

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

Julie Beilby BSc (Hons) MBA

Gibson Building
Gibson Drive
Kings Hill, West Malling
Kent ME19 4LZ
West Malling (01732) 844522

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.

Contact: Democratic Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

1 November 2021

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Communities and Housing Advisory Board to be held in the Council Chamber, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill on Tuesday, 9th November, 2021 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Members of the Board are required to attend in person. Other Members are encouraged to participate online via MS Teams.

Information on how to observe the meeting will be published on the Council's website.

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART 1 - PUBLIC

1. Apologies

5 - 6

2. Declarations of Interest 7 - 8
- Members in any doubt about such declarations are advised to contact Legal or Democratic Services in advance of the meeting*

3. Minutes 9 - 12
- To confirm as a correct record the Notes of the meeting of the Communities and Housing Advisory Board held on 20 July 2021.

4. Presentation by Martin Guyton, Chief Executive of Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust 13 - 14

Matters for recommendation to the Cabinet

5. HMO and Caravan Site Licensing Fee Charges for 2022/23 15 - 18
- This report provides updates on the existing fee charged to licence a house in multiple occupation (HMO) or caravan site for permanent residential use and details the proposed fee charge following a review of the costs to process the respective applications.*

6. Review of Cemetery Charges 19 - 28
- This report provides information to Members to consider a strategic approach to the review and implementation of charges applied at Tonbridge Cemetery.*

7. Tonbridge and Malling Housing Strategy 2022-2027 29 - 62
- The report seeks approval of a draft Housing Strategy ahead of public consultation.*

8. Roadside Nature Reserves 63 - 76
- This report presents the outcome of the recent 'Roadside Nature Reserve' (RNR) trial and proposes a future approach that could be adopted at other sites across the borough.*

9. Community Trigger Review 77 - 80
- This report seeks endorsement of the revised Community Trigger (or Anti Social Behaviour Case Review) process.*

Matters submitted for Information

10. Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Drainage 81 - 84
- This report provides an update on drainage investigations into the long-term ponding of water on the Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground following high rainfall or flooding.*

11. Update from the Community Safety Partnership 85 - 88

This report provides an update on some of the latest work of the Community Safety Partnership.

12. Urgent Items 89 - 90

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

13. Exclusion of Press and Public 91 - 92

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

14. Urgent Items 93 - 94

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 Miss G E Thomas (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs J A Anderson (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs P A Bates
Cllr Mrs S Bell
Cllr N Foyle
Cllr S M Hammond
Cllr N J Heslop
Cllr P M Hickmott
Cllr F A Hoskins

Cllr S A Hudson
Cllr A Kennedy
Cllr Mrs R F Lettington
Cllr W E Palmer
Cllr M R Rhodes
Cllr N G Stapleton
Cllr Mrs M Tatton

Apologies for absence

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Declarations of interest

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 20th July, 2021

Present: Cllr Miss G E Thomas (Chairman), Cllr N Foyle, Cllr S A Hudson, Cllr Mrs R F Lettington, Cllr M R Rhodes and Cllr Mrs M Tatton.

(Note: As Councillors Mrs Anderson, Bates, Bell, Heslop and Palmer were unable to attend in person and participated via MS Teams they were unable to vote on any matters).

Cllr R P Betts, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr D Keers, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr P J Montague, Cllr J L Sergison and Cllr K B Tanner participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited by the Chairman in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S M Hammond, P M Hickmott, F A Hoskins, A Kennedy and D Thornevell.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CH 21/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

CH 21/23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Housing Advisory Board held on 25 May 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CH 21/24 HOUSING STRATEGY

(Decision Notice D210073MEM)

The report outlined the key themes for a TMBC Housing Strategy and an updated project plan for members review and approval.

The Board was reminded of the key ambitions contained in the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 undertaken in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The report outlined the key themes for a Tonbridge and Malling Housing Strategy which would allow the Borough Council to

establish its housing priorities, to plan for meeting current and future need and to govern the effective delivery of housing related services. An updated project plan and revised timetable was set out in Annex 1 to the report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (i) the key areas of work for the forthcoming Housing Strategy be endorsed and the Housing Strategy Project Plan as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be approved.

CH 21/25 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK IN THE TRENCH WARD OF TONBRIDGE

(Decision Notice D210074MEM)

The report set out details of a proposed arrangement to reinstate the Community Development Worker position within the Trench Ward to deliver community initiatives and provide support to residents. The Board was advised that, for a fixed two-year period, Clarion Futures had offered to match fund the £7,500 per year from the Borough Council to deliver this support and that Tonbridge Baptist Church would support the post as the overall 'employer' providing office space, line management and funding of £3,750 per year. It was noted that a Service Level Agreement for the two-year term would be agreed between the Borough Council, Clarion Futures and the Tonbridge Baptist Church.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the arrangements for the proposed Community Development Worker for Trench be noted; and
- (2) the grant funding of £7,500 per year, for 2 years, to be paid to Tonbridge Baptist Church, be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CH 21/26 HOUSING SERVICE ACTIVITY REPORT

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health providing an update on the activity of the Housing Service for 2020/21 including a capital plan review for an IT system implemented within the Housing Solutions team was noted.

CH 21/27 STOCK CONDITION MODELLING UPDATE

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health providing an update on the private sector stock condition modelling exercise undertaken by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) was noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**CH 21/28 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That the public discussion would disclose exempt information, the follow matters be considered in private.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**CH 21/29 LEYBOURNE LAKES COUNTRY PARK - FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND FACILITY DEVELOPMENT**

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

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services presented the Leisure Trust's Business Plan and financial proposal for the future management of Leybourne Lakes Country Park (LLCP) and the outcome of Cost Certainty in relation to the proposed new lakeside facility.

RECOMMENDED: That both the transfer of the site management and the construction of the building project proceed in accordance with the timescales outlined in the report.

***Referred to Cabinet**

The meeting ended at 8.44 pm

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Agenda Item 4

- Presentation by Martin Guyton, Chief Executive of Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust – Annual update on performance of the Trust.

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 HMO AND CARAVAN SITE LICENSING FEE CHARGES FOR 2022/23

Summary

This report updates members of the existing fees charged to licence a house in multiple occupation (HMO) or caravan site for permanent residential use and the recommended fee charge following a review of the costs to process the respective applications. The proposals if adopted would result in fee increases for both HMO and Caravan site licencing.

1.1 Review of HMO licensing fees

- 1.1.1 Under the Housing Act 2004 Part 2 houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) occupied by five or more persons living in two or more households are required to be licensed. HMOs in self-contained flats in purpose built blocks where the block comprises three or more self-contained flats are excluded from this licensing requirement.
- 1.1.2 There are currently 23 licensed HMOs in the Tonbridge & Malling area.
- 1.1.3 The aim of licensing is to improve the controls on HMOs and to raise the standard of some of the highest risk properties that are often occupied by some of the most vulnerable people, whilst maintaining an adequate supply of rented accommodation.
- 1.1.4 The licence is for a maximum of five years and cannot be transferred. The licence can end as a result of the passage of time, the death of the licence holder, the sale of the property or the revocation of the licence by the Council. The licence is held on a public register maintained by the Council.
- 1.1.5 Following a review of administrative costs and using the same HMO licence fee cost calculator developed by the Kent and Medway local authorities that has previously been used, the proposed revised charges based on an inflation rate of 3.8 percent are detailed in the table below:

Service	Current Charge	Recommended Charge	Predicted Income Full Year 2022/23
New HMO licence application fee	£545	£570	£1,710 for three new HMO licence applications.
Renewal of a HMO licence application	£500	£520	£1,560 for three licence renewals due in this period

1.1.6 The charge for a new HMO licence application fee is comparable to our neighbouring Kent authorities of Tunbridge Wells at £575 (for five unit HMO) and Sevenoaks at £654 (for five unit HMO). Over the five year period the fee of £570 equates to approximately a cost of £114 per annum and £9.50 per month.

1.1.7 The charge for the renewal of an HMO licence application is comparable to our neighbouring authorities of Tunbridge Wells of £460 (for five unit HMO) and £412 for Sevenoaks. This lower cost for renewal is attributed to the reduced inspection time.

1.2 Caravan Site Licensing

1.2.1 The Mobile Homes Act 2013 amended the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 to allow local authorities from the 1 April 2014 to charge a fee for the licensing of residential mobile (park) home sites (“relevant protected sites”) and recover their costs in undertaking this function.

1.2.2 A caravan site must have planning consent for use as a caravan site before it can be licensed and once licensed it remains in perpetuity until a change of use or planning consent has expired.

1.2.3 Following a review of administrative costs associated with charging for caravan site licences based on our experience over the last twelve months the proposed revised charges based on an inflation rate of 3.8 percent are shown in the table below:

Service	Current Charge	Recommended Charge	Predicted Income Full Year 2022/23
New caravan site licence application fee	£395	£410	£410 for one new licence
Transfer of a caravan site licence	£190	£200	£400 based on the transfer of one caravan site

			licence
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- 1.2.4 The charge to process a licence application for a new caravan site and transfer of the licence is comparable to Tunbridge Wells where the cost is £300 and £175 respectively. The charge in Sevenoaks is an incremental cost from £542 dependent on the number of pitches above one for a new caravan site, free if a single pitch site, and to transfer an existing licence is £84.
- 1.2.5 The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 introduced a fit and proper person test for site owners/caravan site licence holders or for their person appointed to manage the mobile home/caravan/park home site. This only applies to relevant protected sites other than non-commercial family occupied sites.
- 1.2.6 The Regulations require site owners/caravan site licence holders to apply to be included or their appointed manager to be included on a register of fit and proper persons from the 1 July 2021. From that date and by the 1 October 2021 all relevant site owners/licence holders must have submitted an application. Inclusion on the register is for five years.
- 1.2.7 The Council adopted a fee policy for processing fit and proper person test applications and the fee charge was set at £235. It is not proposed to increase this fee for the 2022/23 period. The fee charged by our neighbouring boroughs of Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks is £132 and £88.45 respectively.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 The Council is legally required to licence certain HMOs and caravan sites under the Housing Act 2004 Part 2 and the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (as amended by the Mobile Homes Act 2013) respectively. For this licensing function they may charge a fee to fund the costs to process an application.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The cost to process the HMO and caravan site licence related applications is reflected in the fee charged to the applicant. Therefore, there should be no additional financial and value for money considerations.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act, with no perceived impact to end users.

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 Members are **RECOMMENDED** to **AGREE** charges from the 1 April 2022 for the following:

- £570 for processing a new mandatory HMO licence application;
- £520 for the processing of a renewal application for a mandatory HMO licence;
- £410 for processing a new caravan site licence application where the use of the site is for permanent residential use;
- £200 for the transfer of a caravan site licence for a permanent residential use site; and
- £235 for processing a fit and proper person test application for licence holders of relevant protected sites other than non-commercial family occupied sites.

Background papers:

contact: Hazel Skinner

Nil

Eleanor Hoyle
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

**Joint Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services and the
Director of Finance and Transformation**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 REVIEW OF CEMETERY CHARGES

Summary

This report provides information to Members to consider a strategic approach to the review and implementation of charges applied at Tonbridge Cemetery.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 At the meeting of the Communities & Housing Advisory Board on 10th November 2020 Members considered a report on the annual review of charges at Tonbridge Cemetery. The report included proposals based on a comparison with other Council's in Kent.
- 1.1.2 At the meeting Members expressed concern about the low level of income generated in comparison to expenditure and felt that this meant that Tonbridge Cemetery was effectively being subsidised and suggested that a strategic and comprehensive review of the charges should be undertaken. It was hoped that, as the facility became more self-sustained, the burden on the general taxpayer could be reduced in the longer term.
- 1.1.3 Cabinet subsequently agreed that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee should undertake a broad, strategic review of the charges. At the recent meeting of Cabinet on 12 October 2021 it was agreed that the review should be considered by this Board. In line with Members' request, this report brings forward a number of options for Members to consider and determine the future charging structure.
- 1.1.4 When considering all of the Council's charges consideration is given to a set of guiding principles approved by Members of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board and reproduced below for the benefit of this Board:
- Fees and charges should reflect the Council's key priorities and other corporate aims and priorities recognising there may be trade-offs as these are not mutually exclusive;

- Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- If there is to be a subsidy from the Council tax payer to the service user this should be a conscious choice;
- The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its key priorities and other corporate aims and priorities;
- Fees and charges should normally be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body);
- Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council tax payer to commercial operators;
- There should be consistency between charges for similar services;
- Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern so as not to preclude, where appropriate, access to Council services on the grounds of ability to pay.

1.1.5 In addition, historically when bringing forward charges for Tonbridge Cemetery a number of specific key principles have been taken into consideration:

- The Council's overall financial position.
- The need to move towards a position of covering more of the costs associated with the management of the Cemetery.
- The need to compare costs with other local authority cemeteries in Kent.
- The need for the charging strategy to support the management of the remaining capacity in the Cemetery.

1.2 Tonbridge Cemetery

1.2.1 Tonbridge Cemetery is located close to the town centre. It was opened in 1858 and covers 14 hectares with approximately 14,000 grave spaces. There is a small chapel within the grounds, a memorial garden features vaults for the interment of ashes, a memorial wall and a rose garden for the scattering of ashes.

1.2.2 The cemetery is managed directly by the Council with the ground maintenance undertaken on the Council's behalf by Landscape Services as part of the Council's larger Grounds Maintenance Contract.

1.2.3 It is important to note that the Cemetery not only serves as a burial ground but is also used locally as a public open space, particularly for walkers, runners and dog walkers; many also use the site as a cut through to the Town Centre. Therefore, it

is worth noting that the budget covers the management and maintenance of the full site, over and above the general burial areas. Maintenance of each specific burial plot is the responsibility of the individual grave owner.

- 1.2.4 The charges for burials at Tonbridge Cemetery are only one element of the overall cost of a funeral.

1.3 Budget Cost

- 1.3.1 Attached at **Annex 1** is a copy of the cemetery revenue budget for 2021/22, approved by Members in February 2021. As highlighted above this covers the full management and maintenance of the Cemetery site. The draft Estimates for 2022/23 are currently being prepared and will be presented to the Finance, Innovation & Property Advisory Board on 12 January 2022.
- 1.3.2 Members will note that, in respect of the 2021/22 Estimates, current fees and charges generate an estimated income of £68,900, compared to a total expenditure cost of £129,850 (Depreciation and Impairment costs of £24,150 are not taken into account due to the fact that these are removed from the cost to taxpayers under a statutory override). This results in an annual net cost of the cemetery to the Council of £60,950. The majority of income is received through the sale of graves and internments. At the present time income is covering approximately 53% of total site management and maintenance costs.

