development of “Mind the Gap”. However, it was felt that the importance of housing in addressing health inequalities could not be fully addressed in such a broad document.
- 1.1.3 The Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing) (JPPB) and Kent Housing Group were therefore invited by health partners to develop a specific Housing “Mind the Gap” to reflect how the housing sector can play its part in reducing health inequalities in Kent. This action plan is now known as “Think Housing First”.
- 1.1.4 Members will be aware that the Council also has its own “Mind the Gap” reflecting local priorities. It is recognised that each district has varying degrees of health inequalities and indeed different priorities to tackle to make a difference hence the need for a district plan. However, all the health inequality action plans are

intended to complement one another with “Think Housing First” being a reference point on the housing strand.

1.2 Why housing is important in tackling health inequalities

- 1.2.1 It is a well known fact that housing is intrinsically linked to health inequalities. It is one of the many reasons for the existence and continuation of poorer health in different population groups. In short, without access to good quality and affordable housing, the chances of enjoying good health and a long life are hindered.
- 1.2.2 Many of the people that the housing sector work with will be those who are living in deprivation, are hard to reach and are most affected by health inequalities. The housing sector is therefore well placed to contribute towards reducing the disparities in health.
- 1.2.3 Reducing health inequalities through housing can also bring economic gains to health care budgets. It is estimated by the Building Research Establishment that poor housing costs the NHS at least £600 million per year. By spending relatively modest sums through housing, real cost benefits can be seen by health.

1.3 Vision and aims of “Think Housing First”

- 1.3.1 The vision of “Think Housing First” is to raise the profile of housing in addressing health inequalities in Kent.
- 1.3.2 The aims are:
- to take advantage of the new opportunities, driven by the recent health reforms, for housing to strengthen collaboration and engagement with health;
 - to maximise the contribution of housing in improving people’s health and wellbeing;
 - to raise awareness to health colleagues of the role of the housing sector; and
 - to reliably inform commissioning priorities and decisions, by demonstrating how investing in housing can save in health bills.

1.4 Action plan

- 1.4.1 The Action Plan [**Annex 1**] is focussed around five key objectives, each with actions detailed as well as outcomes and timescales.
- 1.4.2 The objectives are as follows:
- reduce the negative impact of homelessness on health;

- encourage people to live in homes with good air quality;
- ensure homes are warm, dry and free from hazards;
- develop our neighbourhoods to be healthy places; and
- strengthen the role housing plays in ill health prevention.

1.5 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council role

- 1.5.1 Officers remain closely involved in taking this plan forward through JPPB and Kent Housing Group. The plan will also feature at the Council's Health Action Team meetings alongside the Council's "Mind the Gap".
- 1.5.2 A number of the actions already feature in the Council's Housing Strategy. In addition, the proposed revisions to the Housing Assistance Policy, if agreed, will enable actions around safety, cold homes and falls to be taken forward for Tonbridge & Malling residents in partnership with other agencies.
- 1.5.3 An update report on the action plan contained in "Think Housing First" will be presented to a future meeting of this Board.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 Whilst some of the actions identified in "Think Housing First" are delivered through statutory functions, it is not a legal requirement to produce this action plan.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 Actions identified in the plan are funded in a variety of ways. A number of the initiatives can be delivered through the Council's Housing Assistance Policy that is also on this agenda. It is this funding which is vital to securing the success of the plan and improving the health of our communities.

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 The implementation of this action plan will help focus health improvement efforts where they are most needed.

Background papers:

