

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 Information

1 HOUSING SERVICE ACTIVITY 2017/18

Summary

This report provides an update on the work of the Housing Service for the first and second quarter of the financial year 2017/18.

1.1 Affordable Housing Update

- 1.1.1 Officers are working with Registered Provider partners to ensure a forward supply of affordable homes in the Borough. The spreadsheet in **[Annex 1]** shows the schemes completed in 2017/18 and those due to come forward.

1.2 Private Sector Housing Activity for April to September 2017

- 1.2.1 The Private Sector Housing (PSH) team responded to a total of 124 service requests. The breakdown of the service requests are shown below:

Service request activity	Number of requests
Housing conditions	62
Illegal eviction/landlord harassment	3
Caravan site	1
Empty home visits	20
Immigration related visits	1
Rent deposit visits	18
Temporary accommodation visits	18
Arrange Public Health funeral	1
Total	124

- 1.2.2 The majority of the housing condition related service requests were dealt with informally but where there were significant hazards, as determined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment, and the landlord was not undertaking the appropriate remedial works, then formal enforcement action was taken.
- 1.2.3 A Final Empty Dwelling Management Order under the Housing Act 2004 for a long term empty property in West Malling has been obtained to enable the Council to undertake renovation works and bring it back into use. The renovation works to the property are now underway and good progress is being made.
- 1.2.4 As part of the work of the Corporate Empty Property Group the PSH team have visited and undertaken 16 empty property assessments of those properties that have been empty for over two years and where Council Tax is not aware of any action being taken to bring these back into use. In addition, five long term empty properties (empty longer than six months) have been brought back into use, three of those following advice and information from the PSH team given to the owner and two following receipt of funding from the Kent County Council No Use Empty loan.
- 1.2.5 In addition, three houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licence renewals were issued.
- 1.2.6 For the period April to September 2017, fifty five Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) were completed. These were for the following works:
- Access to bedroom – 1 case
 - Provision of ground floor bedroom/bathroom facilities – 1 case
 - Provision of a stair lift – 17 cases
 - Provision of level access shower facilities – 25 cases
 - Over bath shower – 1 case
 - Improving access – 9 cases
 - Safety related works – 3 cases
 - Moving grant to relocate to a more suitable property – 1 case
 - Other, including additional WC facilities, hardstanding and specialist baths – 4 cases.
- 1.2.7 There may be grants that cover more than one area of work and therefore the numbers will not add up to the total number of grants completed.

1.2.8 For the period April to September 2017, ten Housing Assistance cases were completed. These included:

- Helping to make 8 homes warmer by providing Warm Homes Assistance for heating/boiler replacement;
- Helping to make the home of 1 domestic abuse victim more secure so they feel safer; and
- Helping to make 1 home safer through Home Safety Assistance for repairing the lock to the front door and replacing faulty taps to the wash basin in the bathroom.

1.3 West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme update

1.3.1 Members will be pleased to note that following on from the decision taken at the last meeting of this Board, the Health & Housing Coordinator post at Tunbridge Wells hospital and associated Handyperson service have now been extended until March 2019. This provides continuity of service with the same member of staff in the hospital who has worked hard to make contacts and increase awareness of the scheme.

1.3.2 The scheme continues to go from strength to strength and recently won an excellence award from Kent Housing Group for partnership working as well as a commended award for collaboration at the national Foundations Home Improvement Agency Awards.

1.3.3 Discussions have now commenced regarding appointing a Health & Housing Coordinator post at Maidstone Hospital as we are aware that residents from Tonbridge & Malling may also be admitted here. We hope to have the service up and running in Maidstone Hospital from January 2018. The new service will be jointly funded between Sevenoaks D.C., Tunbridge Wells B.C. and ourselves providing assistance to any resident of these areas. Further Handyperson resources will also be commissioned to support this service.

1.3.4 The Handyperson service will remain free to residents who are being discharged from hospital and require assistance to enable this to happen. However, outside of this scheme, Tonbridge & Malling residents will also be able to access a general Handyperson service at a subsidised rate of £5 per hour if they are in receipt of a means-tested benefit. For those who are not in receipt of a means-tested benefit, the rate will remain at £15 per hour.

1.4 Housing Needs Update for 2017/18

1.4.1 The majority of customers contacting the Housing Options and Support team need help to keep their current home or to find and secure a new home. The table below shows the number of customers who approached the team during 2017.