1.4 Existing Charges

- 1.4.1 Attached at **Annex 2** is a list of existing charges for the cemetery compared where possible with charges applied by other Kent councils. Members will note that the charges do vary significantly across each local authority, but in general the charges for Tonbridge Cemetery are around the average.
- 1.4.2 Historically the charges have generally been increased in line with inflation each year, to cover the increase in direct expenditure costs, and in particular increases in costs of the ground maintenance contract.
- 1.4.3 Member will note that there are no fees for burials of under 18's. This policy decision was recommended to and approved by Cabinet through a Supplementary Report considered on the 14 February 2019. Cabinet resolved that: "*the existing charges for child burials at Tonbridge Cemetery be amended, with future burials for all under 18 year olds being free of charge with immediate effect*". Members may wish to note that on average only one to two burials for under 18s have been undertaken in recent years, and the Council is able to seek reimbursement of an element of the costs for these burials.

1.5 Options

- 1.5.1 In regard to any future charging strategy the following options could be considered by Members in order to reduce the burden of the cemetery on the general taxpayer and help contribute to the Council's saving target;

Option 1 – A fundamental review of charges be undertaken focussing on comparisons with other similar Local Authority providers. The review could look to bring this Council's charges in line with others at the higher level. This would see a variety of price increases across the board. For example, our current charge for a Combined Purchase and Interment (Adult) is £1,715.00 and the highest comparable rate is £2,400, just under a 40% one-off increase.

Option 2 - A one-off increase in excess of the current rate of inflation or adopting a policy of increasing charges by a set percentage over and above the level of inflation year on year until the subsidy has been eliminated. In respect to applying a one-off increase in excess of the current rate of inflation, a 30% increase, for example, would see a £20,700 reduction in the subsidy. If for example charges were increased by circa 30% each year over a three year period that subsidy could be eliminated.

Option 3 – Apply a one-off increase to eliminate the entire subsidy and allow fees and charges to cover the full management and maintenance costs of the Cemetery site. This would need an 89% increase to be applied across all charges based on the 2021/22 Original Estimates

- 1.5.2 All of the above calculations are based on there being no impact on the level of use of the cemetery due to increased charges. Charges for the cemetery are exempt of VAT.
- 1.5.3 In addition to the above the Council has recently seen increases in materials costs specifically in relation to the supply of Memorial Plaques etc where increases of up to 23% have been seen. It is proposed that Members give consideration to the approach to pass these specific costs directly on to the purchasers to ensure the subsidy currently provided does not increase.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 The Council's financial rules require that all fees and charges must be reviewed at least once a year and be reported to the appropriate Advisory Board.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 The options presented in the report generate different levels of additional income to the Council as outlined in the report.
- 1.7.2 As Members will be aware from reports to Cabinet in July and October 2021, the Council is facing significant financial challenges. Significant savings and/or

increases in income are required by April 2026 in order to preserve the integrity of our financial plans.

- 1.7.3 Whilst an element of subsidy from general council taxes for this service has been the Council's choice thus far, Members may wish to consider the extent of that subsidy (see paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.**) when balancing the overall finances of the Council.

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 There is a balance between looking to reduce the overall cost of the cemetery to the Council taxpayer and increasing charges to the point where people will decide not to be buried at the cemetery or seek an alternative location elsewhere. People may also decide to use a local crematorium. This could impact particularly on those members of the public facing financial hardship. Each option provides a different approach to addressing this issue.
- 1.8.2 No public consultation has been undertaken to date on the cemetery charges and this may be something Members wish to consider as part of this review, particularly if a more radical increase in fees and charges to address the full cost recovery issue is proposed.

1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.9.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.10 Policy Considerations

- 1.10.1 Asset Management, Business Continuity/Resilience

1.11 Recommendations

- 1.11.1 Members are requested to consider the options for the future charging strategy at Tonbridge Cemetery including the policy approach in response to increases in material costs as highlighted at 1.5.3 and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Background papers:

contact: Darren Lanes

Nil

Robert Styles
Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Sharon Shelton
Director of Finance and Transformation

DIRECTOR OF STREET SCENE, LEISURE AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

B26
MP CEMETERY

BUDGET HOLDER : MICHAEL HARRIS
(Ext. 6176)

VAT CODE	NOMINAL CODE		2021/22 ESTIMATE £
-	B26MP - 0000 / 15100	Employee Expenses # Salaries & Oncosts	26,000
-	B26MP - 0000 / 20106	Premises Related Expenses # Building Repairs Expenditure	7,300
AG	B26MP - 0000 / 20402	Maintenance of Grounds	5,600
AG	B26MP - 0000 / 21002	Electricity	2,000
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 23001	Rates	9,900
AG	B26MP - 0000 / 24001	Water Charges (Metered)	200
ZG	B26MP - 0000 / 24003	Sewerage & Environmental Services	150
XG	B26MP - 0000 / 28001	Premises Insurance	800
AG	B26MP - 0000 / 40101	Supplies & Services Purchases - Equipment & Materials	1,950
AG	B26MP - 0000 / 50103	Third Party Payments Grounds Maintenance Contract	57,300
-	B26MP - 0000 / 71170	Central, Departmental & Technical Support Services # Information Technology	800
-	B26MP - 0000 / 71300	# Central Salaries & Administration	6,300
-	B26MP - 0000 / 71500	# Departmental Administration	11,550
-	B26MP - 0000 / 87770	Depreciation & Impairment # Non-Current Asset Depreciation	24,150
Total Expenditure C/fwd			<hr/> 154,000 <hr/>

To be used for recharge purposes only. Please do not use these codes when paying invoices.

DIRECTOR OF STREET SCENE, LEISURE AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

B26

BUDGET HOLDER : MICHAEL HARRIS

MP CEMETERY (continued)

(Ext. 6176)

VAT CODE	NOMINAL CODE		2021/22 ESTIMATE £
		Total Expenditure B/fwd	154,000
		Income	
		Fees & Charges	
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91121	Graves - Exclusive Right of Burial	(20,200)
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91123	Interments	(25,300)
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91124	Memorials - Erection	(2,200)
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91125	Memorials - Inscription	(1,500)
AG	B26MP - 0000 / 91126	Register Search	(500)
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91182	Memorial Garden - Lease of Tablet / Vault	(12,600)
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91183	Memorial Garden - Plaque / Inscription	(5,100)
YG	B26MP - 0000 / 91258	Use of Chapel	(1,500)
		Total Income	(68,900)
		TO SUMMARY	85,100

**TONBRIDGE CEMETERY CHARGES 2021/2022
COMPARISON WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

		Maidstone	Medway	Dover	Gravesham	Ashford	Sevenoaks	Thanet	TMBC ¹ Current
Purchase (£)	Baby	0.00	0.00	0.00	To 1 yr 0.00	0.00	23.00	To 1 yr 0.00	To 1 yr 1.00
	Child	To 18 yrs 0.00	To 18 yrs 690.00	To 12 yrs 0.00	1 – 17 Yrs 520.00	To 18 yrs 0.00	To 5 yrs 23.00	1 – 12 Yrs 175.00	2 -18 yrs 1.00
	Adult	1,690.00	1585.00	750.00	1195.00	1360.00	930.00	720.00	1030.00
Single grave	Adult	1,690.00	1585.00	750.00	520.00	1240.00	592.00	720.00	540.00
Interment (£)	Baby	0.00	0.00	To 6mth 62.00	To 1 yr 0.00	0.00	155.00	To 1 yr 0.00	To 1 yr 0.00
	Child	To 18 yrs 260.00	To 18 yrs 0.00	6mth - 12 yrs 270.00	1 – 17 Yrs 430.00	To 18 yrs 0.00	0mth - 5 yrs 155.00	1 – 17 Yrs 0.00	2 - 18 yrs 0.00
	Adult	710.00	785.00	1100.00	1020.00	760.00	690.00	990.00	685.00
Single grave	Adult	595.00	785.00	900.00	855.00	640.00	515.00	790.00	685.00
Combined Interment and Purchase (£)	Baby	0.00	0.00	61.00	0.00	0.00	178.00	0.00	1.00
	Child	260.00	690.00	265.00	950.00	0.00	178.00	175.00	1.00
	Adult	2400.00	2370.00	1850.00	2215.00	2120.00	1620.00	1710.00	1715.00
Single grave	Adult	2285.00	2370.00	1650.00	1375.00	1880.00	1107.00	1510.00	1225.00
Period of Lease (years)		60 years	50 years	50 years	60 years	30 years	75 years	50 years	60 years
Memorial Permit (£)	Small	160.00	213.00	200.00	250.00	200.00	170.00	178.00	150.00
	Large	300.00	510.00	425.00	395.00	200.00	340.00	280.00	300.00
Chapel (£)		280.00	90.00	170.00	170.00	0.00	160.00	79.00	155.00
Search Fees (£)		£0 - 10	£60 (per name)	£62.00 (over 1hr)	20.00 (per name)	£36.00 (per name)	0.00	£23.00 (per name)	55.00 (per 5 names)
Interment of Ashes (£)		245.00	170.00	210.00	353.00	440.00	88.00	170.00	165.00
Memorial Wall Plaque (£)		N/A	N/A	100.00	N/A	200.00	134.00	NOT LISTED	165.00

¹ 2021/22 charges

NOTE: Costs are based on comparable services where available. **All charges shown are exempt of VAT**

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

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

1 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-2027

1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 This report presents a draft Housing Strategy for members review and approval ahead of public consultation. The Housing Strategy sets out our strategic approach to housing in the borough for 2022-2027.

A revised and final draft of the Housing Strategy will be brought to members at the February 2022 Communities and Housing Advisory Board meeting for review and approval for adoption.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 This Strategy will replace the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 which was in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, endorsed by members in 2017. Each of the three West Kent authorities is developing their own Housing Strategy, to better reflect local priorities and challenges.
- 1.2.2 A Housing Strategy for Tonbridge and Malling enables the Council to establish our housing priorities and approach to housing in the Borough. Recent legislative and policy changes have created a challenging housing context which we need to respond to for our level of need and changing demand profile. Adopting a Strategy will help shape our strategic response to focus limited resources efficiently and establish priorities in a local context.
- 1.2.3 The Council will continue working with local authority partners including Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council through joint projects, contributing to the delivery of our Strategy.

1.3 About the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027

- 1.3.1 Setting a vision “For Tonbridge and Malling residents to have access to good quality and affordable homes that meet their needs, whether renting or buying.” the Strategy has four key priorities to achieve this:

1. Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability
 2. Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness
 3. Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed
 4. Working in partnership.
- 1.3.2 The Strategy fulfils the requirement for a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and encompasses an updated Tenancy Strategy. A copy of the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2023 is in **Annex 1** of this report.
- 1.3.3 The Strategy outlines objectives for each priority, which will be delivered and monitored through annual action plans. Actions will also be supported by a framework of policies and procedures being developed across the housing service (see **Annex 2** for the draft year 1 action plan 2022-2023).
- 1.3.4 Priority 1 Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability – focusses on improving existing homes across tenures, with measures to improve standards, energy efficiency and make best use of homes through addressing empty homes and occupancy of social housing (for example through a review of our Allocations Scheme and considering ways to address under-occupation).
- 1.3.5 Priority 2 Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness – outlines our approach to increasing and improving homeless prevention through a partnership working, including addressing rough sleeping, and widening the housing options available such as enabling access to the private rented sector.
- 1.3.6 Priority 3 Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed – captures the importance of understanding and analysing local housing need to inform policy decisions and housing delivery in the borough and TMBC’s role in influencing delivery, for example through a Local Housing Company.
- 1.3.7 Priority 4 Working in partnership – highlights the importance of partnership working in achieving the priorities and objectives of the Strategy at a time of limited resources, to share expertise and best practice. Health and wellbeing is connected to good quality affordable housing and collaborative working enables effective service delivery to improve people’s lives.

1.4 Consultation

- 1.4.1 Two workshops were held with housing staff to seek their views on the proposed priorities and objectives of the Strategy in September and discuss any changes or ideas.
- 1.4.2 Member engagement workshops were held on 28 and 29 September and 7 October to discuss the draft vision, priorities and objectives of the Strategy.

These were led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Kim Tanner and a total of 23 Members attended across the three workshops, with the key matters highlighted being long term empty properties within Registered Provider housing stock, the importance of helping existing residents find homes local to them (for example, children being able to find a home of their own), importance of having strong relationships with Registered Providers and the delivery of services to their tenants, and interest in ways the Council could take a more pro-active role in relation to housing delivery such as a Local Housing Company. A record of all the comments and queries raised at the member engagement workshops is provided in **Annex 3**.

- 1.4.3 Public consultation will be carried out between November 2021 and January 2022 and will include notifying a range of partners and stakeholders including third sector organisations about the consultation alongside promoting to residents.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 The Strategy will be produced in pursuit of the delivery of our mandatory and statutory functions under the Housing Acts.
- 1.5.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their district and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results every five years. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 delivery plan requires a rough sleeping element to be included in local authority homelessness strategies, with annual action plans.

The Housing Strategy includes our approach to homelessness and rough sleeping, meeting this requirement.

- 1.5.3 Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to have a Tenancy Strategy. An updated Tenancy Strategy is included in the Housing Strategy. The last Tenancy Strategy was adopted in 2013.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The Housing Strategy is being delivered in house. The Housing Needs Research that will inform delivery of the Housing Strategy will cost £31,811.33 excluding VAT, agreed and budgeted for in 2018 within the housing reserve.
- 1.6.2 A Housing Strategy focussed on local need and priorities can help with future funding opportunities.
- 1.6.3 Actions to deliver the objectives of the Strategy will be informed by budgetary considerations.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 Not having an up to date Strategy could, in the case of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in particular, put TMBC at risk of challenge.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Communications – the draft Housing Strategy and public consultation process will reflect Corporate Communications Guideline requirements including accessibility requirements.
- 1.8.2 Climate Change – the Housing Strategy will contribute towards achieving the commitments of the TMBC Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030 through the objectives under Priority 1.
- 1.8.3 Equalities/Diversity – a EqIA will be completed when revising the draft Strategy following public consultation, to consider the impact of the Strategy and any measures we need to take relating to equality and diversity.
- 1.8.4 Having a Housing Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on delivering aims of existing policies such as:
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Health and Safety.
- 1.8.5 A policy and procedure programme will ensure all necessary policies and supporting documents are updated or developed to deliver the strategic objectives of the Strategy.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 for public consultation [**Annex 1**] and that approval of the final consultation material be delegated to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

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: Gillian Aylett

Nil

Eleanor Hoyle
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Vision: For Tonbridge and Malling residents to have access to good quality and affordable homes that meet their needs, whether renting or buying.