contact: Linda Hibbs

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

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1. Action plan

Objective 1: Reduce the negative impact of homelessness on health					
Recommendation	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescales	
1a	Improve access and registration with GPs for rough sleepers	Explore the feasibility of introducing joint GP and housing appointment systems for rough sleepers in GP surgeries	Increase no. of rough sleepers accessing primary health care and housing services	GPs LHAs Support Providers	Jun 2015
1b	Take primary health care services to where rough sleepers are	Explore the feasibility of introducing a mobile GP outreach service in areas with a high concentration of rough sleeping	Increase no. of rough sleepers accessing primary health care services	GPs LHAs	Jun 2015
1c	Make plans for accommodation for rough sleepers upon hospital admission	Introduce homeless hospital discharge protocols in every district	Homeless people have accommodation upon discharge so increasing opportunities for continuation of care and reduction of readmission	Hospitals LHAs	Jun 2015
1d	Raise awareness of health, housing and support services available to rough sleepers	Develop a publicity campaign on housing and health services available to rough sleepers	Rough sleepers are signposted and connected to housing, primary health care, mental health and substance misuse services	JPPB LHAs Support Providers	Jun 2014
1e	Link homeless households in temporary accommodation to GPs	Signpost households placed in temporary accommodation to GPs	Increase no. of homeless households accessing primary health care services	LHAs	Jun 2014
1f	Improve identification of people in housing need who have mental health problems	Set up a Task & Finish Group to explore how to identify people in housing need who have mental health problems and ensure they are appropriately assessed	Increase no. of households receiving help from mental health services	JPPB	Dec 2014
1g	Raise awareness of resources for promoting healthy mental wellbeing	Publicise the 5 ways to mental wellbeing, Live It Well website and Mental Health Matters helpline	Increased awareness of the resources available to promote mental wellbeing	LHAs Registered Providers	Jun 2014
Objective 2: Encourage people to live in homes with good air quality					
Recommendation	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescales	
2a	Promote smoke free homes	Investigate the feasibility of housing providers introducing no smoking clauses in tenancy agreements	Increase no. of smoke free homes	LHAs Registered Providers	Dec 2014
2b	Prevent accidental deaths due to fire caused by careless disposal of cigarettes	Target referrals to the Kent Fire & Rescue Service home safety visits scheme	Decrease in no. of accidental fires caused by careless disposal of cigarettes	LHAs Registered Providers	Jun 2014
2c	Provide information to at risk households on recognising the signs of tuberculosis	Housing to take part in public health publicity campaigns on tuberculosis targeting those who are in temporary accommodation, living in poor housing, overcrowded housing and HMOs	Increased awareness of recognising the signs of tuberculosis to encourage earlier diagnosis and treatment	LHAs Registered Providers Public Health	Dec 2014
Objective 3: Ensure homes are warm, dry and free from hazards					
Recommendation	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescales	
3a	Improve identification of people at risk of excess winter deaths and falls	Explore funding opportunities with health to roll out Your Home Your Health in areas of Kent with high prevalence of excess winter deaths and falls	Improved housing conditions Reduction of nos. in fuel poverty Reduction of no. excess winter deaths and falls	LHAs HIAs H&WBs	Dec 2014
3b	Improve the coordination	Include private sector teams and	Increased number of homes made	LHAs	Jun 2015

	between housing, health and social care in falls programmes	HIAs in the falls prevention pathway and home care reablement service	safe from the risk factors of falling	Public Health Social Care H&WBs	
3c	Improve housing conditions so people can return from hospital sooner after a fall	Develop a falls hospital to home referral protocol for those requiring a return home to a safe environment (i.e. a 'safe room') using minor adaptations	People who have had a fall can return home sooner from hospital as their home will be adapted and made safe preventing a second fall	Hospitals LHAs RPs Social Care H&WBs	Jun 2015
3d	Increase the activity by housing on falls prevention	Expand postural stability exercise classes in sheltered accommodation schemes and include access to the wider community	Improves muscle strength and balance and reduces the risk of a fall	Registered Providers LHAs Public Health H&WBs	Dec 2014
3e	Increase the activity by housing on preventing a second fall	Pilot a rapid response team for those who have had a fall to make their home safe	Prevents a second fall	Ambulance Service Nurses LHAs HIAs H&WBs	Jun 2015

Objective 4: Develop our neighbourhoods to be healthy places

Recommendation	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescales	
4a	Ensure well designed and well laid out housing with access to open and green spaces	Develop a housing and health design guide incorporating the Health Inequalities and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (HIWA) and Screening Toolkit	New affordable housing developments and the re-design of existing schemes are well designed, inclusive and encourage participation in open spaces and local services	LHAs Registered Providers Planning Officers	Dec 2014
4b	Encourage residents to make use of existing open spaces	Housing providers to encourage community engagement in using open spaces	Increased participation in the use of open spaces	Registered Providers LHAs KCC	Dec 2014
4c	Play a role in getting across messages on healthy eating	Add a 'healthy eating on a budget' course to the future programme of tenancy training events delivered by the Kent Engagement Group	Increased awareness of making healthy and cost effective choices over diet	KEG LHAs RPs	Jun 2014

Objective 5: Strengthen the role housing plays in ill health prevention

Recommendation	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescales	
5a	Understand the costs for delivering the recommendations and the savings made to health	Undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the savings to health under the above actions	Enables a case to be presented to local Health and Wellbeing Boards and CCGs for additional funding	LHAs Public Health H&WBs	Jun 2014
5b	Include housing in future Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA)	Ensure housing is included in future Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA)	Housing informs and guides county health inequality plans and the commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care services	JPPB	Jun 2014
5c	Involve housing in risk stratification to predict those most at risk of poor health in the future	Pilot risk stratification involving housing data in one district and roll out if successful	The most appropriate people for whom interventions in health are identified for actions to be taken to prevent future ill health	LHAs Public Health	Jun 2015
5d	Measure the impact of housing services on health inequalities	Provide training to housing partners on the Health Inequalities and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (HIWA)	The housing sector actively considers the impact of their policies and services on health inequalities	Public Health LHAs Registered Providers	Dec 2014

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

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Matters for Information

1 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on the following:

- Disabled Facilities Grant funding and Better Care Fund;
- Energy Company Obligation Programme;
- Coldbusters Scheme; and
- Better Homes: accessible housing framework.

