

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD**

**28 February 2017**

**Report of the 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 HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT UPDATE**

**The report provides an update on the former supporting people programme, a note of progress on devolution work areas within west Kent on housing related support and seeks Member endorsement on the response to the Government's consultation on the Funding of Supported Housing.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 The Supporting People programme was introduced nationally in 2003 and has been administered locally through Kent County Council (KCC). It brought together disparate funding streams from health, social care, probation and local housing authorities to establish a ring-fenced budget to fund and strategically commission housing related support (HRS) services. Support in this context means advice and help to make it easier for vulnerable people to maintain their independence in their home. HRS helps a number of different groups of vulnerable people to achieve a range of positive outcomes. The groups supported include:

- Older people, who require support to live in their own home
- People with learning, physical and sensory disabilities, who want to live as independently as possible
- People suffering from health problems such as mental illness and substance misuse
- Vulnerable homeless households including rough sleepers
- People at risk of domestic abuse
- Young people and others with multiple needs such as offenders

- 1.1.2 HRS enables vulnerable people to recover from homelessness and move towards social inclusion and settled accommodation, thereby preventing future homelessness, preventing spending on Health and Social Care and increasing community safety. It minimises the need for high cost interventions and reduces avoidable pressure on statutory services such as social care by developing the skills, resilience and capacity of individuals. Most HRS services are either:
- Supported Housing - such as hostels, refuges, sheltered accommodation or
  - Floating Support - this is available to anyone with HRS needs, regardless of tenure
- 1.1.3 In 2009, the ring-fence on the supporting people funding stream was removed and from 2011/12, the funding was rolled into the revenue support grant. There is now no specific budget allocation for supporting people services as it is part of this single grant. The programme's value is circa £18 million.
- 1.1.4 A recent review of HRS services undertaken by KCC noted linkages between most HRS services and some commissioned services for adults and children's social care. Prevention and early intervention services such as those provided through HRS are viewed by KCC to be integral to their strategies for children's and adult social care and as such are now being considered in the wider context of social care transformation and budgets. Furthermore, there is recognition from all partners of the need to consider more fundamentally how supported housing should be planned, commissioned and delivered within a tighter public spending climate.

## **1.2 Current Position**

- 1.2.1 The commissioning of HRS for Mental Health, Learning Disability, Older People and Physical Disability is now being considered under the governance of the County Council's Adults Transformation Portfolio. Services for these client groups previously funded through supporting people have/will be redesigned and recommissioned and funding integrated into the wider KCC commissioning programme for these groups.
- 1.2.2 In respect of Domestic Abuse, these services have been redesigned and jointly recommissioned by combining the HRS funding with that of partner agencies including the Police, Police Crime Commissioners Office, Public Health and some District & Boroughs, with the aim of providing a joined up, holistic, integrated approach to reducing the impact of domestic abuse on families and communities within Kent.
- 1.2.3 KCC in partnership with stakeholders and Providers is now focussing on the redesign of HRS for vulnerable homeless households and homeless young people. With regards to young people the vision is very much to redesign and

align the accommodation and support pathway for Children in Care, Young Care Leavers, and 16/17 year olds.

- 1.2.4 Whilst we are engaged in this process, there is concern that if services are prioritised for these groups to whom KCC owe a statutory duty this will be to the detriment of households who are vulnerable but do not meet the thresholds to receive statutory services. For example, our young persons supported accommodation scheme at New Wharf Road currently accommodates young people aged between 16 and 24. At any one time some of these residents will neither be 16 or 17 years of age nor care leavers but are still deemed vulnerable due to their homelessness. If the proposals to prioritise only care leavers and 16 and 17 year olds are implemented it will effectively mean all other young people will have very limited access to schemes such as New Wharf in future, leaving a potential gap in service provisions at a time when demand is increasing.
- 1.2.5 With Local Housing Authorities soon to be under new duties proposed in the Homeless Reduction Bill to more formally assist those single person households who are not considered to be in priority need, we need to fully understand the impact and interdependencies of KCCs proposed changes on clients to whom the LHA owes a duty.