Introduction

This Strategy sets out Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's plans for housing services for 2022-2027. The Strategy has four priorities which are fundamental to providing good quality affordable housing.

To achieve this vision the Strategy has four priorities:

1. **Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability**
2. **Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness**
3. **Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed**
4. **Working in partnership.**

The Housing Strategy sits under the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council [Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2023](#) and works alongside other strategic plans such as the [Economic Recovery Strategy 2021 – 2023](#) and [Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2030](#). This Strategy fulfils the requirement for a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and encompasses an updated Tenancy Strategy. The provision of quality, affordable homes contribute to delivering the ambitions of other adopted borough strategies and priorities of the Corporate Plan.

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with stakeholders including residents and local partner organisations [reference to Appendix with consultation statement].

It's likely there will continue to be significant changes to the national policy, the housing market, local communities and the local government sector over the lifetime of the Housing Strategy, and it needs to be flexible to respond to changes. To enable this flexibility and responsiveness the action plans to deliver the Housing Strategy will be made annually. The action plan 2022 – 23 outlines delivery for year one.

Partnership working is vital to delivering the ambitions of this Strategy and the success of the annual action plans will be the result of joint efforts across statutory, voluntary and community agencies. Effective partnership working is key across all housing services including homeless prevention and it's important we continue and improve partnership working with a range of agencies and organisations to share best practice and achieve positive outcomes.

National and local policy context

The Strategy is informed by a wide legislative and policy context, with many changes to the national policy framework for housing and planning since the previous West Kent Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 key areas are outlined in this section.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 took effect on 3 April 2018, placing new duties on councils to work with homeless families to prevent or relieve homelessness before a main homeless duty is accepted. The main changes brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are as follows:

- Work to prevent homelessness of all eligible applicants likely to be homeless in 56 days
- Work to relieve homelessness of all eligible applicants who become homeless
- Take reasonable steps to secure accommodation for those who approach for assistance
- New 'Duty to Refer' for public bodies working with homeless households to the Council homelessness team.

The Government announced a new [Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018](#), with the aim of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027, now brought forward to 2025. Funding has been provided through the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway for Councils to reduce rough sleeping.

The Government announced the 'Everyone In' initiative in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, instructing local authorities to bring rough sleepers in from the streets and give them access to emergency accommodation.

The [Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#) introduced welfare policy reforms building on the [Welfare Reform Act 2012](#) including:

- Restricting Local Housing Allowance rates; including changing the basis LHA rates are set on from the median to the 30th percentile of market rents within a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA), applying national caps to LHA rates and abolishing the five bed rate
- Benefit cap reduction, from £26,000 per year to £23,000
- A 1% reduction in social rents for 4 years from 2016.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) includes measures to promote awareness of domestic abuse, protect and support victims (including a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order), transform the justice response by helping victims give evidence through screens and other special measures, and improve performance with a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to help drive improvements in the responses to domestic abuse. Under the Act all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have a priority need for homelessness assistance. The Council has received funding to assist in us fulfilling our new duties under the Act and are working in partnership with other local authorities and Kent County Council to develop and deliver our response.

The Social Housing Green Paper 2018: A new deal for social housing and Social Housing White Paper 2020: The Charter for Social Housing Residents

[A new deal for social housing proposes](#) a rebalancing of the relationship between residents, addressing stigma associated with social housing, the need for landlords to listen to residents and the desire for a culture of accountability and respect.

Five principles underpin the new deal for social housing residents:

- a safe and decent home which is fundamental to a sense of security and our ability to get on in life;
- improving and speeding up how complaints are resolved;
- empowering residents and ensuring their voices are heard so that landlords are held to account;
- tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities, challenging the stereotypes that exist about residents and their communities; and,
- building the social homes that we need and ensuring that those homes can act as a springboard to home ownership.

The Social Housing White Paper provides a framework for reform, setting out how ‘transformational’ change for social housing residents will be achieved through a new Charter for social housing residents and changes to the regulatory regime. The new Charter sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect:

1. **To be safe in your home.** We [*the Government*] will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
2. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

The Energy Act 2011

The Energy Act provided has three principal objectives:

1. Tackling barriers to investment in energy efficiency
2. Enhancing energy security
3. Enabling investment in low carbon energy supplies.

The Act includes key provisions relating to the Green Deal, the private rent sector and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). The Green Deal created a new financing framework to enable the provision of fixed improvements to the energy efficiency with improvements funded by a charge on energy bills, avoiding the need for consumers to pay upfront costs.

The Act includes provisions to ensure private residential landlords are unable to refuse a tenant’s reasonable request for consent to carry out energy efficiency improvements from April 2016 where a finance package (such as the Green Deal or the Energy Company Obligation) is available. The Act also meant it became unlawful for landlords to grant a new tenancy or renew existing tenancies for properties that do not meet the minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating E from 2018, extending to all domestic rented properties from April 2020.

The Act amends existing powers enabling the creation of a new Energy Company Obligation to:

- Take over from existing obligations to reduce carbon emissions that expired in 2012
- Work alongside the Green Deal finance offer by targeting measures to households likely to need additional support, including vulnerable people on low incomes.

Heat and Buildings Strategy (October 2021)

This [Heat and Buildings Strategy](#) sets out government plans to decarbonise homes and commercial, industrial and public sector buildings, towards achieving net zero by 2050. The Strategy outlines five core principles to guide action over the next decade and longer-term transformation to Net Zero:

1. A whole buildings and whole-system approach needs to be taken to minimise costs of decarbonisation
2. Innovation is essential to driving down costs, improving options and informing future decisions
3. ‘No- and low-regrets’ action need to be accelerated now – prioritising actions to improve the energy performance of buildings, including retrofitting, fabric first approach for improved building thermal efficiency and build the market by developing technical expertise, growing the workforce and the UK’s manufacturing capacity and capability. This includes building the market for hydronic heat pumps
4. Balance certainty and flexibility to provide stability for investment and an enabling environment for different approaches to be taken to address different buildings
5. Government will target support to enable action for those most in need.

The Strategy confirms additional funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (investing £800 million over 2022/23 to 2024/25) and Home Upgrade Grant (investing £950 million over 2022/23 to 2024/25) to improve the energy performance of low income households’ homes, support low-carbon heat installations, help reduce fuel poverty and build the green retrofitting sector.

The [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) introduced legislation for a number of measures intended to promote home ownership and boost housebuilding in England (such as the sale of higher value local authority homes, starter homes, pay to stay) along with measures to help tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector.

The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Prescribed Description) (England) Order 2018 reformed the mandatory HMO licensing regime, applying mandatory licensing to HMO properties which are less than 3 storeys high.

Regional policy context

The [Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-2025](#) ‘A Place People want to call Home’ sets out key housing related ambitions for Kent and Medway focused across five themes to compliment and support the work of Kent Housing Group members to meet their local and countrywide objectives through a collective voice and ambition. The themes are:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Working Together for Safer Homes
- Infrastructure First
- Accelerating Housing Delivery
- Affordability.

A key message throughout the Strategy is that access to decent, safe, secure, warm, healthy and affordable homes across all tenures should be possible for everyone in Kent and Medway.

Delivery Affordable Warmth: A Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent

The [Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent](#), developed by the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP), sets out a commitment to reduce the negative impact of fuel poverty and cold homes upon the health and wellbeing of the County’s residents. Fuel poor households are more likely to live in energy inefficient homes and this is not tenure specific, it’s a problem across all tenures that include social housing, private rented and owner-occupied properties. Just over 64,000 households in Kent and Medway were affected by fuel poverty in 2013. The Strategy highlights national targets and

identifies local targets set out in the Kent Environment Strategy and Climate Local Kent, which partners will work to achieve, through the four key priorities of the Strategy:

Priority 1: Information gathering and sharing

Priority 2: Improving energy efficiency

Priority 3: Reducing fuel costs

Priority 4: Increase income – support vulnerable households to maximise income.

Joint health and wellbeing strategy

The [Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: outcomes for Kent](#) outlines the priority areas and how we would like to work together to improve people's health and reduce health inequalities in the county, with a vision "To improve health and wellbeing outcomes, deliver better coordination quality care, improve the public's experience of integrated health and social care services, and ensure that the individual is involved and at the heart of everything we do." The Kent and Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Board and Transformation Partnership has agreed the [Case for Change](#) plan about how services need to change to focus on the priorities in the Strategy and achieve the right care for people.

Local policy context

Our [Corporate Strategy](#) includes the importance of embracing effective partnership working and funding, achieving efficiency and, valuing the environment and sustainable growth. Key outcomes of the corporate strategy include supporting those in need of housing support and delivering a new Local Plan to meet growth targets for new development to 2039.

The [Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030](#) sets out the Council's commitment to local action on climate change, biodiversity protection and enhancement and our approach to partnership working, driven forward through an annual climate change action plan. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of sustainable development through the planning process and national Building Regulations and forthcoming Future Homes Standard. The Strategy includes measures to reduce carbon emissions from residential homes, including retrofitting insulation measures and efficient heating, and supporting the decarbonisation of energy supply through low carbon electricity.

The Council's focus is to improve existing housing condition ensuring homes are safe and warm by encouraging and supporting the installation of energy conservation and efficiency measures. Our housing improvement team adopt a whole house approach considering energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy options. By improving the energy efficiency of homes residents benefit from reduced energy consumption, with lower bills, and improved thermal comfort and well-being.

Tonbridge and Malling housing development policy and requirements

Tonbridge and Malling has a new homes delivery target of 839 homes per year set by the Standard Methodology, with an affordable housing policy CP17 in the [Core Strategy](#) setting out a policy requirement of 40% affordable housing for sites of 15 dwellings or above, or 0.5ha or above). Within affordable housing provision CP17 requires a 70/30 split of affordable homes for rent (which could be either social rents or affordable rents) and 30% intermediate tenures, such as shared ownership, in line with the definition of affordable housing in the NPPF.

Alongside this national and local policy context the Strategy is also informed by data and information about our local housing market, including the BRE Housing Stock Modelling 2020, Housing Register data, housing advice and private sector databases.

Additional evidence of housing need is shown through the 1279 households currently accepted onto our Housing Register for social housing, with average waiting times of between 15 months and 3 years (Source: Housing Register data for 2020-21, Locata) and the increasing number of people seeking housing advice. The continued high numbers on the Housing Register and increasing Housing advice and homeless prevention cases shows the pressing need for affordable housing in the borough, reflective of the national situation with demand outstripping supply.

Key housing achievements

Key housing achievements for Tonbridge and Malling over the course of the West Kent Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 include:

[Infographics to outline achievements listed]

- Worked with partners to prevent homelessness for 385 households since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act; assisted households to stay in their homes or helped them find suitable alternative accommodation (Source: internal housing advice and homelessness data records)
- Provided online housing advice tools using the Kent Homechoice and EntitledTo websites making it easier for customers to access services
- Appointed a Rough Sleeper co-ordinator in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council using Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding
- Secured funding for rough sleeper services in collaboration with partners, enabling us to extend the Housing First Project from 3 to 7 units in partnership with Clarion and Look Ahead, a supported lettings project across West Kent delivered by Look Ahead, Complex Needs Navigators and a Young Persons Navigator with Porchlight and Complex Care Needs Nurse and two Mental Health Workers to work with rough sleepers and people in temporary accommodation
- Accommodated a total of 38 rough sleepers through the 'Everyone In' initiative and worked with partners to move on 27 to long-term settled housing. The move on and settled housing has been in a range of provision types including supported, social housing and private rented tenancies.
- Assisted 7 households into settled accommodation through Housing First with 100% tenancy sustainment success
- Enabled the resettlement of 11 households through the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement scheme
- Secured funding to improve homes in the borough through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator, Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations (MEES) Compliance and Enforcement pilot and Green Homes Grant
- Helped residents with Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), 308 mandatory DFGs and 60 discretionary grants have been completed since 2018
- Enabled delivery of 709 new affordable homes by developers and Registered Providers since 2016, including three extra care schemes
- Purchased and provided six units of temporary accommodation in the borough
- Secured a lease arrangement providing 7 units of temporary accommodation with occupancy support.

Local Housing context

Tonbridge and Malling Borough is in West Kent, covering an area of around 93 square miles from the North Downs at Burham and Snodland in the north to the town of Tonbridge in the south. The remainder of the borough is dotted with villages and smaller towns. Three motorways pass through the north of the borough and there are good rail connections to London and the South East. Local employment and rail links to London combined with attractive countryside make West Kent a highly desirable place to live which influences the housing market.

Tonbridge and Malling has an estimated population of 132,571 (2020) (Source: ONS mid-2020 population estimates). The borough has an estimated total of 55,184 dwellings, with 71% owner occupied, 13% private rented and 16% social housing (2019 ONS estimates).

The majority of homes in the borough are warm and safe but a significant minority, 8%, have serious hazards including risk of falls and being cold and 2% of homes suffer from more general disrepair (Source: BRE Client Report, BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council 2020).

There are 29 Registered Providers (RP) with social stock in the area, providing 9,505 homes of a variety of tenures: 7,697 general needs, 1,070 low cost homes ownership (such as shared ownership), 604 older peoples housing and 134 supported housing (source: Regulator of Social Housing Statistical Data Return (SDR) 2020). The largest stock holding RP is Clarion Housing Association with 7,010 homes (74% of the total social housing stock).

There is a supported living scheme for residents with Learning disabilities in East Malling with Housing21 and two supported accommodation schemes provided by Look Ahead in Tonbridge (commissioned by Kent County Council (KCC)), New Wharf provides supported housing for young people and care leavers and another scheme in the Tonbridge area provides accommodation for those with complex needs. The Bridge Trust have two properties in Tonbridge providing supported accommodation in share housing for single homeless adults with low to medium support needs. The Royal British Legion has homes in Aylesford and provides a range of support, employment and housing services.