1.2 Disabled Facilities Grant funding and Better Care Fund

1.2.1 Members may be aware that in June 2013 as part of the 2013 Spending Round, the Better Care Fund (previously referred to as the Integration Transformation Fund) was announced. The Better Care Fund provides an opportunity to transform local services so that people are provided with better integrated care and support. It encompasses a substantial level of funding to help local areas manage pressures and improve long term sustainability.

1.2.2 In 2014/15 there will be some pooling of NHS and adult social care funds to support adult social care services which have a health benefit and it is for local areas to determine how the investment is best used. Health and wellbeing boards will be expected to be the place for discussions between NHS England, clinical commissioning groups and councils on how the funding should be spent. There will also be an additional £200 million to prepare for the full implementation of pooled budgets in April 2015.

1.2.3 In 2015/16 £3.8 billion will be deployed through this Fund for health and social care. This pooled Fund is created from £1.9 billion of NHS funding and £1.9 billion of existing funding from the health and wider care system. This includes £220 million of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding.

- 1.2.4 The DFG funding has been included in the Fund so the provision of adaptations can be incorporated in the strategic consideration and planning of investment to improve outcomes for service users.
- 1.2.5 Initially, it was understood that the DFG funding would no longer come to them as an allocation from Department for Communities and Local Government, as at present, but would go to Kent County Council as the upper-tier authority with the districts retaining the statutory duty for to provide DFGs for those who qualify.
- 1.2.6 In December 2013 further guidance was issued on the Better Care Fund which indicated that each area will have to allocate the DFG funding to their respective housing authorities from the pooled budget to enable them to continue to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people, including in relation to young people aged 17 and under. Indicative minimum allocations for DFG have been provided for each district council.
- 1.2.7 It has therefore been confirmed that for 2014/15 Tonbridge & Malling's DFG Capital Grant Determination from the Department for Communities and Local Government will be £424,067. This is an increase of £9,000 on the 2013/14 allocation.
- 1.2.8 It has also been confirmed that the minimum amount of DFG funding that Tonbridge & Malling should receive from the Better Care Fund in 2015/16 is £490,000 which is a 15.5 per cent increase on the 2014/15 allocation. Discussions are ongoing with Finance colleagues regarding the implications of this on the Council's Capital Plan.
- 1.2.9 In terms of the Better Care Fund, meetings with Kent County Council and local clinical commissioning groups are ongoing to ensure that the benefits of DFGs are embedded within the Kent Better Care Fund plan. It is likely that this will trigger a full review of how DFGs are administered across Kent to ensure value for money and to achieve a more streamlined service for the customer.
- 1.2.10 Further reports on DFGs and the Better Care Fund will be brought to Members of this Board as necessary.

1.3 Energy Company Obligation Programme

- 1.3.1 Members will recall from the last meeting of this Board that we had sought endorsement of the roll out of an Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding project across Tonbridge & Malling. In order to improve energy efficiency of homes some householders were eligible for a non repayable grant through ECO to fund measures such as solid wall insulation, heating improvements, loft insulation and cavity wall insulation. The Kent & Medway Green Deal Partnership (KM GDP) has been set up to enable Kent to maximise the amount of funding coming into Kent particularly through ECO.

1.3.2 However in the Autumn Statement in December a number of key changes to ECO were identified which will impact on funding available for the Kent and Medway Warm Homes scheme. In particular the Department of Energy and Climate Change has announced proposals as follows:

- a reduction of the Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation (CERO) by 33 per cent which will reduce funds available for solid wall and hard to treat insulation;
- an extension of the ECO programme from 2015 to 2017 which will slow the programme down;
- the inclusion of easy to treat measures, such as loft and cavity wall insulation, enabling them to count towards the CERO target which means the number of completions of potentially harder measures such as solid wall insulation will be reduced;
- including previous over performance in Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) towards the pre 2015 target which will reduce the current targets set under ECO;
- The widening of Carbon Savings Community Obligation (CSCO) to cover 25 per cent of the most deprived areas, rather than the current 15 per cent; and
- An ongoing commitment to affordable warmth through the Home Heat Carbon Reduction Obligation (HHCRO) and CSCO from March 2015 at a notional £540 million per annum.

1.3.3 All the changes proposed will go to consultation and are likely to come into force in autumn 2014. In the meantime these proposed changes have resulted in a huge slowdown of available ECO funding. KMGDP is unable to predict how this will impact upon future assistance offered under the Warm Homes scheme until the changes are confirmed and utility companies respond. They will hold details of interested residents, who will be contacted once the changes to ECO funding have been confirmed.

1.3.4 In the Tonbridge and Malling area we have postponed the launch of Warm Homes, which is the banner under which ECO in Kent operates, given the changes in 1.3.2 and 1.3.3.

