

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2014

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

Summary

The Council's Housing Options team continues to promote the prevention of homelessness and address the housing needs of local residents. The number of households seeking advice and/or applying to the Housing Register for social housing has remained significantly high as a result of the economic downturn.

1.1 Housing options and prevention of homelessness

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

1.2 Housing Options approaches

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

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

1.3 Homeless Applications

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

- 1.3.1 As can be seen from the table above, the number of homeless applications remains low. The applications listed in columns three and four are not necessarily the same as those in column two. This is because a decision on a homelessness application may not be reached during the same calendar month as it was made.

1.4 Temporary accommodation

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

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

1.5 Rent Deposit Scheme

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

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

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

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

1.6 Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO)

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

1.7 Housing Register

- 1.7.1 The number of households on the housing register has not exceeded 1,000 during the first quarter post the review of our housing allocation scheme.
- 1.7.2 The table below shows the number of applicants joining and leaving the housing register, including home seekers (those applying for their first social tenancy) and transfers (existing social tenants applying for a move).

Month	Applications Received	Applications Cancelled	Number on Housing Register
October	155	111	997 (388 Transfers)
November	102	209	982 (382 Transfers)
December	86	65	995 (386 Transfers)
TOTAL	343	385	2974 (1156 Transfers)

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

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

1.8 Choice Based Lettings

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

1.9 Legal Implications

- 1.9.1 Non arising from this report

1.10 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.10.1 None arising from this report

1.11 Risk Assessment

- 1.11.1 None arising from this report

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jane Smither
Jason Wheble

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health