

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

13 November 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 WEST KENT HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Summary

The West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021 is in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council. This report sets out the main points of the Strategy and asks Members to endorse it.

1.1 The main points of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy

1.1.1 The Strategy [**Annex 1**] sets out how the three Councils will work to meet their statutory duties and responsibilities over the next five years. It outlines four ambitions to achieve the vision “to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes for purchase and rent whilst reducing homelessness and contributing to building the West Kent economy. We want our residents to live in safe, good quality homes that meet their needs.”

1.1.2 The four ambitions of the Strategy are:

- Ambition 1: Improving the availability of housing for all and preventing homelessness
- Ambition 2: Improving Supply
- Ambition 3: Improving Standards
- Ambition 4: Improving health and wellbeing.

These broad objectives provide a framework to influence the Council’s and partners’ priorities. It reflects the role played by a wide range of organisations and agencies in delivering the housing and homelessness objectives of the Strategy.

1.1.3 The Strategy highlights the changing housing policy context, including government’s welfare reform, focus on home ownership and planning policy. This context, along with increasing demand, population growth and increasing private rents, means it’s a challenging time to meet housing need. Enquiries to the

Housing Options services seem to be broadening, meaning advice and signposting have become more holistic to include financial guidance, health related advice and community safety awareness.

- 1.1.4 The Strategy will need to be flexible and iterative to meet the impact of changes to housing and welfare policy as they unfold during the period of the Strategy.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The existing Homelessness Strategy (2011-2016) is a joint West Kent strategy; it has now been expanded to include main challenges and objectives for our Housing Services. This is good practice and fits with our statutory duty to publish a homelessness strategy.
- 1.2.2 The Board received an update on the Strategy in July, noting the final draft was slightly delayed as a result of the pending Homelessness Reduction Act. The Strategy has been updated to incorporate the implications of the Act, and also the implications of the Housing white paper '[Fixing our broken housing market](#)' (February 2017).
- 1.2.3 The draft Strategy went out to consultation from 16 June to 28 July 2017, inviting comments from partner agencies and organisations across the Kent. We had five replies to the consultation, summarised in **[Annex 2]**.
- 1.2.4 We held two workshops, one with partners and one just with housing association partners. Comments from the workshops informed the Strategy.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 The Strategy is produced in pursuit of the delivery of our mandatory and statutory functions under the Housing Acts.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 Financial implications arising from the Strategy and associated action plan can be met from within existing budgets or agreed as part of the current budget setting process.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Endorsing, and adopting, the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy fulfils our statutory duty to have a homelessness strategy.
- 1.5.2 There are no financial risks associated with the Strategy. Financial and staffing resources are needed to fulfil our statutory homeless duties. These are included in our plans to meet the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- 1.5.3 No health and safety implications have been identified.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 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. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and varies between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

1.6.2 An equality impact assessment was completed for the Strategy. It found some of the actions in the Strategy Action Plan are likely to have a positive impact on certain groups, including:

- Disability: Provide assistance to vulnerable residents to help them remain in their homes through the Home Improvement Agency and Disabled Facilities Grants.
- Age: Ensure appropriate access and support for those with dementia. Work with partners to provide access to a facility to manage crisis homelessness and a 'cooling off' space for young people. Recognise the needs of young people leaving care and work with Kent County Council to assist them to move on successfully into independent living.
- Ethnicity: Participate in the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme.
- Sex: Extend the use of and support the Sanctuary Scheme to allow people experiencing domestic abuse to remain in their home.

1.7 Policy Considerations

1.7.1 N/A

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Board endorses the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021.

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

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health