1.3.5 We will however be promoting the KMGDP Warm Homes affordable warmth offer which is managed by Aran Services Ltd and is currently available until 30 April 2014. The Affordable Warmth offer assists residents in receipt of certain benefits to install boiler replacements and home insulation providing the existing boiler is

broken or not working properly. We are currently preparing a mail out to eligible residents in order to maximise take up of this scheme in our area.

1.3.6 We will also continue to play a key role in the KMGDP in order to ensure that we take up any new opportunity to use ECO funding within Tonbridge & Malling.

1.3.7 Further update reports on ECO will be presented to this Board when appropriate.

1.4 Coldbusters Scheme

1.4.1 In February 2013 the Council signposted residents to the Coldbuster scheme which offered fully funded boilers and insulation to private households in receipt of certain qualifying benefits. The Coldbusters affordable warmth scheme utilises ECO funding and is managed by Climate Energy Ltd. All offers were subject to a technical survey and it was anticipated that the majority of standard straight forward boiler replacements would qualify for full funding.

1.4.2 We understand that 22 residents have received a replacement boiler through the Climate Energy scheme to date; with a further three still to be completed. One household has received loft insulation.

1.4.3 In some cases residents have been required to pay a contribution either because the cost savings achieved through the installation of a replacement boiler in their case were insufficient to attract full funding or because additional works were required. We are anticipating that we will utilise Warm Homes Assistance from the Council's Housing Assistance policy to top up the ECO funding for approximately six households. This is a good use of the funding as it helps vulnerable residents improve their heating so they are warm at home and have reduced fuel use hence potentially cheaper bills. The funding offered under the Council's assistance is repayable on sale of property.

1.5 Better Homes: accessible housing framework

1.5.1 In December 2013 Kent Housing Group and Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing) launched Better Homes: accessible housing which is a framework for delivering housing for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities across Kent and Medway.

1.5.2 The framework was developed following a recommendation in the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2012-15 under the ambition to "support vulnerable people in housing need to fulfil their potential and live a high quality life through the provision of excellent housing".

1.5.3 The vision of the framework is to:

- ensure the provision of high quality accommodation that meet the needs of physically and/or sensory disabled people in Kent and Medway;

- develop new and innovative ways of facilitating the delivery of accommodation for physically and/or sensory disabled people in Kent and Medway;
- develop and maintain a consistent, proportionate and efficient approach to the delivery of accommodation for physically and/or sensory disabled people in Kent and Medway;
- raise awareness and understanding amongst local communities and partners of the housing needs of people with physical and/or sensory disabilities and how they can be met in Kent and Medway; and
- ensure that people with physical and/or sensory disabilities exercise choice in determining their housing options so that best use is made of new and existing stock.

1.5.4 Joint Policy and Planning Board will own and monitor the framework against a number of criteria such as number of wheelchair accessible housing units consented and completed, number of people with disabilities registered on Kent Homechoice and number of re-lets of already adapted properties to suitable applicants. An annual review of the framework will also take place to allow a refresh if necessary.

1.6 Legal Implications

1.6.1 DFGs remain a statutory duty for Tonbridge & Malling B.C. to deliver for those residents who meet the qualifying criteria.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 The review of DFGs under the Better Care Fund plan will aim to ensure value for money within the DFG process.

1.7.2 ECO presents a real opportunity to carry out large scale energy efficiency improvements to housing at no or subsidised cost to the householder or the Council. It is important that we work in partnership to maximise this opportunity for residents in the Borough.

1.8 Risk Assessment

1.8.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

contact: Linda Hibbs

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

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 2011/12 to 2014/15. The report goes on to describe the progress on various housing strategy initiatives.

- 1.1.1 The effective negotiation, planning and delivery of affordable housing forms one of the key priorities of the Council and an area of significant activity for the housing and planning services. 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 work with our partners to plan and ensure timely delivery of new housing, the Council also has a role to play in facilitating progress and 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 delivery rate at Kings Hill and Leybourne Grange by Russet Homes 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 healthy.

1.2 Affordable Housing Scheme Updates

1.2.1 Members will recall our Registered Provider Partner Moat's continued efforts regarding a possible rural affordable housing scheme in Plaxtol, adjacent to their existing dwellings at Shrubshall Meadow. Following extensive engagement with the local community and the completion of a Housing Needs survey for Plaxtol, Moat have now obtained planning permission for seven new affordable homes. Moat hope to complete the scheme of four shared ownership houses and three affordable rent homes by Spring 2015.

1.2.2 Members will be pleased to be informed that that recent severe flooding events in Tonbridge proved the resilience of the new affordable housing schemes in the town centre. Old Cannon Wharf, Ashbys Yard (Point), and the supported scheme for young people on New Wharf Road all remained fully operational and occupiable by residents, aside from some temporary, but important, issues with repairs to the lifts and other operational issues from which learning points can be taken.