There are three extra care schemes across the borough in Tonbridge, Larkfield and Watlingbury provided by Rapport Housing and offering homes for rent and ownership (market sale and older persons shared ownership).

We want to ensure the assessed need for market and affordable homes is delivered while encouraging housing provision that contributes to the sustainability of communities and environmental sustainability.

Housing Strategy Priorities

Priority 1: Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability

Why this priority is important

- The quality and efficient use of existing homes is key to providing decent homes for residents in the borough.
- It's important existing social housing is used efficiently, with 1279 households currently on the housing register (Housing Register data September 2021).
- Improving the energy efficiency of existing homes will help reduce fuel bills and energy use

- Over 800 properties are registered as empty as at September 2021, and 383 have been empty for more than six months (TMBC Council Tax data records).
- 43% of the private sector stock in the borough could benefit from energy efficiency improvements with 21% having un-insulated cavity walls, 15% having less than 100mm loft insulation and 7% having no loft insulation (BRE Client Report 2020).
- An estimated 5.8% of private rented properties (508 homes) have an EPC below band E and so do not meet the minimum energy efficiency standard to be rented out (BRE Client Report 2020).
- An estimated 4424 (8%) of all homes have a serious health hazard in line with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) (BRE Client Report 2020).
- New licensing requirements means there are an estimated 171 licensable HMOs.
- Adaptations can enable people to continue to live independently in their own home.

Our objectives are to:

- Ensure efficient use of existing housing stock.
- Improve property conditions to provide safe, healthy homes.
- Improve energy efficiency of housing stock to alleviate fuel poverty and help address climate change.
- Support residents to have a suitable home that meets their needs and where they can live independently.

What we will do to meet our objectives:

1.1 Ensure efficient use of existing housing stock:

- Continue our work to bring empty properties back into use: focussing our limited resources on problematic long term empty homes and liaising with Registered Providers about their empty homes
- Review our Housing Allocations Policy to ensure households in greatest need receive sufficient priority and to facilitate transfers (e.g. households who wish to downsize)
- Consider occupation levels of existing homes and options to address under-occupation, with particular focus on larger family homes with Registered Providers
- Outline our views on tenancy types and use of existing social housing stock for Registered Providers through our updated Tenancy Strategy – Appendix A
- Use Local Lettings Plans for affordable housing on new developments to reflect local needs and priorities
- Develop and implement a framework of engagement with Registered Provider partners to deliver and monitor use of existing social housing stock and the communities living in these homes
- Consider options to monitor and influence the sale of intermediate tenure homes in partnership with the Government's appointed Help to Buy zone agent and Registered Providers.

1.2 Improve property conditions to provide safe, healthy homes:

- Improve conditions in the private rented sector by implementing HMO licensing requirements, enforcement measures and assistance through grants and loan work as outlined in our housing assistance policy
- Take enforcement action where necessary.

1.3 Improve energy efficiency of housing stock to alleviate fuel poverty and help address climate change:

- Work in partnership to support the delivery of objectives in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent and take actions to increase energy efficiency and assist those in fuel poverty

- Continue to seek funding opportunities to enable energy efficiency improvements to properties of different tenures, working with Registered Providers and landlords and residents
- Assist at least ten households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes towards meeting our Climate Change Strategy commitments
- Encourage the use of energy efficiency measures in new build homes, including a fabric first approach and the passivhaus standard
- Explore options to improve the energy efficiency of Council owned temporary accommodation.

1.4 Support residents to have a suitable home where they can live independently:

- Continue to support and meet the demand for adaptations using mandatory DFGs to help older and disabled people to live independently and remain in their homes
- Continue to fund the Health & Housing Coordinators within hospital settings to facilitate discharge to a safe and suitable home
- Actively engage and contribute to partnerships with Health and Care services, including through the West Kent Integrated Care Partnership
- Work with Kent County Council and use insight from the housing needs research to understand any gaps in existing provision in services and housing development and explore options to address identified needs (this links to Priority 3)
- Encourage and influence housebuilders and Registered Providers to account for accessibility in new build homes and consider accessibility when developing planning policies.

Priority 2: Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness

Why this priority is important

- This Strategy sets out how we will continue to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, addressing the long-term housing challenges households face in securing a home.
- We are required to have a homelessness strategy & rough sleeping strategy: the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their district and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results every five years. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 delivery plan requires a rough sleeping element to be included in local authority homelessness strategies, with annual action plans.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 strengthened the duty for local authorities to prevent homelessness.
- Our focus is on prevention and early intervention providing advice and access to a range of housing solutions as well as emergency assistance and accommodation.
- Housing costs and house prices are high, meaning many local households face affordability issues: median house prices are 11.3 times the median earnings (source: ONS 2020).
- Affordable private rented accommodation is in short supply in the borough. The 'LHA gap' which is shortfall between market rents and Local Housing Allowance adds to affordability issues for some households, ranging from 10% to 50% (source: analysis of 2020 Local Housing Allowance rates and average market rents ONS private rental market data 2019-2020).
- Demand for affordable housing outstrips supply – with approximately 16% of housing stock being social housing, low turnover combined with the number of households waiting for social housing shows unmet need. Within social housing provision new build delivery has focussed on social homes at Affordable Rents over recent years rather than social rents.
- Partnership working and the importance of the links between housing and wellbeing have been highlighted further through the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and implementing the 'Everyone In' initiative.

- The Housing Solutions Team are dealing with an increase in cases from a wide range of customers, all in need of housing advice: 1267 cases were opened during 2020-21, 23% increase from 1029 in the previous year (source: internal housing advice data records, Locata).
- The three most frequent reasons households become homeless or are threatened with homelessness in 2020-21 were a private rented tenancy being ended (22.7% of prevention duties owed) and family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (33% of prevention duties owed) and non-violent relationship breakdown with partner (10.3% of prevention duties owed) (source: MHCLG Live tables on homelessness online at www.gov.uk).
- Rough sleeping – although we have low numbers of rough sleepers it is vital to continue with proactive prevention and support measures. There were an estimated 6 rough sleepers in the borough at the annual estimate in November 2020, with outreach work bringing this down further since the estimate.
- Ongoing impact of welfare reform and benefit claim levels – the number of new claims for Universal Credit increased during 2020 – 2021 linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in income and employment status are likely to effect local households and may impact on their wellbeing and ability to meet housing costs.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has increased from an average of 29 placements in 2017/18 to 119 for 2020/21 and 150 so far for 2021/22, leading to a significant increase in costs.
- Over half of homeless acceptances were deemed to be in priority need because the household included dependent children (64.8%) in 2020-21 and priority need because of vulnerability due to physical disability or ill health was the second most common reason at 14.1%. The number of acceptances with priority need due to vulnerability due to mental health has increased, from 5.2% in 2018-19 to 12.7% in 2020-21 (source: MHCLG Live tables on homelessness online at www.gov.uk, priority need of households owed a main duty).

Our objectives are to:

- Provide housing options advice focussing on homeless prevention through a personalised approach.
- Work with voluntary and statutory partners to help rough sleepers off the streets and into settled accommodation and prevent people from rough sleeping.
- Ensure vulnerable groups and those with complex needs have access to support to maintain their tenancy.
- Improve links with landlords in the private rented sector to work together to prevent homelessness and increase housing options.
- Minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation to manage temporary accommodation costs and seek alternative provision including property purchase or development.

What we will do to meet our objectives:

2.1 Provide housing options advice focussing on homeless prevention and intervention through a personalised approach:

- Ensure personalised housing plans improve the resilience of customers and identify any support needed, to become more independent and resilient
- Improve the range of housing options and prevention interventions, including mediation services and accessing the private rented sector where possible
- Maximise use of funding options available to help households access the private rented sector
- Ensure agencies who have the duty to refer are aware of this and know how to refer those at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping

- Develop partnerships to enable new initiatives and longer-term housing solutions over the life of this strategy
- Engage with customers to learn from their experience and use feedback on services to shape provision.

2.2 Work with voluntary and statutory partners to help rough sleepers off the streets and into settled accommodation:

- Continue our strong partnership working approach to tackling rough sleeping in the borough, through responsive outreach services and future initiatives
- Continue to seek funding available for homeless related services, including the current Next steps accommodation programme, Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding and any future initiatives of funding streams to enable homeless prevention initiatives and support provision
- Continue our Housing First project as a housing led approach to tackling homelessness.

2.3 Ensure vulnerable groups and those with complex needs have access to support to maintain their tenancy:

- Work with partner agencies to address the support, education, training and employment needs of vulnerable people and continue collaborative working to secure resources and identify funding opportunities for new initiatives and projects
- Ensure vulnerable groups have access to support through tenancy sustainment services
- Continue our commitment to the UK resettlement scheme and Afghan resettlement scheme, facilitating moves into private rented homes along with appropriate support provision in partnership with Kent County Council
- Keep protocols under review to enable efficient, safe and effective working, including 16-17 year old protocol, and those relating to complex needs, including mental health problems.

2.4 Improve links with landlords in the private rented sector and encourage them to work with us to prevent homelessness and increase housing options through developing our landlord offer:

- Continue to facilitate the West Kent Landlord Forum in partnership with neighbouring authorities and the NRLA, and develop local engagement options such as networking gatherings or workshops, to keep landlords informed of legislative changes and requirements, discuss particular topics and share our landlord offer
- Continue to review and develop our private landlord offer, including 'golden hello' incentive payments and rent guarantee and promote it through the Landlord Forum
- Engage with private landlords through the West Kent Landlord Forum partnership and seek to overcome any issues for existing tenancies and/or making them reluctant to let homes to households facing homelessness. We will work to improve perceptions of those in receipt of welfare benefits and promote awareness of duties under the Equalities Act 2010, including indirect discrimination if landlords refuse to let a home to those in receipt of welfare benefits.
- Investigate options to improve access to the private rented sector, including a social lettings agency or leasing scheme.

2.5 Minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation to manage temporary accommodation costs and seek alternative provision including property purchase or development:

- Explore alternatives to nightly paid temporary accommodation and ways to help households secure suitable alternative accommodation, for example purchasing property or developing provision, and leasing schemes

- Use Council and Registered Provider options for temporary accommodation where possible
- Improve the housing options for households at risk of homelessness and assist households to resolve their housing need before the crisis point of homelessness.

Priority 3: Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed

Why this priority is important

- We need to respond to a wide range of housing needs from smaller homes for young people and people looking to downsize, to larger family homes
- 839 new homes are needed in Tonbridge and Malling per year, including 40% affordable homes
- Home ownership is out of reach for many average and low income households with median house prices 11.3 times the median earnings (source: ONS affordability ratio data 2020)
- Social rent is the only genuinely affordable housing option for many households and there is a lack of new supply of homes for social rent
- Although housing delivery has met new build targets in recent years the affordable housing delivered as part of this isn't sufficient to meet affordable housing need alone; demand continues to outstrip supply with 1279 households currently on our Housing Register. The market on its own does not deliver the amount and range of affordable housing needed.
- It is important to understand the housing need of communities and areas in the borough, including rural areas.

Our objectives are to:

- Understand local housing need with up to date information on affordable and specialist housing need for a range of housing (including type, tenure and location) to inform decision making and housing priorities.
- Provide housing choice by encouraging housing of different types, size and tenure in suitable locations, at a range of prices to be within reach of different household financial capacities.
- Ensure a range of specialist and/or accessible housing to meet identified needs of vulnerable groups.
- Work in partnership with Registered Providers, private developers and Homes England to gain greater influence and control over affordable housing delivery and make best use of financial resources and assets.
- Consider options for the Council to influence and take a pro-active role in housing delivery, including through a Local Housing Company.

What we plan to do to meet our objectives

3.1 Understand local housing need, with up to date information on affordable and specialist housing need for a range of housing (including type, tenure and location) to inform decision making and housing priorities:

- Improve our understanding of housing needs through carrying out local housing needs research
- Improve our understanding of specific housing needs by capturing and analysing our own internal data and intelligence and information held by our partners
- Work with health partners and Kent County Council to understand and respond to current and future housing needs of older people and other vulnerable groups that require specialist housing.

3.2 Provide housing choice by encouraging housing of different types, size and tenure in suitable locations, at a range of prices to be within reach of different household financial capacities:

- Use findings and information from the Housing needs research to establish priorities for housing provision across the borough for affordable homes for rent and intermediate housing, for example shared ownership and intermediate rent
- Work with landowners and developers to deliver affordable homes on allocated sites reflective of housing need in line with the Affordable Housing Statement
- Explore the viability of delivering more social rent homes within new developments
- Explore options to provide affordable housing for keyworkers
- Encourage adaptable and accessible housing that can respond to the changing needs of residents, supported by housing needs information and planning policy
- Diversify the provision of affordable housing through partnership working and innovation, such as community-led schemes and self-build.

3.3 Ensure a range of specialist and/or accessible housing to meet identified needs of vulnerable groups:

- Use findings and information from the Housing needs research to understand any gaps in provision and emerging need for specialist or accessible housing
- Formulate actions to address any need and work in partnership with developers, Homes England and Registered Providers to deliver required homes
- Explore opportunities to deliver required provision and seek to enable delivery, including re-provision of existing social housing stock, whole site affordable housing developments and consideration of the use of S106 contributions.

3.4 Consider options and work in partnership with Registered Providers, private developers and Homes England to gain greater influence/control and be involved in affordable housing delivery, making best use of financial resources and assets:

- Explore the options for the Council to take a more pro-active and direct approach to affordable housing delivery, such as a Local Housing Company
- Take a more proactive approach to working with Registered Providers to encourage them to come forward with land-led developments and consider joint initiatives
- Develop options and priorities for the use of S106 contributions to facilitate affordable housing provision
- Work closely with Homes England and other partners to identify and bring forward sites for development.

3.5 Consider options for the Council to influence and take a pro-active role in housing delivery, including through a Local Housing Company:

- Research options for the Council to take a pro-active approach to housing delivery through measures such as establishing a Local Housing Company, joint ventures with private developers, Registered Providers or long lease models.

Priority 4: Working in partnership

Why this priority is important

- Limited resources and budget restrictions mean partnership working is vital to delivering the aims of this Strategy and delivering well rounded services to residents
- We need to harness the expertise and experience of partners to deliver excellent services
- Joining up services and cross sector working is important to successful delivery of housing services shown through the hospital discharge co-ordinator role and delivery of the rough sleeper action plan
- Housing has an important role in health and delivering/facilitating integrated services. Integrated services which take account of individual needs are key to improving health needs; people with mental and physical disabilities, complex needs, long-term conditions and terminal illness need access to different health care, social care, housing and other services such as education
- Membership and active engagement in Kent Housing Group enables collaborative working; sharing learning, best practice and shared projects to make best use of limited resources.