Month	Options Presentations	Resolved at first point of contact	Homelessness Prevented	Ongoing Cases
Apr 2017	49	27	15	6
May 2017	54	39	6	9
Jun 2017	57	37	11	9
Jul 2017	38	25	2	11
Aug 2017	41	24	9	8
Sep 2017	80	12	1	67
Total	319	164	44	110

1.4.2 In addition to this, the team investigated 85 homeless applications. The full housing duty was accepted for 40 households; 27 households were found not to be homeless, 7 households were found not to have a priority need for accommodation and a further 11 households were found to have become homeless intentionally. The team will continue to provide advice and assistance to help households resolve their housing needs even where a full housing duty is not owed to a household.

1.5 Temporary Accommodation

1.5.1 The following table provides a 'snapshot' number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation at the end of each month during this period.

Date	Number in self-contained temporary accommodation (AST)	Number in self-contained temporary accommodation (nightly paid)	Number in traditional bed & breakfast	Total
30.04.17	4	22	3	29
31.05.17	5	25	2	32
30.06.17	5	17	1	23
31.07.17	4	23	1	28
31.08.17	6	21	1	28
30.09.17	7	23	1	31

1.5.2 We are continuing to look at ways of reducing the time households stay in nightly paid temporary accommodation, including negotiating properties from our main housing provider, Clarion Housing Group, for use as temporary accommodation. The rent on the properties is set at local housing allowance levels reducing the overall cost to the Council as well as providing customers with a more settled

environment whilst waiting for a permanent allocation of accommodation. We are also currently examining other options for providing efficient additional temporary accommodation, including the use of S 106 funding towards affordable housing and the potential reuse of vacant property in association with our partners where that is appropriate.

- 1.5.3 Further to this an Officer from the Housing Options and Support team is currently working specifically to create and manage tailored move on plans for households being accommodated in temporary accommodation to provide them with assistance to move to alternative accommodation in other sectors rather than relying on social/affordable housing.

1.6 Accessing the Private Rented Sector

- 1.6.1 It remains challenging for households on low incomes to access the private rented sector with many private landlords in the Borough being able to achieve rents much higher than the local housing allowance (LHA) rates which remain frozen to rent levels of January 2015.

- 1.6.2 The table below shows the Housing Options and Support team continued efforts and success and finding accommodation in the private sector by negotiating with landlords and making use of the Councils Rent Deposit Scheme.

Month	Rent In Advance	Deposit Loan	Deposit Bond	Tenancies secured without financial assistance
April 2017				
May 2017			2	2
June 2017		1		
July 2017				
August 2017			1	1
September 2017	1			
Total Tenancies secured	1	1	3	3

1.7 Housing Register

- 1.7.1 The table below shows the distribution of live applications on the Housing Register by size of property required.

Month	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	Total
April 2017	508	345	116	48	7	1024
May 2017	513	349	114	51	8	1035
June 2017	536	335	119	51	8	1049
July 2017	550	332	132	52	10	1076
August 2017	546	335	133	54	9	1077
September 2017	556	336	137	54	9	1092

1.7.2 The table below shows the number of households housed via Kent Homechoice during the last six months, broken down by bed need.

Month	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	Total
April 2017	5	10	5	1	0	21
May 2017	9	9	3	0	0	21
June 2017	14	8	11	0	0	33
July 2017	7	16	5	2	0	30
August 2017	10	9	2	0	0	21
September 2017	13	11	7	0	0	31
Total	58	63	33	3	0	157

1.7.3 The following table shows the waiting times of applicants that have been housed via Kent Homechoice during the period 1 April 2017 and 30 September 2017, broken down by size and type of accommodation. Whilst these figures can be helpful in demonstrating timescales involved from application to allocation, it should be noted that some applicants will wait longer for particular property types or locations and this will affect the overall waiting times. The average waiting times on the far right of the table is realistic for the majority of applicants.

Property type	Number of lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered accommodation	9	5 weeks	14 months	4 months
1 bed general needs	52	4 weeks	5 years	10 months
2 bed flat or maisonette	47	7 weeks	31 months	11 months
2 bed house	21	17 months	15 years	31 months
3 bed house	34	8 weeks	28 months	12 months
4 bed house	3	12 weeks	29 months	14 months

1.8 Legal Implications

1.8.1 None arising from this report.

1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.9.1 The extension of the West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme and associated Handyperson service is funded from increased Better Care Fund allocation for 2017/18.

1.10 Risk Assessment

1.10.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

Nil

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Managers

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