1.2.3 Photographs showing a selection of schemes approaching completion are set out at **[Annex 2]**.

1.2.4 HCA Prospectus

- 1.2.5 The Homes & Communities Agency has finally released its Prospectus for the new Affordable Homes Programme bidding round 2015-18. There is a total of £2.9 billion available as capital grant funding. This document is the formal guidance to Registered Providers as to how to bid for grant money for new developments, and the rules and restrictions in place in relation to what government is seeking to subsidise.
- 1.2.6 The broad message is one of incentivising smaller units over larger ones within the forthcoming bids in line with the impacts of welfare reform, such as the spare room subsidy. As with the previous bid round, there is a very strong expectation that organisations placing funding requests will have ensured they have substantially “sweated” their own assets to maximise efficiency prior to seeking any grant. This could include either Council’s offering land for free or housing associations selling stock in high value areas to fund the provision of additional homes in cheaper areas.
- 1.2.7 The two tenures being sought are Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership only, with the clear instruction from the HCA that “the income generated and contribution to the costs of supply is expected to be maximised, including charging rent at up to 80% of market rents”. The Council is concerned about pursuing only the Affordable Rent tenure, and a letter from both the Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing to Sir John Stanley MP is attached **[Annex 3]** describing these concerns in detail.
- 1.2.8 The Council’s emerging Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SHMA) and direct experience of the Affordable Rent tenure (as opposed to Social Rent) demonstrates the need for flexibility so that Affordable Rent is not always maximised to the full 80 per cent allowed in order to address real affordability issues.
- 1.2.9 However, the Prospectus states “for the purposes of this programme, it is not expected that local authority priorities will include a preference for social rent over Affordable Rent – the intention of the programme is to provide new Affordable Rent homes...In general, Government policy does not support the argument that only rents at or close to social rent levels are capable of meeting local needs – particularly when support for housing costs through Housing Benefit and Universal Credit is taken into account”.
- 1.2.10 This lack of flexibility or ability for local intervention is clear, as the Prospectus states that “Local authorities that work closely with providers to deliver affordable homes in line with the requirements of this Prospectus should expect to secure higher levels of local affordable housing. Local authorities that put barriers in the way of delivery... that would add to the costs of delivery, should expect to see fewer schemes funded in their area... a view that Affordable Rent prevents an

authority from meeting local need would not be considered a robust reason not to support a bid (*in the internal HCA bid approval process*)".

- 1.2.11 In terms of design standards, the Prospectus is not definitive, stating "The Government's consultation on its Housing Technical Standards Review closed on 22 October but the outcome is not yet known. An addendum to this prospectus will be published when there is further information about the Review. In the meantime, in working up schemes and indicative proposals, bidders should take their own view of their approach to standards".
- 1.2.12 The bid deadline is the end of April, which will mean that our Registered Provider Partners will be busy engaging with officers to ensure their bids are as robust and accurate as possible.

1.3 Low Cost Home Ownership Initiatives

- 1.3.1 The Help To Buy Agent (previously Homebuy Agent), Moat, provides a report for Tonbridge & Malling on low cost home ownership initiatives as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1– TMBC Help To Buy Agent Statistics 2013 Quarter 3 (October to December)

Low Cost Home Ownership Factor	Number of Households
	2013 Q3
Number of Enquiries	64
Number of Applications	62
Shared Ownership	4 (3 x 3 bed houses at The Red House, Tonbridge, 1 x 3 b Gorse Crescent Aylesford)
Resales	1 dwelling, Wordsworth Way Aylesford

1.4 Legal Implications

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

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 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.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 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:

contact: Chris Knowles

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2011/12

SCHEME DETAILS		AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS											DELIVERY TIMETABLE					
Address	RSL	Tenure	Flats			M'nette		Houses			B'galow		Total Units	Start on site date	Planned completion date			
			1 bed	2 bed	3 Bed	1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+bed	1 bed				2 bed		
Kings Hill (Onsite Phase)	Russet Homes	Social Rent	2						5	2						9	Oct-10	Oct-11
		Shared Ownership	3	5					2							10		
Leybourne Grange Phase 2	Russet Homes	Social Rent														0	Feb-11	Dec-11
		Shared Ownership														4		
TOTALS 11/12			5	5	0	0	0	0	7	0	2	0	0		23			

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2012/13

SCHEME DETAILS		AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS											DELIVERY TIMETABLE					
Address	RSL	Tenure	Flats			M'nette		Houses			B'galow		Total Units	Start on site date	Planned completion date			
			1 bed	2 bed	3 Bed	1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+bed	1 bed				2 bed		
Leybourne Grange	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent														15	Feb-11	Oct-12
		Shared Ownership														2		
Hilborough Valley	Southern Housing	Social Rent	27	39	5				14							85	Apr-11	Jun-12
		Shared Ownership																
Sofie Hill Garages Site	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent											6			6	Mar-12	Mar-13
		Shared Ownership																
TOTALS 12/13															108			