Our objectives are to:

- Work in partnership with local authorities and partner organisations through active membership and engagement in Kent Housing Group to share best practice, learning and resources.
- Engage with Registered Providers and private developers through regular strategic and management/liaison meetings to ensure efficient and effective delivery of services.
- Work with health colleagues and organisations to ensure preventative focussed work and improve health through links between services.
- Maximise our joint working with local commissioned organisations and third sector partners to add value to our housing services.

What we plan to do to meet our objectives

4.1 Work in partnership with local authorities and partner organisations including active membership and engagement in Kent Housing Group to share best practice, learning and resources:

- Continue with our membership to Kent Housing Group and our active role in this partnership
- Continue to work in partnership with other local authorities.

4.2 Engage with Registered Providers and private developers through regular strategic and management/liaison meetings to ensure efficient and effective delivery of services:

- Develop an approach to regular engagement with Registered providers and private developers to influence housing delivery in the borough
- Continue to meet with providers of social housing to monitor use and management homes after delivery, ensuring positive occupancy, customer service and neighbourhood management and foster positive working relationships with teams across partners, including Community Safety and Housing Benefits.

4.3 Work with health colleagues and organisations to ensure preventative focussed work and improve health through links between services:

- Continue to take an active role in cross sector initiatives and projects with Health Services
- Continue with partnership working with health and social care partners
- Work with health partners to ensure the Complex Care Nurse and the Mental Health services continue

- Work in partnership with Kent County Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Board to support delivery of the Better Care programme and priorities of the Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy developing preventative and integrated services to improve outcomes for residents by maximising people's independence and promoting personalisation.
- Continue to raise awareness of housing and the services we offer to ensure a joined-up approach to supporting residents especially vulnerable people.

4.4 Maximise our joint working with local commissioned organisations and third sector partners to add value to our housing services:

- Work with KCC commissioned services on wellbeing and older persons to ensure services link into the support available and share information.

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Tenancy Strategy

Introduction

This Tenancy Strategy outlines Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's position on the types and use of tenancies for social housing in the borough. Registered Providers must have regard to this Strategy when developing their policies and approach to the tenure and rents for stock in the borough.

Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy setting out matters providers of social housing are to have regard in formulating policies relating to:

- The types of tenancy they will grant
- When a type of tenancy will be granted
- The length of fixed term tenancies
- The expectations about reviewing fixed term tenancies and the circumstances when another tenancy will be granted on the expiry of a fixed-term tenancy.

Aims

- Outline the Council's view on the types and use of tenancies for social housing, informing the approach of Registered Providers in the borough.
- To ensure a consistent approach to the types of tenancies issued across all providers of social housing
- To ensure tenancies provide the right level of stability for households and support sustainable communities
- To ensure social housing is affordable.

Tenancy types and length

Starter/introductory tenancies

Providers must be clear to prospective tenants about the type of tenancy they will be granted at the end of the Starter/Introductory period, their rights and responsibilities during the Starter/Introductory period, the process at the end of the period including reasons a tenancy may not be converted or issued.

Providers should use the starter/introductory period to identify any issues that affect tenancy sustainment and work with the tenant to resolve them.

Starter /Introductory tenancies may be extended if there are serious tenancy breaches during the starter period, for a maximum of 6 months. Providers need to ensure the tenant understands the reasons for an extension and agree a plan to resolve any issues, with a view to issuing a more secure tenancy at the end of the extension period to prevent homelessness.

Starter/Introductory tenancies should not be used for existing tenants, including tenants transferring from another social home or moving through a mutual exchange.

Lifetime tenancies: secure and periodic assured tenancies

The Council encourages all providers of social housing to use secure or assured tenancies as the first choice of tenure to help build successful and sustainable communities through enabling residents to settle in their home and establish social networks.

Fixed term tenancies

Lifetime tenancies are preferred but the Council appreciates Registered Providers may choose to use fixed term tenancies. Where fixed term tenancies are used the primary objective should be to enable the best use of available housing in terms of under occupation and adaptations.

Fixed term tenancies should be for a minimum of five years, with longer fixed terms considered where a household's circumstances are unlikely to change over time, for example, households with young children or people with long term health conditions.

Shorter term tenancies, i.e. two years, should only be used in exceptional circumstances (for example when accommodation is linked to specific criteria or is planned for redevelopment) and should be discussed with the Council on a case by case basis.

All prospective tenants should be given clear information about the type of tenancy being offered, the reasons for this and how the tenancy will be reviewed, at the point of signing a tenancy agreement. Registered Providers need to include information explaining the review process for fixed term tenancies in their Tenancy Policy.

The Council expects fixed term tenancies to be re-issued at the end of the term unless there is a change of circumstances or serious tenancy breach as defined in the relevant Registered Provider's Tenancy Policy.

Tenancy reviews and any related possession action need to include engagement with other agencies to meet the household's needs where appropriate, for example, social services.

Support, information, and advice must be provided to tenants to help them understand their housing options at the end of the fixed term and enable them to move on to suitable housing. Registered Providers should consider extending a tenancy until alternative suitable accommodation can be found if necessary.

Decisions to end a fixed term tenancy should be proportionate and tenants must be provided with clear, accessible information about the internal appeal process.

Registered Providers must inform the Council's Housing Solutions team when a decision has been taken to end a tenancy, in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). Early engagement with the Council and other agencies is important to enable joint working to prevent homelessness and other negative outcomes.

Licences: non-secure tenancies and excluded licences

The Council has accommodation for use as Temporary Accommodation (TA) to accommodate households being assisted under Part 7 Housing Act 1996. The Council will only issue licences in relation to emergency or temporary accommodation.

Excluded licence agreements are issued to households accommodated while enquiries are made into what duty is owed under homelessness legislation. Where a main housing duty is owed weekly periodic non-secure tenancies are issued for temporary accommodation provided.

Rent types: Affordable and Social Rent

Homes let at Social Rent are preferable as it is most affordable.

Where affordable rents are used, they should be capped to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels (including service charges) if 80% of the gross market rent exceeds the LHA level.

Conversions to Affordable Rent

TMBC appreciate there may be a need to convert rents for existing stock at re-let to Affordable rents to support new development. It is preferable for this to be kept to a minimum to maintain availability of a range of rents for social housing and to avoid increasing the risk of households being 'benefit trapped' with higher rents acting as a barrier or deterrent to them taking up employment because they would not be able to afford an Affordable Rent. The Council requests providers to contact the Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager to discuss any proposals to convert social rent homes to Affordable Rent.

Properties that are subject to an existing S106 agreement with units provided at Social Rents will not be converted to Affordable Rents.

We will work with Registered Providers to monitor lettings at both Affordable Rents and Social Rents, considering the number of bids for properties, the findings of pre-tenancy checks (including affordability) and the subsequent tenancy sustainment for households. We will ask Registered Providers to supply information on the sustainability of Affordable Rent tenancies. Information gathered through this monitoring process will inform future reviews of this policy as appropriate.

Service charges

Service charges can be difficult for households to afford. Registered Providers need to abide by government guidance relating to service charges and any increases. TMBC expect Registered Providers to:

- Set reasonable service charges that reflect the services provided
- Provide clear information to tenants, including how service charges are set and show the cost separately to the rent charge
- Consult with tenants about any changes to service charges that may result in additional charges
- Review service charges regularly and reduce charges if actual expenditure is lower than current charges.

Existing and transferring tenants

Registered Providers must ensure existing tenants understand any changes to security of tenure, tenancy security and rights (such as RTB) and rent when they are moving to another property. Registered providers should consider granting a tenancy with the same security of tenure and rent as the tenancy they are giving up through, even if they are not legally required to.

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TMBC Housing Strategy Action Plan Year 1, 2022-23		
Action	Notes and 2022-23 target	Lead
Priority 1: Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability		
1.1 Ensure efficient use of existing housing stock		
Review Housing Allocations Policy	Policy review to be completed by end of 2022-23	Housing Solutions Manager
Investigate occupation levels (under-occupation and overcrowding) to inform projects to encourage and enable downsizing or mutual exchanges	Analyse information from Registered Providers, the housing register and housing needs research and consider options to address under-occupation. Update members through an information report during 2022-23 and consider in allocations policy review. Investigate a pilot project in partnership with Clarion and support agency.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager and Housing Solutions Manager
Bring empty homes back into use; identify empty homes and use a range of interventions to bring them back into use, using enforcement action where appropriate	Work with Registered Provider partners to understand the extent of empty properties within existing social housing stock and explore options to address this. Agree a performance indicator for empty homes within the engagement framework. Monitor progress through annual reports to CHAB.	Housing Improvement Manager
	Promote the No Use Empty Scheme in partnership with Kent County Council	Housing Improvement Manager
	Consider altering the Council's approach to tackling Empty homes: report exploring the subject of Empty homes and possible changes to approach to be taken to members to provide steer and form the basis for an Empty Homes Policy to be developed. Empty Homes Policy adopted by end of 2022-23.	Housing Improvement Manager
Develop and implement a framework of engagement with Registered Provider partners to deliver and monitor use of existing social housing stock	Develop and implement framework by September 2022	Head of Housing and Health
Consider ways to monitor the provision of existing intermediate tenure homes including resale information.	Look into the information available on existing intermediate homes from Registered Providers and the Government's appointed Help to Buy zone agent. Reflect on the information, along with findings in the Housing Needs research to inform policy decisions and monitoring arrangements. (Links to objective 3.1 Priority 3 and 4.2 Priority 4 on monitoring and strategic relationships with Registered Providers).	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
1.2 Improve property conditions to provide safe, healthy homes		
Develop a programme of targeted interventions to improve standards informed by the stock condition survey	Review the stock modelling report and integrated database to identify the least energy efficient private rented stock to inform priority areas of work and targeted use of resources and enforcement action. Develop an action plan for 2022-2023 to implement programme.	Housing Improvement Manager
	Provide advice and assistance to owners of homes that do not reach a minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) of Energy Performance Certificate band E and take appropriate enforcement action where necessary for rental properties.	
Fulfil requirements under extended HMO licensing scheme	Inspect additional HMO needing licenses as a result of the new scheme and process or enforce as necessary.	Housing Improvement Manager
Use powers to impose financial penalties in line with our Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy	Each offence will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The council will seek to impose a financial penalty for a relevant offence, unless there are circumstances relating to the offence that advocate pursuing a criminal prosecution instead.	Housing Improvement Manager
1.3 Improve the energy efficiency of housing stock to alleviate fuel poverty and help address climate change		
Continue to bid for decarbonisation funding to bring investment into improving existing housing stock, in partnership with other local authorities and Registered Providers as appropriate	Continue retrofitting project with Clarion	Housing Improvement Manager

Identify and promote services and initiatives to improve energy efficiency; including warm homes, energy efficiency and retro-fit technologies	Promote services and initiatives through effective media campaigns and pro-active targeted promotion as appropriate to maximise the opportunity for take-up.	Housing Improvement Manager
	Work in partnership with the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP) to support and contribute to the delivery of actions in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent.	
Assist households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes	Help a minimum of 10 households with energy efficiency improvements in line with our commitment in the Climate Change Strategy Explore and apply for funding opportunities throughout the year to help deliver energy efficiency improvements to existing homes.	Housing Improvement Manager
1.4 Support residents to have a suitable home where they can live independently		
Continue delivery of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Maximise use of Disabled Facilities Grants for adaptations to support residents to continue living in their own home. Revised Housing Assistance Policy by end of 2022-23.	Housing Improvement Manager
Priority 2: Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness		
2.1 Provide housing options advice focussing on homeless prevention through a personalised approach		
Continue to develop a focus on homeless prevention services and interventions, and implement ways of working to support this	Embed Prevention Officer roles within the Housing Solutions team Improve online information and advice tools to enable customers to self-serve and help manage expectations	Housing Solutions Manager
Seek customer feedback to inform service provision and improve customer experience	Ensure people feel supported and listened to when accessing services and that they can access services with ease. Ensure collaborative working across teams to provide consistent efficient services	Housing Solutions Manager
Maximise use of existing funding and take up new opportunities to help households access the private rented sector	Use funding such as Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), Accommodation for Offenders Funding (AFO), Rough Sleepers Initiative and Discretionary Housing Payments to help households access the private rented sector and sustain tenancies. Links to objective 2.4 below.	Housing Solutions Manager
Promote and improve awareness of duty to refer and improve monitoring of referrals	Deliver informal training to partners about the duty to refer and promote it through attending meeting for relevant organisations to share and improve understanding of the duty to refer. Improve our data collection and monitoring of cases resulting from a duty to refer.	Housing Solutions Manager
Continue with our commitment for the resettlement of 12 families as part of the UK resettlement scheme and deliver our commitment to the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme	Work with KCC to help as many households as we can under both the UK resettlement scheme and Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.	Housing Solutions Manager
2.2 Work with voluntary and statutory partners to help rough sleepers off the streets into settled accommodation and prevent rough sleeping		
Continue with and develop our Rough Sleeper action plan and task force meetings	Continue to identify rough sleepers and find ways to move them away from rough sleeping, finding accommodation solutions along with prevention work	Housing Solutions Manager
	Continue collaborative working to tackle rough sleeping using responsive outreach work for any rough sleepers identified.	
	We will continue to monitor rough sleeping and improve our intelligence about rough sleepers in the borough through robust procedures, ensuring people are verified before they are placed in accommodation.	
Expand and continue to develop Housing First	Expand the scheme by another 7 units, to total 14, by March 2022 in partnership with Look Ahead, Porchlight and Clarion Housing Association	Housing Solutions Manager
	Work with Jobcentre Plus and other voluntary agencies to explore ways to maximise opportunities for those with complex needs to access education, training and employment or support needs, with a view to enable withdrawal of Housing First tenancy support services for existing cases.	