### **1.3 West Kent Devolution**

- 1.3.1 Whilst there are considerable challenges in this area of work, there are also potential opportunities. We, Tunbridge Wells BC and Sevenoaks DC together with KCC have been exploring opportunities for devolution and collaborative working. This includes integration and co-commissioning that would enable the delivery of more seamless services for customers, increased efficiency and greater responsiveness to local priorities. HRS and Public Health Preventative Services feature significantly in this work.
- 1.3.2 The HRS theme, has identified four work streams on which to focus efforts:
- Vulnerable homelessness and young people
  - DFGs and older people
  - Integration of Domestic Abuse Services
  - Exploration of existing district and borough services that could potentially integrate, combine and consolidate District Housing functions
- 1.3.3 This will involve the identification of KCCs Adult Social Care and HRS budgets which could appropriately be disaggregated and devolved to a West Kent level and combined with existing district services and resources, where appropriate and agreeable, to enable the local provision and commissioning of support services to meet the specific needs of the West Kent area.

- 1.3.4 With regard to Public Health Preventative Services it has been agreed to adopt a phased approach to the roll out of a new model of delivering these services, focussing efforts on clearer assessment and identification of health care pathways for people and utilising the strengths and contribution that district councils can make in this area. This includes an interim arrangement with Kent Community Health Foundation Trust, who will be providing some services to complement the new model for the initial six months. This will allow both a fuller understanding of opportunities for collaboration to deliver the Preventative Strand in the Sustainability and Transformation Plan for West Kent and develop a partnership approach to procuring the preventative health service.
- 1.3.5 In the meantime the Districts and Boroughs are working on developing a Single Point of Access for people wanting to access preventative health care services and an integrated database to support this. The aim is to introduce these between April and October.

#### **1.4 Funding of Supported Housing Consultation Response**

- 1.4.1 Members may recall previous reports to this Board which outlined the provisions contained within The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. One of the provisions in the Act stated for all social and affordable rents to be reduced by 1 per cent year on year between 2016 and 2019. A subsequent government announcement was also made to cap housing benefit level for all rented social housing homes at local housing allowance levels from 2018. There are concerns that if this were to be applied to supported housing where rents and service charges are higher in comparison to general needs accommodation, it would remove the entitlement of residents to full housing benefit, have a detrimental impact on vulnerable tenants and on the viability of new and supported housing such as extra care housing.
- 1.4.2 Supported Housing was exempted from these requirements pending the government issuing a consultation paper on the matter. This consultation paper "Funding for Supported Housing" was issued on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016 and the consultation period ended on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The opportunity was taken to submit a response on behalf of the Council which is attached at **[Annex 1]**.
- 1.4.3 The key elements of the new proposals are:
- All housing costs for supported housing will be met. Housing costs will be paid through the benefit system up to the local housing allowance level with a top up paid by the local authority.
  - To enable this top up to happen, funds will be allocated to local authorities by a mechanism yet to be decided. No decision has yet been made as to whether this top up funding will go to upper or lower tier authorities.
  - The top up funding will be ring fenced and only available to pay supported housing costs.

- The new system is planned to be implemented from 2019 and the Local Housing Allowance cap will not apply to supported and sheltered housing until then, with some exceptions including domestic abuse refugees. The 1 per cent annual rent reduction will apply to sheltered housing from 2017-2019.
- A Green Paper with the detailed arrangements for the local top up model is due to be published in the spring, with the final package due to be announced in autumn 2017 ahead of the new model becoming operational from April 2019.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

1.5.1 None arising at present

## **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.6.1 None arising at present

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 All appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken as required.

## **1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.8.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. Once the direction of travel becomes clear a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

## **1.9 Policy Considerations**

1.9.1 Meeting housing need, and preventing homelessness to enable people to live independently in the community touches upon a number of key corporate priorities including Housing, Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety and Children and Young People.

## **1.10 Recommendations**

1.10.1 Members are requested to **endorse** the consultation response to Government.

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:

Nil

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