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2013/14

SCHEME DETAILS		AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS												DELIVERY TIMETABLE			
Address	RSL	Tenure	Flats			M'nette			Houses			B'galow		Total Units	Start on site date	Planned completion date	
			1 bed	2 bed	3 Bed	1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+bed	1 bed	2 bed				
Court Lodge Wrotham	Russet Homes	Shared Ownership		3											3	Jan-12	Sep-13
Coldharbour	KCC	Affordable Rent								18					18	May-12	Dec-13
		Shared Ownership															
Ashby's Yard	Town & Country HGrp	Affordable Rent	15	40	5										60	Mar-11	Oct-13
		Shared Ownership	11	21											32		
TGGS	WKHA	Affordable Rent	6	8						8					22	Oct-11	Jan-14
		Shared Ownership	3	4											7		
Leybourne Grange Phase 2 Continued	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent	3	6						5					14	Apr-13	Mar-14
		Shared Ownership		6						6	2				14		
The Red House	Moat	Affordable Rent								7					7	Aug-12	Jun-13
		Shared Ownership								7					7		
K College	WKHA	Affordable Rent								4	3				7	Jan-13	Jan-14
		Shared Ownership		2											2		
Grange Road	Russet Homes	Shared Ownership								1	2				3	Aug-12	Jun-13
The Pinnacles	Russet	Social Rent								2					2	Jun-12	Mar-14
		Shared Ownership		6						12					18		
TOTALS 13/14			38	96	5	0	0	0	0	28	49	0	0	0	216		

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL: AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014/15

SCHEME DETAILS		AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS												DELIVERY TIMETABLE		
Address	RSL	Tenure	Flats			M'nette			Houses			B'galow		Total Units	Start on site date	Planned completion date
			1 bed	2 bed	3 Bed	1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+bed	1 bed	2 bed			
Isles Quarry	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent		13					2	16	6			37	May-13	Mar-15
		Shared Ownership		6					1	8				15		
Isles Quarry	Crest Nicholson	Affordable Rent													May-13	Mar-15
		Shared Equity		12					6					18		
Cannon Lane	Moat	Affordable Rent	12	13										25	Apr-13	May-14
		Shared Ownership	4	11										15		
Scott Road Scheme	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent						4	2				6	Aug-13	Sep-14	
		Shared Ownership		8									8			
Marvillion Court Regeneration	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent		4				1	2				7	Jan-13	Dec-14	
		Shared Ownership						1	8				9			
Fen Pond Road	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent							2				2	Jan-13	Apr-14	
		Shared Ownership							5				5			
Capitation Close	Russet Homes	Shared Ownership							2				2	Sep-13	Dec-14	
Twisden Road	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent						5					5	Feb-13	Dec-14	
Lavender Road	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent		4									4	Feb-13	Dec-14	
Winterfield Phase 1	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent							4	2	4		10	Feb-13	Mar-15	
		Shared Ownership							4	2			6			
Winterfield Phase 2	Russet Homes	Affordable Rent	9	8						2			19	Feb-13	Mar-15	
		Shared Ownership	2	14					2				18			
Shrubshall Meadow, Plaxtol	Moat	Affordable Rent					2	1					3	May-13	Mar-15	
		Shared Ownership						3	1				4			
TOTALS 14/15			27	93	0	0	0	2	28	54	10	4	0			

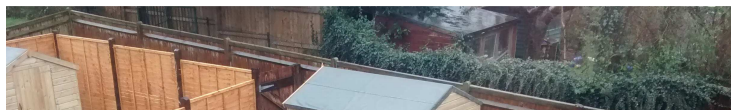
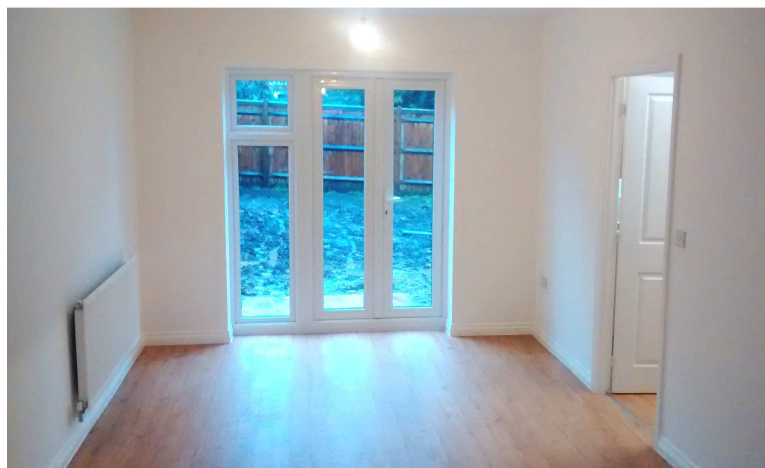
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Annex 2 - Selection of Photographs of New Affordable Housing Schemes

The Pinnacles – Tonbridge (Russet Homes)



Tonbridge Grammar School For Girls – Tonbridge (West Kent Housing Association)



K College – Tonbridge (West Kent Housing Association)



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**TONBRIDGE & MALLING
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Nicolas Heslop

**Borough Councillor for Cage
Green, Tonbridge**

Leader of The Council

The Rt Hon Sir John Stanley MP
House of Commons
London
SW1 0AA

13 February 2014

Dear Sir John

Concerns Regarding the Affordability of Social Housing

We are writing in order to highlight to you some of the increasing concerns we have regarding the provision of affordable social housing within Tonbridge & Malling.