2.3 Ensure vulnerable groups and those with complex needs have access to support to maintain their tenancy		
Work with partners to ensure vulnerable people have the support they need	Continue to work with KCC homeless connect for tenancy sustainment services	Housing Solutions Manager
	Continue to use Rough Sleeper Initiative funding for the supported lettings project with Look Ahead	
2.4 Improve links with landlords in the private rented sector to work together to prevent homelessness and increase housing options		
Continue to develop our Private Landlord offer to make it effective in engaging landlords to work with us to prevent homelessness	Review pilot 'golden hello' incentive and rent guarantee within an options appraisal for the Private Landlord offer. Options report for Landlord Offer to members, May 2022.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
Develop positive working relationships with local lettings agents and landlords	The Homeless Prevention Officer will build relationships with lettings agents and landlords to find tenancy opportunities in line with the Discharge of Duty into the Private Rented Sector Policy	Housing Solutions Manager
Improve and extend engagement with private landlords	Continue our work with neighbouring authorities to deliver the West Kent Landlord Forum events and information	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
	Develop and trial local engagement options such as networking gatherings or workshops; hold local event/s during 2022-23 and gather feedback to inform future approach.	
2.5 Minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation to manage temporary accommodation costs and seek alternative provision, including property purchase or development		
Research and consider options for alternative provision such as property acquisitions and options to lease properties	Carry out options assessment to establish preferred option/s and provide a report to members by end of 2022-23. Seek Cabinet approval for implementation and required resources, NB this may be in year 2 of this action plan. Secure 30-40 units the Council has control of and access to for use of for temporary accommodation.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
Reduce use of nightly paid Temporary Accommodation	Increase homelessness prevention, in turn reducing use of temporary accommodation.	Housing Solutions Manager
Increase the supply of self-contained homes in council control for use as temporary accommodation	Explore option to lease properties - assess options including a cost benefit analysis, and report to members by end of 2022-23 as above. Complete project to convert 4 council owned properties in Tonbridge: commence on site [date tbc], due to complete [date tbc] providing 12 units.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager Property Services Team and Housing Services
Priority 3: Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed		
3.1 Understand local housing need with up to date information on affordable and specialist housing need for a range of housing (including type, tenure and location) to inform decision making and priorities		
Research and analyse local housing needs to make sure the affordable housing delivered meets local needs	Carry out Housing Needs Research and report; due to complete March 2022. This research will analyse local housing need across areas of the borough, for a range of tenures and consider affordability thresholds for various tenures including for rented and intermediate housing.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
Use findings and information from the Housing needs research to establish priorities for housing provision across the Borough	Use insight into housing needs provided by the research to inform work towards achieving Priority 3 of this Strategy and inform projects and policy decisions, including the Affordable Housing Statement, new Local Plan and Housing Allocations Scheme review.	Head of Housing and Health and Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
3.2 Provide housing choice by encouraging housing of different types, size and tenure in suitable locations, at a range of prices to be within reach of different household financial capacities		
Research types of intermediate housing, for example living rent and rent to buy	Consider options for intermediate housing tenures other than shared ownership, informed by local housing needs research and information from Registered Providers in the Borough. Present an information report to members by end of 2022-23.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
Monitor the tenure and mix of homes delivered to inform future policy	Monitor delivery through the Annual Authority Monitoring Report and additional monitoring of affordable housing provision, as a percentage of overall delivery and recording tenure and mix information.	Planning Team & Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
3.3 Consider options for the Council to influence and take a pro-active role in housing delivery, including through a Local Housing Company.		
Consider use of council owned assets for use to deliver affordable housing	Review of council owned assets through the internal Assets Group and consider their use to delivery new affordable housing units through joint working with Registered Providers.	Head of Housing and Health

Priority 4: Working in partnership		
4.1 Work in partnership with local authorities and partner organisations including active membership and engagement in Kent Housing Group to share best practice, learning and resources		
Continue our membership to Kent Housing Group	Actively contribute and engage with partners of the Group.	Head of Housing and Health & service representatives of each sub-group
4.2 Engage with Registered Providers and private developers through regular strategic and management/liason meetings to ensure efficient and effective delivery of services		
Work with Registered Providers to maintain and improve housing management services and joint working with the Council and other agencies	Develop and agree an approach to monitoring and engagement between Registered Providers and the Council; including meetings to share staff and service updates, review specific cases and any areas of concern. Links to Priority 1 objectives	Head of Housing and Health
	Monitoring will require data, management and performance information, including customer satisfaction and steps being taken to implement the 'Charter for social housing residents' as set out in the Social Housing White Paper 2020.	
Develop an approach for regular engagement with Registered Providers to influence housing delivery in the borough	Set up strategic meetings with Registered Providers: bi-annual meetings with Registered Providers with large amounts of stock in the Borough, and annual meetings with Registered Providers with lower amount of stock. First meetings to be in 2022-23.	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
Facilitate a developers and Registered Provider Forum	Develop and host a Forum event annually, to facilitate networking and dialogue between partners. These events will also support the delivery of policy i.e. the new Local Plan, Affordable Housing Protocol and publication of the Housing Needs Research.	
4.3 Work with health colleagues and organisations to ensure preventative focussed work and improve wellbeing through links between services		
Work in partnership with Health Services to provide integrated services taking account of individual needs	Take an active role in partnership working with health providers to address the health needs of residents with more integrated services through representation at the West Kent Integrated Care Partnership and associated health forums.	Head of Housing and Health
Continue to take an active role in cross sector initiatives and projects with Health Services	Work with health partners to ensure that housing continues to play a key role in supporting timely and safe discharge from hospital.	Housing Solutions Manager
4.4 Maximise our joint working with local commissioned organisations and third sector partners to add value to our housing services		
Work with KCC commissioned services on wellbeing and older persons	Ensure housing related services link into available support through partnership meetings to have an open dialogue and share information.	Head of Housing and Health

Record of member points and questions at Housing Strategy workshops September – October 2021

You said	We have
Social housing properties lying empty	Included within the draft strategy the importance of improved liaison with our Registered Provider (RP) partners including performance management and holding them to account including reporting on empty homes. We have included an action on this within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.
Do more re empty homes including EDMOs and increase use of No Use Empty Scheme	Explained that empty homes work which involves bringing long term problematic properties back into use is very resource intensive and would require a shift/increase in resources. The approach needs to be considered in the longer term. Included within the action plan to promote the No Use Empty Scheme.
There are Clarion properties lying empty and derelict. Can we have an update on number of Clarion empty properties.	Included within the draft strategy the importance of improved liaison with our RP partners including performance management and holding them to account including reporting on empty homes. We have included an action on this within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.
How many Clarion properties are lying empty? Do Clarion have to pay the 200% Council Tax premium and if so how many is this being paid on?	Included within the draft strategy for improved liaison with our RP partners including performance management and holding them to account including reporting on empty homes. <i>Follow up action: Clarified how many Clarion properties are empty and how many are paying the Council Tax premium.</i>
If someone is in social housing and their financial position appears to improve is anyone checking this and can we do anything if they don't need this form of affordable housing.	Explained this is difficult as they will often have a lifetime tenancy, and this cannot be ended by a change in circumstances. However, we should be encouraged by the social housing household having been able to improve their circumstances financially and having had the opportunity to do so.
Where does our responsibility for downsizing lie? Should we promote more? Better incentives?	Explained we can influence downsizing through our housing allocations policy and the priority we give. Explained our housing needs research will provide robust information on under occupation levels and need which will determine our response to this and any action will be contained within a future action plan which will sit under the strategy.
What can we do about independent living – is it a KCC responsibility? Where do our adaptations fit in? If someone is living in a 3 bed and only needs a 1 bed do we encourage them to move?	Explained independent living is both responsibility of KCC (through social services in the main) and TMBC through our DFG programme and in terms of DFGs there is always a conversation about moving to a more suitable property including where downsizing might be more appropriate. Clarion do refuse some adaptations on family homes if under occupied. Explained our housing needs research will provide robust information on under occupation levels and need which will determine our response to this and any action will be contained within a future action plan which will sit under the strategy.

What about intergenerational housing/communities?	Included within the draft strategy for some research on this and assessment if we can deliver this approach in T&M.
Support further energy efficiency grant work and the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards work.	Included within the draft strategy objectives that focus on energy efficiency improvements and actions are contained within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.
Frustration with developers in delivering affordable housing.	Explained about the ongoing work to better align planning and housing requirements to strengthen our position on affordable housing delivery. Included within the action plan actions on this which will sit under the strategy.
Clarion are slow to respond and there needs to be a refresh of their services.	Included within the draft strategy the importance of improved liaison with our RP partners including performance management and holding them to account across all the services they deliver. We have included an action on this within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.
We should include social housing units within housing developments even when not in the rules or despite what Government say.	Understood the frustration of Members in housing delivery. Explained about the ongoing work to better align planning and housing requirements to strengthen our position on affordable housing delivery. Included within the action plan actions on this which will sit under the strategy.
Concern about losing land/shops to accommodation – we must be careful.	Explained balanced communities is clearly an important consideration.
Private rented sector is not accessible for many of those who are on the housing register and want to stay in their immediate area.	Explained our concern about the affordability of the private rented sector and its impact on our homelessness work in particular. Included within the draft strategy objectives that focus on working with landlords and considering our landlord offer and actions are contained within the action plan which will sit under the strategy. Explained about use of Local Lettings Plans.
Support for pro-active role in housing delivery including through use of Local Housing Company. We can then deliver social housing, use our own land effectively and have a long term income stream. Most excited by this within housing strategy.	Exploration of housing company will be included within the action plan which will sit under the strategy – will likely not be Year 1 but over longer term of strategy.
Need for social housing to be for local residents not for those moving out of London. We need to have more control.	Explained housing register process and local connection and use of local lettings plan.
Kings Hill new apartments – need LLP. Residential accommodation over shops – in London (Welling) where new supermarket being built it is residential above.	<i>Follow up action: Will check if LLP for apartments in Kings Hill.</i> Agreed closer work with planning re. housing opportunities – included within strategy.

Record of member points and questions at Housing Strategy workshops September – October 2021

Timescale in delivery of new homes is important – we should be able to make developers deliver what they say.	Explained constraints of planning system. J. Anderson advised that she thought land banking and issues was in current Government thinking to be addressed.
What do we mean by empty homes?	Agreed this is open to misinterpretation. In the main we will be talking about long term empty homes (over 6 months) however recognise we need to be clear about any definition within the strategy.
Could we consider a joint post across three West Kent LAs to tackle empty homes?	Explained that working across the West Kent districts is established practice especially in housing so it is something we will consider as part of our response to empty homes work
Social housing provided on developments can be the housing near the motorway, at the back of the site, poorer in quality and have noise issues.	Explained our role in liaising with both planning and housing developers and closer work with those will be included within the strategy.
Improving energy efficiency of homes should have more emphasis – we should really “up the anti” on insulation etc.	Included within the draft strategy objectives that focus on energy efficiency improvements and actions are contained within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.
Homes being built today are not sustainable. New houses need tiles changing every 20 years.	Explained our role in liaising with both planning and housing developers and closer work with those will be included within the strategy.
Housing and planning need to be more joined up.	Explained about the ongoing work to better align planning and housing requirements to strengthen our position on affordable housing delivery. Included within the action plan actions on this which will sit under the strategy.
Where empty properties are due to speculative buying can we increase Council Tax	Explained we are not aware this is a specific reason for empty properties in T&M. Also that we have in place Council Tax premiums for empty properties and the Finance team will take full advantage of opportunities re premium charges.
First time buyers with family in areas cannot access properties due to affordability. 60% Peters Village are moving in from London which is increasing the price for local people.	Explained we have no control over purchases on open market. Explained about use of Local Lettings Plans.
If insulation in PRS is improved then landlords can increase the rent.	Explained there are minimum standards of energy efficiency in the PRS and we would not expect to see a rent increase in terms of compliance with this. However setting of rent levels is out of the control of the local authority.
There seems to be a real disconnect between housing providers and remedial works especially when linked to health issues.	Included within the draft strategy the importance of improved liaison with our RP partners including performance management and holding them to account across all the services they deliver. We have included an action on this within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.

Record of member points and questions at Housing Strategy workshops September – October 2021

<p>A real concern about affordable housing. If I was a 21 year old starting again options would be non existent.</p>	<p>Explained about the ongoing work to better align planning and housing requirements to strengthen our position on affordable housing delivery. Included within the action plan actions on this which will sit under the strategy.</p>
<p>Look at modular type buildings. Offer at affordable rent for 10 year period and at same time offer a saving option so saving for a mortgage. They then hand property back to us and have a deposit for a house.</p>	<p>Explained exploration of housing company will be included within the action plan which will sit under the strategy – will likely not be Year 1 but over longer term of strategy. All options of delivering affordable housing will be considered.</p>
<p>Poets estate, Larkfield – parts were built as one/two beds so cheaper option to start with but could easily be extended to three/four beds as required.</p>	<p>All options of delivering affordable housing will be considered. R. Dalton advised some three beds in Burham are ready to be extended into four beds.</p>
<p>In villages we need to consider homes for older persons.</p>	<p>Explained our housing needs research will provide robust information on older persons housing need which will determine our response to this and any action will be contained within a future action plan which will sit under the strategy.</p>
<p>How many rough sleepers do we currently have?</p>	<p>Last official count – 6. Moving picture but housing team very aware of intelligence and all identified will have been offered support.</p>
<p>As new Armed Forces Champion how are housing working with ex forces residents/applicants</p>	<p>Explained priority on housing register and will be considered in forthcoming allocations review. Also very lucky to have strong connections with RBLI in T&M and links are established.</p>
<p>Its good that we haven't got a lot of rough sleepers however education for 17/18-year-olds who may be thinking of moving out from home etc would be positive. Target schools/colleges and give advice about the real world.</p>	<p>Included within the draft strategy are objectives that focus on homelessness prevention work and actions on this work are contained within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.</p>
<p>We have some holiday lets for retired people that are let as permanent and they are not in the right place in terms of lack of pavements/poor access.</p>	<p>Explained our housing needs research will provide robust information on older persons housing need which will determine our response to this and any action will be contained within a future action plan which will sit under the strategy.</p>
<p>Really pleased with approach being taken. Proactive not just reactive. Just what we need.</p>	<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>Aware of an empty Clarion property – empty for 4 years. How much control do we have?</p>	<p>Included within the draft strategy the importance of improved liaison with our RP partners including performance management and holding them to account including reporting on empty homes. We have included an action on this within the action plan which will sit under the strategy.</p>

Record of member points and questions at Housing Strategy workshops September – October 2021

<p>If someone has to move to another part of the borough how do we assess that need and do people tend to want to stay in the same area?</p>	<p>Explained about our housing allocations policy requiring a housing need to move. Explained our housing needs research will provide robust information on area preferences which will determine our response to this and any action will be contained within a future action plan which will sit under the strategy. Explained about use of Local Letting Plans</p>
<p>What does work with landlords mean?</p>	<p>Explained importance of PRS. Explained need for access to affordable homes in the PRS to assist with addressing housing needs.</p>
<p>Pleased to see a focus on rural areas</p>	
<p>Support for Local Housing Company</p>	<p>Explained exploration of housing company will be included within the action plan which will sit under the strategy – will likely not be Year 1 but over longer term of strategy.</p>
<p>We should be providing housing with outside space – even more important with Covid impacts etc.</p>	<p>Explained our role in liaising with both planning and housing developers and closer work with those will be included within the strategy.</p>

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Part 1- Public

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

1 ROADSIDE NATURE RESERVES

Summary

This report presents the outcome of the recent 'Roadside Nature Reserve' (RNR) trial and proposes a future approach for Member consideration that could be adopted at other sites across the borough.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the meeting of the Street Scene and Environment Advisory Board on the 9 February 2021, Members considered and approved the following recommendations:

- 1) the proposed trial of a wildflower strip on amenity open space at Darenth Avenue be progressed.
- 2) liaison be undertaken with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and the Council's grounds maintenance contractor with a full report being considered at a future meeting of this Board on the potential of wider borough proposals.