The provision of a continuing supply of affordable housing is a key priority of the Borough Council and as you know over a period of many years we have had a very strong track record of delivering new homes for rent and shared ownership (the fourth highest within Kent within this Comprehensive Spending Review period). Equally, we have high expectations of our Preferred Partner Housing Associations in how they expand and manage their stock within the Borough.

We are increasingly troubled by a growing concern and real obstacle to how we are able to address the housing needs of many of the households on our housing register. That concern is focussed on the affect of the "Affordable Rent" tenure regime and the practical limitations it has on financial accessibility to adequate housing for some of our key household need groups.

The Borough Council is finding that, unlike the previous tenure of Social Rent, our historically sought after, family-size homes now offered for Affordable Rent, are beyond the reach of many households. Either households are not placing bids because the rents are too high, or they are being rejected by Registered Providers on their inability to sustain the tenancy and stay out of arrears.

Evidence is clear on this point. Housing officers have reported home visits, to properties in various states of serious disrepair in the private sector, where existing households say that they don't see the point in bidding on our housing register for the new-build affordable rent properties as they are now simply unaffordable.

To illustrate this situation, a small three-bed home in Tonbridge provided by a housing association using the new Affordable Rent tenure, can cost well over £900 per calendar month rental. Previously, through the social rent tenure, a similar home, through the exact same landlord, would have been around £600 a month, sometimes less.

Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4LZ
Email: nicolas.heslop@tmbc.gov.uk

The impact of this new, higher cost, tenure is that it best serves households that are either entirely welfare dependent, where the actual rent level is of less significance, or those that may otherwise be able to access market rented homes, or intermediate tenures such as shared ownership, due to being on relatively higher income. Those working households on low incomes are, in our view, likely to be the ones to find Affordable Rent the most challenging. It would not be the wish of the Borough Council to lock out hard working families from accessing affordable housing in this Borough.

If families are entirely benefit-dependent, it can also prove very difficult for them to make the transition to work and become economically active if the Affordable Rent is to be maintained without falling into arrears. In other words, the current Affordable Rent regime can be a disincentive to seeking employment for many households. Many of our Preferred Partner Housing Associations also now seek a week's rent in advance at the beginning of a new tenancy, which many low income families also find very hard to find.

We are acutely aware that, in the past, many socially renting households have been able to save in order to step onto the property ladder or possibly buy their own home directly from the housing association. This offered good prospects for social mobility. However, with the much higher rent expectation of the Affordable Rent tenure, this outcome seems now to be much more unlikely and, in many cases, impossible to achieve.

The concerns described above are amplified into future housing supply by the new guidance from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). The "Prospectus for Affordable Homes Programme 2015-2018" clearly sets out that all new affordable housing provision for rent can only be the Affordable Rent tenure and that this must be set at 80 per cent of the local market rent. This denies any scope for local discretion or response to strategic requirements which is needed in areas such as west Kent where this type of affordable housing supply is, quite simply, not actually affordable to many households in need.

The situation is further exacerbated by the challenges of accessing alternative options in the private rented sector. Rents are very high and many landlords are now real estate investors and looking to maximise their rate of return. The demand for such accommodation is also increasing. With many first time buyers struggling to raise large enough deposits to secure a mortgage, they are turning to the private rented sector as the solution to their accommodation issues. This has resulted in many of the households that approach us for assistance competing with households in a far healthier financial situation and are subsequently being priced out of this sector.

We trust this demonstrates the challenges that the Council face in meeting the housing needs of our residents and our frustrations in being unable to effectively address them. We would be grateful for any assistance you may be able to give in promoting more flexibility and practical appreciation of how local housing needs need to be addressed.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Nicolas Heslop
Leader TMBC

Councillor Mrs Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

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 address the housing needs of local residents. The number of households seeking advice and/or applying to the Housing Register for social housing has remained significantly high as a result of the economic downturn.

1.1 Housing options and prevention of homelessness

1.1.1 The demand for the Housing Options team's advice service remains high as many families have become affected by Government welfare reforms. The Housing Options Team are working hard to assist and find alternative solutions for those households who are affected by the changes and to prevent families from becoming homeless. Work also continues to promote the service to private landlords in the Borough with the aim of increasing housing solutions for households looking for accommodation.

1.2 Housing Options approaches

1.2.1 The following table gives a breakdown of all recorded approaches to the Housing Options Team. Members will note that the number of households whose homelessness has been prevented was particularly high and this is testament to the support that is offered to households by the Housing Options Team. The 'Advice Only' column below relates to customers contacting the Options Service for advice on their housing difficulties but who are then able to resolve their difficulties without our intervention. The 'Prevented' column relates to households who have contacted the service and received advice and assistance to resolve their difficulties, prevention measures can include resolving housing benefit issues, mediation, negotiation with landlords or excluders, for example. The Relieved column relates to households who have become homeless from their accommodation and interventions by the Options Team have resulted in them being able to return to their homes. The Open column relates to ongoing cases where outcomes have yet to be achieved.

Month	Contact Made	Advice Only	Prevented	Relieved	Open
Oct 2013	58	35	15	0	15
Nov 2013	57	23	21	0	22
Dec 2013	28	5	16	0	23
TOTAL	143	63	52	0	60

1.3 Homeless Applications

Month	New homeless applications	Duty to house accepted	Duty to house rejected	Average No of days to process applications
Oct 2013	4	3	1	16
Nov 2013	2	0	2	22
Dec 2013	0	0	1	4
TOTAL	6	3	4	14

- 1.3.1 As can be seen from the table above, the number of homeless applications remains low. 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.

1.4 Temporary accommodation

- 1.4.1 The following table gives the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation at the end of each month. It will be noted that the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation continues to remain stable.

Date	Number in self contained Temporary Accommodation (AST)	Number in self contained Temporary Accommodation (nightly paid)	Number in traditional Bed & Breakfast	Total
31.10.13	3	11	0	14
30.11.13	3	7	0	10
31.12.13	3	4	0	7

1.5 Rent Deposit Scheme

- 1.5.1 The following table demonstrates the success of the Housing Options Team's efforts in finding and securing accommodation for households in the private sector. There is an enormous amount of work involved in securing private rented properties for households. As such the increase in successful tenancies arranged and reported below can be considered to be a real achievement. Options Officers often become involved in lengthy negotiations with private landlords who might be

reluctant to work with households who are on a low income. The Options team work closely with the Private Sector team to arrange inspections of properties to ensure they are fit for occupation and that the required health and safety certificates are in place. The applicant might also need assistance from the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme to secure the property and so further work is involved in processing the application.

Month	Number of Loans approved	Bonds	Customers assisted into a private rented property without a deposit loan or bond
Oct	4	1	2
Nov	1	1	3
Dec	10	0	4

Officers will showcase some of this success by way of a short presentation.

1.6 Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO)

- 1.6.1 We are continuing to successfully discharge our duty to homeless households by an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. We have completed six offers to date and have two further households currently awaiting offers.

1.7 Housing Register

- 1.7.1 The number of households on the housing register has not exceeded 1,000 during the first quarter post the review of our housing allocation scheme.
- 1.7.2 The table below shows the number of applicants joining and leaving the housing register, including home seekers (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
October	155	111	997 (388 Transfers)
November	102	209	982 (382 Transfers)
December	86	65	995 (386 Transfers)
TOTAL	343	385	2974 (1156 Transfers)

- 1.7.3 The following table gives the breakdown of applicants who have been housed through Choice Based Lettings:

Month	Home seekers	Transfers	Total
October	34 (68%)	16 (32%)	50
November	80 (83%)	16 (17%)	96
December	15 (60%)	10 (40%)	25

1.8 Choice Based Lettings

- 1.8.1 The Choice Based Lettings Partnership have been working with its contractor, Locata, to develop an Application (App) that will allow customers to view adverts and place bids using their Apple and Android devices. These devices include smart phones and tablet computers. Customers can also use this App to seek tenants who they can exchange their socially rented homes with, look for work and obtain information about housing options, financial advice and health and support. The App is available to download for free from both the Apple App Store and Google Play.
- 1.8.2 Currently the Choice Based Lettings Partnership is trialling a daily bidding pilot. Daily bidding is about the continuous advertising of available homes and reducing the delays with letting these homes, which may be caused by having fortnightly bidding cycles. It is an idea being piloted by Swale and Amicus Horizon. Russet Homes have expressed an interest in moving to daily cycles. If following the pilot, there is no consensus between local authorities and landlords in a locality, there is a mechanism that allows different cycles to be operated within the new system.

1.9 Legal Implications

- 1.9.1 Non arising from this report

1.10 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.10.1 None arising from this report

1.11 Risk Assessment

- 1.11.1 None arising from this report

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jane Smither
Jason Wheble

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

Date of reply	Consultation document	Dealt with by
6 January 2014	Park Homes Site Licensing: Changing the licence holder	Hazel Skinner

1.1 Legal Implications

1.1.1 None arising from this report.

1.2 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.2.1 None arising from this report.

1.3 Risk Assessment

1.3.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

contact: Hazel Skinner

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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