1.1.2 A number of Members had raised the potential of introducing wildflower strips on amenity open space and/or allowing the grass to grow longer by reducing the frequency of cuts. The decision was taken to allow the grass to grow longer rather than creating a wildflower strip due to the financial costs that would be incurred.

1.1.3 A suitable location was identified in Darenth Avenue, Tonbridge and the trial consisted of cutting the area twice, once in March and once in September/October and cutting the edges against the road and path 15 times as per the current contract. It was previously reported that the grass would be 'cut and mulched' though during early consultation with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, it was clear that a cut and collect method would need to be applied to the late (September/October) cut in order to achieve greater opportunities for biodiversity.

1.2 Report Findings

- 1.2.1 Medway Valley Countryside Partnership undertook periodic monitoring of the site throughout the trial and their full report can be found in **Annex 1**. Key findings of the report include –
- The initial site survey in March 2021 revealed only 6 plant species, all typical of amenity grassland sites.
 - At the second site visit in June the number of plant species observed had increased to 15 species, but owing to the very late and cold spring, followed by heavy rainfall in May 2021 it was hardly a typical growing season.
 - The site visit in August showed a further increase in floral diversity to 24 species, with good patches of black medic, black knapweed, clovers, and goat’s beard – all good food sources for pollinating insects. This increase in floral diversity was matched by an increase and abundance in insects with 6 butterfly species seen. There were few bumblebees, however, most likely owing to their lack of nesting sites in the immediate vicinity. There were no Orthoptera seen (the order of insects including grasshoppers and crickets). This is not surprising, however, as the close mown grass of previous years would not have allowed such species to complete their lifecycle, a period of at least two years of changed management being required before this group are able to naturally migrate to the site.
- 1.2.2 In summary, the report concluded that the newly adopted management/cutting regime may require at least two growing seasons to fully determine the extent of the benefits. Initial recordings do, however, demonstrate clear increases in biodiversity even over one growing season and the benefits of adopting the altered maintenance regime.
- 1.2.3 The report also contained a number of recommendations that included the sowing of Yellow Rattle and future monitoring. With regard to the latter, further monitoring is not considered essential spend at the current time and is, therefore, not proposed. With regard to the sowing of Yellow Rattle, this is at relatively low one-off cost (£125) and could be carried out at the trial site within existing revenue budgets.
- 1.2.4 Medway Valley Countryside Partnerships final recommendation is to ‘*Follow leading wildlife charity Plantlife’s recommendations which advocate local provenance seedbank to grow with the only other intervention being to cut and collect. This will be the most sustainable, economic, and successful method to provide a more biodiverse site which captures carbon dioxide and nitrogen*’.
- ## 1.3 Future RNR Proposals
- 1.3.1 Taking the above into account it is, therefore, proposed for Member consideration that there would be benefits to adopting the same management approach to other

sites within the borough. These sites would follow the same cutting regime being cut once in late March with a second 'cut and collect' in late September/October; the edges against paths or roadsides would still be cut 15 times as per the current grounds maintenance contract.

- 1.3.2 It is proposed that Officers now bring forward sites for future RNR's for Members consideration and approval. It is proposed that sites are identified in order that the new cutting regime can be adopted in the 2022 growing season.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 On a small scale, it is anticipated that no additional costs would be incurred regarding changing the cutting regime from 15 cuts a year to one cut in March and a cut and collect in September/October.
- 1.5.2 Should Members agree to the one-off sowing of Yellow Rattle at the trial plot, this could be carried out within existing revenue budgets at an estimated cost of £125.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 None

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decision recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Asset Management, Biodiversity & Sustainability, Climate Change and Community

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:

- 1) the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership report be noted;
- 2) the cutting regime trialled and outlined in the report at 1.3.1 be adopted at other sites across the borough; and
- 3) future sites be identified for Member's approval and implementation in the 2022 growing season.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Michael Harris

Nil

Robert Styles

Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services

Author	Mark Pritchard, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) August 2021
Site Name	Darenth Avenue
Site Management	Site assessment for roadside verge conservation management
Site Details	<p>TMBC contacted MVCP to make an ecological assessment of an area of land adjacent to Darenth Avenue in Tonbridge. This was with a view to possible future conservation management of the site as a roadside nature reserve. The land is identified in map 1 below. Prior to 2021 it had been closely mown as an area of amenity grassland, but the council is now keen to explore low or no mow sites to enhance biodiversity, carbon and nitrogen capture and improve natural aesthetics within the borough. This document gives a summary of site visits made by MVCP in 2021 following a change in management to no mowing, and the future habitat management recommendations following on from that study. In conclusion a series of proposals as to what conservation measures are recommended, which species and habitats should be targeted, the likely costs and a long-term vision for the site are all made.</p> <p>Address: Grid reference: TQ590481 Approximate area 0.1 Ha Darenth Avenue Tonbridge Kent TN10 3JF</p> <p>The site sits within the northern suburbs of the town. It is bounded by a road to the north and a semi-natural area to the south featuring secondary woodland, two mature ponds and the cemetery. The site is small and flat and is now covered in amenity grassland species plus two mature deciduous trees. It has an underlying geology of Weald clay with no drift geology, resulting in a soil with a neutral pH. The site, taken from the Kent Habitat Survey 2012, is described as improved grassland with some potential to establish neutral grassland owing to its the underlying geology. A basic soil nutrient test was undertaken.</p> <p>A good perspective is gained from Google Earth see Map 2. The site has no formal wildlife or landscape designations nor any evidence of archaeological interest (taken from the Kent Historic Environment record).</p>

Discussion of site visits

The initial site survey in March 2021 (see appendix 1 for full surveys) revealed only a small number of 6 plant species, all typical of amenity grassland sites. It was hoped that by relaxing the cutting regime to one of no mowing over the length of the summer the existing seedbank might provide a greater variety of grasses and herbs, making an attractive visual roadside verge for the public, improving the biodiversity potential for invertebrates, and giving the council a saving of time and resources managing the site. The prevailing best advice on restoring species rich lowland grasslands from Plantlife also recommends adopting this non-intervention approach <http://www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk/advice-guidance>

A simple soil nutrient test revealed that while the site was not optimum for lowland meadow restoration as fertility is quite high, it has some potential for improved sward diversity by adopting a different management regime, one which avoids the need for soil stripping which would be an expensive and unnecessary option.

The second site visit in June is when the greatest variety of flowering plants would likely be seen. The number observed had increased to 15 species, but owing to the very late and cold spring, followed by heavy rainfall in May 2021 it was hardly a typical growing season. No uncommon or scarce species were found, but several common neutral grassland species such as clovers, mouse ear and speedwell were, plus the presence of finer grasses such as Yorkshire fog hinted at the potential of the site. A good number of common bird species were heard and observed feeding, although insect abundance and variety were disappointingly low.

The most recent site visit in August showed a further increase in floral diversity to 24 species, with good patches of black medic, black knapweed, clovers, and goat's beard – all good food sources for pollinating insects. This increase in floral diversity was matched by an increase and abundance in insects with 6 butterfly species seen, including the increasingly scarce small copper. There were few bumblebees however, most likely owing to their lack of nesting sites in the immediate vicinity. Some of the grassland was dense probably because of the abundant rainfall experienced in summer 2021. There were no Orthoptera seen (the order of insects including grasshoppers and crickets). This is not surprising however as the close mown grass of previous years would not have allowed such species to complete their lifecycle, a period of at least two years of changed management being required before this group are able to naturally migrate to the site. The nearby cemetery is a potential source of natural dispersal of both plants and invertebrates.

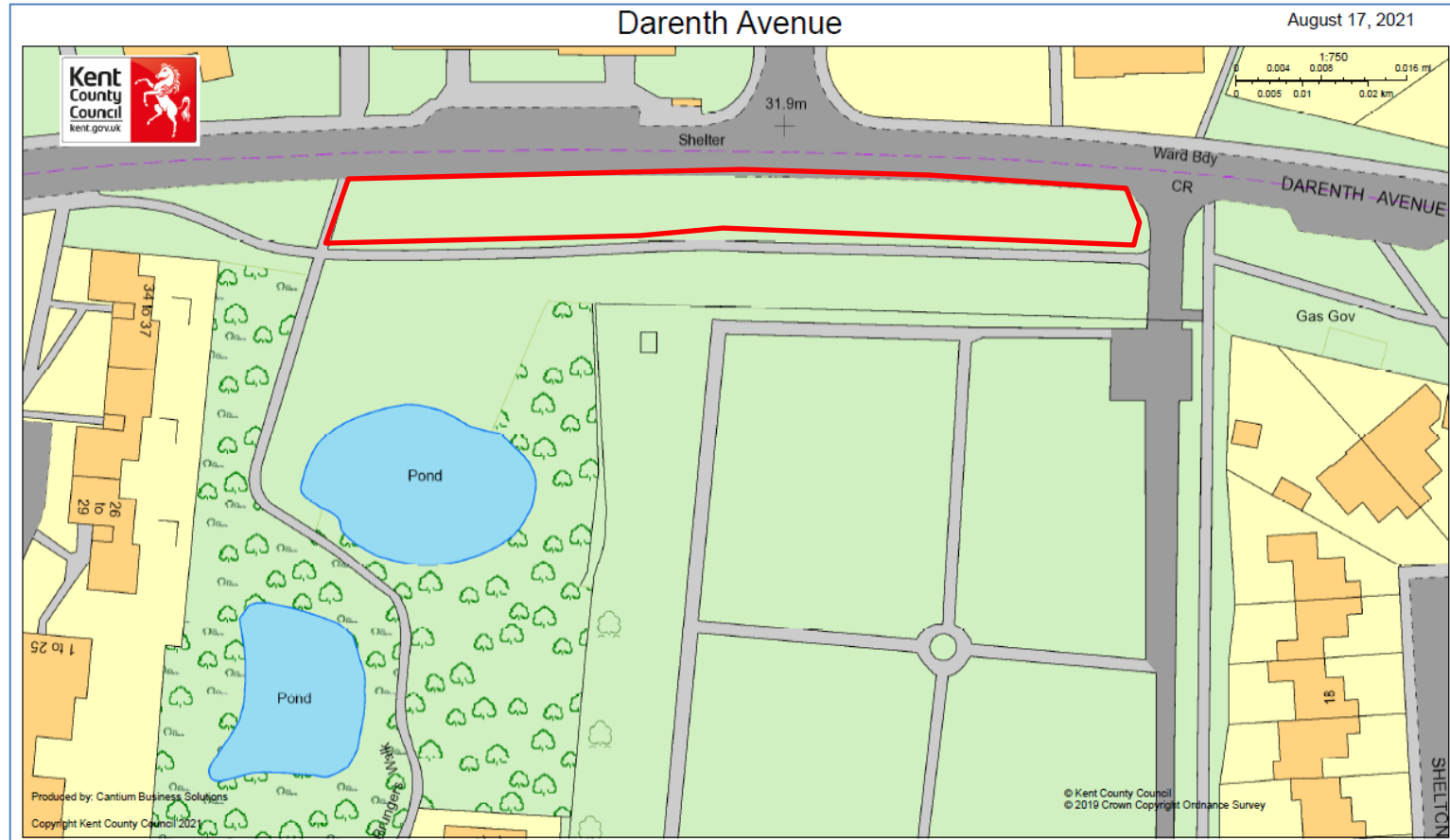
In summary the newly adopted management regime of cut and collect requires at least two full growing seasons to determine whether the desired improvement in biodiversity on site can be achieved. Grasslands are excellent habitats for locking and storing carbon and nitrogen and by removing the arisings.

N.B. This report is based upon the opinions of the surveyor to establish the habitat recommendations for the site and should not be regarded at this stage as a definitive statement of any protected species which are likely to be present or absent.

Darenth Avenue

Annex 1

Map 1 – Darenth Avenue, Tonbridge (KLIS 2021)



Site boundary



Darenth Avenue

Map 2 – Google Earth Today



Proposed actions

Table 1. Proposed activity

2022 Month	First year only	Who	One off cost (all ex- VAT)
January	Sow yellow rattle across site by hand, trampling into soil	MVCP	£125 + seed cost (estimated £30)
July	Specialist invertebrate survey and report	MVCP approved specialist	£300
		Total	£455
2022 and on-going Month	Annual activity	Who	Annual on-going Cost (all ex-VAT)
April - September	Butterfly, flora, and bumblebee surveys following standard "W" walk start (3 visits) including cost of annual report	MVCP (first three years only)	£250
March	Late March cut grassland short (<5cm) across whole site	TMBC	Included in contract
September	Cut, collect & remove grass across whole site	TMBC or MVCP as chosen	Included in contract or £300 p.a.
			£250 (1 st three years) or £550 1 st three years, £300 p.a. thereafter

Key recommendations

The above table, table 1 provides a schedule of activities for year 1 and each subsequent year which can be carried out by MVCP or TMBC contractors.

- Instigate full action plan from Table 1.
- In late 2021 introduce yellow rattle seed which parasitises on coarse grasses allowing for a more species rich sward and greater abundance of flowering plants leading to a lower nutrient status for the site.
- Cut, collect, and remove grassland arisings each year. This step is essential.
- Follow leading wildlife charity Plantlife's recommendations which advocate local provenance seedbank to grow without only other intervention being to cut and collect. This will be the most sustainable, economic, and successful method to provide a more biodiverse site which captures carbon dioxide and nitrogen.

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Appendix 1 – Species records

Date and conditions	Common name	Latin name	Fauna
23/03/2021	Dandelion	<i>Asteraceae sp.</i>	
Cool cloudy	Common Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	
14 degrees C	Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	
	creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	
	Meadow buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	
	Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	
Date and conditions	Common name	Latin name	Fauna
01/06/2021	Dandelion	<i>Asteraceae sp.</i>	Bumblebee
Warm and sunny with little cloud coverage. 21C	Common Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Honeybee
	Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Sparrow

Darenth Avenue

Annex 1

	creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Crow
	Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Blackbird
	Rye grass	<i>Lolium sp.</i>	Blue tit
	Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Wood pigeon
	Common Mouse ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Wren
	Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Dunnock
	Meadow buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Long tailed tit
	Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	
	red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
	Meadow fescue	<i>Festuca pratensis</i>	
	Rough hawkbit	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	
	Cock's foot grass	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	
Date and conditions	Common name	Latin name	Fauna
09/08/2021	Dandelion	<i>Asteraceae sp.</i>	Red tailed worker bumblebee
Warm and sunny with little cloud coverage. 23C	Common Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Small white butterfly
	Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Meadow brown
	creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Holly blue
	Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Honeybee
	Rye grass	<i>Lolium sp.</i>	Red admiral
	Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Small copper
	Common Mouse ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	
	Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	No orthoptera seen
	Meadow buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	
	Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	
	red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
	Meadow fescue	<i>Festuca pratensis</i>	



Darenth Avenue

Annex 1

	Rough hawkbit	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	
	Cock's foot grass	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	
	White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	
	Ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	
	Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	
	Black medic	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	
	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	
	Goat's beard	<i>Tragopgon pratensis</i>	
	Meadow cranesbill	<i>Geranium pratense</i>	
	Self-heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	
	Black knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	



Medway Valley
COUNTRYSIDE
protect / explore / enjoy

Mark Pritchard
MVCP August 2021

Darenth Avenue

Annex 1

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

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

1 COMMUNITY TRIGGER REVIEW

This report will provide Members with information about the revised Community Trigger process and will ask them to endorse this process.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Community Trigger (or Anti-social Behaviour Case Review) is a process which allows members of the public to ask their local Community Safety Partnership to review responses to incidents of anti-social behaviour.

1.1.2 The Trigger was introduced through the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (revised January 2021) to help ensure that agencies are working together to resolve incidents of anti-social behaviour that are affecting resident's quality of life. Community Safety Partnerships will do this by appropriately sharing information between agencies, reviewing the actions that have been taken and use available resources to try and reach a solution and make recommendations that will hopefully prevent the situation from reoccurring.

1.1.3 The Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership already has a procedure in place but due to the revision of the Trigger the Community Safety Managers across Kent have looked at what is currently in place to ensure that we are all following a consistent approach across Kent and that victims who meet the criteria can receive a review of their case.

1.2 The Community Trigger process

1.2.1 Tackling anti-social behaviour is a key priority for both the Community Safety Partnership and the Borough Council and the Community Trigger process will be one way of ensuring that victims can get the support they need to resolve anti-social behaviour issues.

1.2.2 The Community Trigger can be used if someone has reported at least three incidents of anti-social behaviour to a relevant organisation (e.g. the Council, Police, Social Landlord) within the previous six months. These are incidents where

the same behaviour, nuisance or problem has reoccurred, where the victim feels that no effective action has been taken and when it was reported within one month of it happening. This is known as the Community Trigger threshold.

- 1.2.3 In determining the threshold, we should also consider the persistent nature, the harm or potential harm caused by the anti-social behaviour and the adequacy of the response to the anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2.4 The Community Trigger is not designed to replace existing anti-social behaviour reporting lines or for the reporting of general acts of crime, including hate crimes although these can be included in the number of incidents that are reported if the person feels that they were part of the anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2.5 Community Trigger applications are submitted via the Borough Council's website (<https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/community-services/report-anti-social-behaviour/3>) and are initially considered by the Safer & Stronger Communities Manager and another professional (usually a police sergeant) to see if they meet the threshold.
- 1.2.6 If the application meets the threshold, then a Review Panel must be held which would consider the case and would involve agencies such as the Police, Council and Social Landlords. Any agencies may be asked to submit information in relation to the case (if appropriate) so that this information can be considered by the Panel to decide if any further actions are required to help resolve the case.
- 1.2.7 Even if the threshold is not met, then we would try to help the complainant to resolve the issue by liaising with other agencies.
- 1.2.8 The victim/complainant will be kept informed at all times about what is happening and once a Review Panel has been held (as appropriate) then the victim will also be informed of the outcome of this. We will also review any actions arising from the Panel to ensure that they are completed, and the victim is receiving the help that they need.
- 1.2.9 Since 2014 (when the requirement for Community Triggers first came in) we have received 25 applications. Of these eight have met the threshold and a panel has met. Whilst we would hope that most issues could be resolved before the need to progress to a Community Trigger, we do want to ensure that residents are aware of the Community Trigger and how they can access this if they feel that their anti-social behaviour issues are still ongoing.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 The Community Trigger is included within the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (revised January 2021) and it is therefore a requirement for the Borough Council to work with other agencies to ensure that residents can request a Community Trigger if they feel that their issue meets the threshold.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 There are no direct costs involved in providing the Community Trigger, although it does take up Officer time.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 All risk assessments will be undertaken as appropriate.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.7 Policy Considerations

1.7.1 Community Safety

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That Members **ENDORSE** the Community Trigger process.

The Central Services Director and Deputy Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Alison Finch
Safer & Stronger Communities
Manager

Adrian Stanfield
Central Services Director and Deputy Chief Executive

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 TONBRIDGE RACECOURSE SPORTSGROUND DRAINAGE

This report provides an update to Members following recent drainage investigations into the long-term ponding of water on the Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground following high rainfall or flooding.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Over the past few years an area of standing water or ponding has occurred around the play area in the Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground during the winter period. This can result in damage to the surface of the sportsground as the turf and surrounding vegetation rot and the ground becomes waterlogged. The area of standing water also makes access through the sportsground difficult at times, reducing access to the play area and creating a pungent smell.
- 1.1.2 The Council commissioned an initial survey from a drainage consultant to identify the sources of flooding and to suggest potential solutions. Following this further investigation work was carried out by Officers from Technical Services. This identified a much wider network of newer and historical drainage.
- 1.1.3 The historical drainage consists of several drainage gullies and land drains which appear over-time to have fallen into disrepair, with some pipes being damaged or broken and beyond economical repair.
- 1.1.4 The newer drainage consists of large area land drains. Whilst these appear to be functional, the outfalls into the River Medway require some additional work to allow them to function properly. This drainage is also cross connected into the older historical systems.

1.2 Further Analysis - Sources of Flooding

- 1.2.1 There is clearly a need to recognise that the sportsground is an essential part of flood management in Tonbridge, as the area is recognised as active floodplain and as such will regularly flood during the winter period.

1.2.2 There are several possibilities as to why this area has had standing water during the winter months. These are;

- Flood water - Water arising from the River Medway during flood events is trapped in this area and is unable to drain back into the River Medway.
- Ground water - The water table during the winter period rises and causes a natural pond of water to form which then naturally drains as drier weather arrives.
- Surface water – Intense rainfall on the sportsground saturates the area and a pool of water is trapped.
- Damaged drainage systems – River water can enter the sportsground drainage and work in reverse to allow this flooding.

Each of the points above could result in flood water forming a pond in the sportsground and each has a different management technique to address.

1.3 Works undertaken

1.3.1 The Council has commissioned work to isolate this system from the River Medway to prevent water moving from the River into the Sportsground.

1.4 Recent monitoring

1.4.1 Since the end of September, the existing drainage system and associated land drains have dried out as they are now isolated from the River Medway. This is a good position to be in at the start of Autumn as it allows isolated heavy showers to soak away.

1.5 Next Steps

1.5.1 To allow the drainage outfall into the River Medway to function there will be a new pipe installed into the river that can be opened and closed manually. This pipe will be opened when the river is low enough to drain the flooding in the sportsground and then closed to prevent the river coming back in when its level increases. This will be installed in the next few weeks.

1.5.2 Staff from Technical Services will continue to monitor the sportsground over this next winter period to ascertain where the water is coming from that causes this ponding to then allow the most cost-effective solution to be developed. This monitoring along with options will be reported back to this Board next year.

1.6 Legal Implication

1.6.1 None

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 The on-going monitoring of the existing drainage systems along with the minor works that have been carried out have been funded from existing revenue budgets and will allow a better assessment of the issues being encountered. This will allow Officers to bring forward the relevant proposals to alleviate this area of standing water.

1.8 Risk Assessment

1.8.1 None

Background papers:

contact: Andrew Young

Nil

Robert Styles

Director of Street Scene Leisure and Technical Services

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 UPDATE FROM THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

This report will give an update on some of the latest work of the Community Safety Partnership

1.1 Latest crime statistics and crime trends

1.1.1 The latest crime statistics (to the end of September 2021) show that there was a 10% reduction in reported crimes to the police (from 8,236 this year compared to 9,153 in the same period last year). There have also been reductions in violent crime offences (1.5% reduction), residential burglaries (11.6% reduction), shoplifting offences (24.7% reduction) and drug offences (16.3% reduction). The reasons for these reductions are unclear, although the police have been undertaking proactive patrolling which might have led to the reductions in burglaries, shoplifting and drug offences.

1.1.2 There have also been reductions in the number of domestic abuse reports to the police (from 2,965 last year to 2,886 this year) and in reports of anti-social behaviour to the police (from 2,418 last year to 2,239 this year). It is difficult to know why domestic abuse reports have reduced as organisations working with victims of domestic abuse are seeing increasing numbers of people contacting them for support (and with increasingly complex cases). We continue to encourage victims of domestic abuse to report these to the police and get any help they need.

1.1.3 The Community Safety Partnership will continue to monitor the crime statistics so that it can identify any crime trends or look at whether any further work is needed to tackle a particular issue.

1.2 Serious Violence Duty

1.2.1 Following public consultation in July 2019¹, the Government announced that it would bring forward legislation introducing a new serious violence duty on public bodies which would ensure relevant services work together to share data and knowledge and allow them to target their interventions to prevent serious violence

altogether. The Government also announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships by making sure they have a strategy in place to tackle violent crime.

- 1.2.2 Serious violence has a devastating impact on victims and their families, instils fear within communities and is extremely costly to society. Incidents of serious violence have increased in England and Wales since 2014. For example, offences involving knives or sharp instruments increased by 84 percent between the year to June 2014 and the year to June 2020.
- 1.2.3 The Duty (as set out in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act) requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy.
- 1.2.4 New structures will not necessarily be required, and local areas will need to decide on how to take this forward. This may be through the existing Violence Reduction Units or through Community Safety Partnerships.
- 1.2.5 The Duty requires that the Police, Probation Service, Youth Offending Teams, Fire & Rescue Service, Health, District Councils and County Councils must work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. Within Kent it is likely that the Violence Reduction Unit (which is already in operation and leading on work in the county to tackle violent crime) will lead on this work. This will avoid duplication and discussions are already underway to look at how best this work would be carried out.

1.3 Violence Against Women and Girls

- 1.3.1 Following recent events, violence against women and girls (VAWG) is becoming a national priority. Whilst Tonbridge & Malling is a low crime area, with crimes against women and girls low, we know that there is more to do to make sure that women and girls feel safe in the borough.
- 1.3.2 There are already many agencies working in the borough to tackle this issue and the Police and Crime Commissioner is leading on work to develop a county wide strategy. He currently is asking for residents to complete a survey (<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/VAWGKENTPCC/>) and is meeting with agencies to look at how we can work together.
- 1.3.3 The Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership already commissions a number of agencies to work with victims of domestic abuse (as well as programmes which work with perpetrators of domestic abuse). We link in with KCC Early Help around schools work and preventative work and have been able

to provide funding for Op Heart, a Kent Police initiative focusing on personal safety in and around the night-time economy. As part of this, police licencing officers (and TMBC licencing officers) have visited premises and have distributed 'spikeys' which aim to prevent drink spiking.

- 1.3.4 The Partnership will be looking to identify whether there are any further actions it should be taking to address this topic and it is likely that Violence Against Women and Girls will become a priority in its Partnership Plan for 2022/23.
- 1.3.5 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council itself is now a White Ribbon accredited organisation. White Ribbon is a charity that aims to end male violence against women by engaging with men and boys to make a stand against violence. Their mission is for all men to fulfil the White Ribbon promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women. They aim to act as a catalyst, encouraging people, and especially men and boys, to take action and change behaviour individually and collectively.
- 1.3.6 White Ribbon Ambassadors are male volunteers who engage with other men and boys to call out abusive and sexist behaviour among their friends, colleagues and communities to promote a culture of equality and respect. Women can also sign up to be Champions and encourage men to get involved by finding opportunities to inspire and inform; through presentations, conversations and social media.
- 1.3.7 White Ribbon Day is 25 November and as part of this we'll be looking to plan some events to highlight this both within the Council and in the wider community.

1.4 Neighbourhood Engagement Meetings and crime prevention stands

- 1.4.1 The next Neighbourhood Engagement meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 December at 7pm via MS Teams. This meeting gives residents the chance to speak to representatives from the Police, Borough Council and County Council about community safety issues. All are welcome to attend but need to register in advance (csp@tmbc.gov.uk).
- 1.4.2 We hope that in the New Year (subject to Covid restrictions) we will be able to move to face to face meetings with residents and we will keep you informed of any dates arranged for these meetings.
- 1.4.3 In the run up to Christmas we have also arranged a number of community safety/crime prevention stands across the borough. Dates for these are still to be confirmed but again will be published as soon as they are known.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 Any funding requirements are provided through the Community Safety Partnership.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 All risk assessments are under-taken as appropriate.

1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Community Safety

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Alison Finch
Safer & Stronger Communities
Manager

Adrian Stanfield
Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive

Agenda Item 12

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

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Agenda Item 13

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.

**ANY REPORTS APPEARING AFTER THIS PAGE CONTAIN EXEMPT
INFORMATION**

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Agenda Item 14

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

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