

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

**29 May 2018**

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

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 HEALTH & WELLBEING REPORT**

**Summary**

**This report updates Members on the activity of the Private Sector Housing team in 2017/18 including Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Assistance, the latest on the West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme, the expansion of the Council's One You Health team and changes to Houses in Multiple Occupation legislation.**

**1.1 Private Sector Housing Team activity 2017/18**

1.1.1 The Private Sector Housing (PSH) team responded to a total of 269 service requests in 2017/18. The breakdown of the service requests are shown below:

<b>Service request activity</b>	<b>Number of requests</b>
Housing conditions	126
Illegal eviction/landlord harassment	6
Caravan site	2
Empty home visits	48
Immigration related visits	7
Rent deposit visits	36
Temporary accommodation visits	35
Arrange Public Health funeral	2
Hospital Discharge Scheme	5
One You	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>

- 1.1.2 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. As a result of a landlord not undertaking the necessary remedial works on an Improvement Notice under section 11 of the Housing Act 2004 the Council undertook works in default to upgrade the electrical installation, improve ventilation and install a gas central heating/hot water system in a private rented property. The Council costs in arranging and doing this will be recovered from the landlord.
- 1.1.3 A successful prosecution was also taken against the holder of a caravan site licence for a park home site in Golden Green under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (as amended) for not complying with the licence conditions to provide adequate lighting to the site.
- 1.1.4 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 complete and the property is being marketed to let.
- 1.1.5 As part of the work of the Corporate Empty Property Group the PSH team have visited and undertaken 42 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.
- 1.1.6 In addition, two houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licence renewals and one new HMO licence were issued. Also one caravan site licence was transferred to a new owner.

## **1.2 Disabled Facilities Grants**

- 1.2.1 For the period April 2017 to March 2018, ninety eight Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) were completed. These were for the following works:
- Access to bedroom – 4 cases
  - Provision of ground floor bedroom/bathroom facilities – 2 cases
  - Provision of a stair lift – 28 cases
  - Provision of level access shower facilities – 50 cases
  - Over bath shower – 4 cases

- Improving access – 14 cases
- Safety related works – 4 cases
- Moving grant to relocate to a more suitable property – 1 case
- Other, including additional WC facilities, kitchen works and specialist baths – 4 cases.

1.2.2 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.

1.2.3 I am pleased to report a £675,000 spend against a £695,000 budget for DFGs. The small underspend will be rolled forward into the 2018/19 budget as the level of commitment to cases far exceeds this figure. In 2017/19 we also recovered £9,000 of DFG funding that was paid out on owner occupier cases that have sold their properties within 10 years of the works being completed. This money is recycled within the budget to allow further spend on DFG applications.

1.2.4 The Council continues to progress a high number of DFGs for children compared to neighbouring local authorities. These cases also represent some of the biggest spend due to the nature of the recommendations being made by the Occupational Therapists e.g. provision of ground floor bathroom and bedroom.

1.2.5 As at 14 May 2018 we still await confirmation of the 2018/19 allocation for DFGs through the Better Care Fund although all indications have been that we will receive a slight increase on last year's funding.

### **1.3 Housing Assistance**

1.3.1 For the period April 2017 to March 2018, eighteen Housing Assistance cases were completed. These included:

- Helping to make 13 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;
- Enabling people to continue to live independently in their own homes with the provision of low level cost adaptations (less than £5,000) to enable discharge from hospital or where works are required urgently by providing two discretionary disabled facilities grants; and
- Helping to make 2 homes safer through Home Safety Assistance for undertaking an electrical test, repairing the lock to the front door and replacing faulty taps to the wash basin in the bathroom.

- 1.3.2 In 2017/18 we spent £59,000 on housing assistance cases against a £60,000 budget. We also recovered £53,000 from owner occupiers who sold their properties where a housing assistance grant had previously been awarded.

#### **1.4 West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme**

- 1.4.1 The West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme continues to be well received. The Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Discharge Manager recently commented that the scheme had contributed towards ensuring delayed transfers of care (DTOC) were controlled during what was a particularly difficult and long winter period.
- 1.4.2 The scheme was extended in March 2018 to provide a Health & Housing Coordinator at Maidstone Hospital as well as Tunbridge Wells Hospital. We anticipate that the majority of the cases picked up by the coordinator at Maidstone Hospital will be from Tonbridge & Malling BC rather than Tunbridge Wells or Sevenoaks. The Coordinator is now settling into the new role and establishing the post at the hospital with visits to wards and team meetings to raise awareness. The Private Sector Housing team are providing support to the Coordinator to ensure timely access to our services.
- 1.4.3 This scheme has been so successful that a number of other local authorities in Kent are collaborating to provide the same roles now in Darent Valley and William Harvey hospitals. In addition a meeting has been set up by Peabody South East Ltd (our commissioned provider of the service and formerly Family Mosaic) with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to discuss our innovative scheme and how we are using our Better Care Funding in a joined up way to address both health and housing issues.

#### **1.5 One You health team**

- 1.5.1 The presentation this evening will provide Members with an update on the activities of the One You team over the last twelve months.
- 1.5.2 I am pleased to report that we are working in partnership with Age UK to employ a One You Your Home advisor. This role is being funded through the Council's Better Care Fund allocation as it aims to provide integration of health and housing services for residents.
- 1.5.3 This role will work two days a week with Warders Medical Practice in Tonbridge to try and reduce the number of visits to the GP for patients who have other underlying needs such as poor or unsuitable housing, debt worries etc. The role will also link in with the One You team to provide additional resources and support. It is expected that this role will be fully up and running by July 2018 and we will update Members further as the new initiative progresses.

## **1.6 Houses in Multiple Occupation**

- 1.6.1 A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is any property, house or flat, occupied by three or more people comprising two or more households who share facilities (kitchen, bathroom or toilet) even if they occupy the property on a single tenancy.
- 1.6.2 Under Part II of the Housing Act 2004 a mandatory HMO licence is required where the HMO:
- Is three or more storeys high; and
  - Contains five or more people in two or more households; and
  - Contains shared facilities such as a kitchen, bathroom or toilet.
- 1.6.3 The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Prescribed Description) (England) Order 2018 legislation comes into force on 1 October 2018, which removes the “three or more storeys high” criteria for mandatory licensing of HMOs. It also excludes purpose built flats within a block comprising three or more self-contained flats. Therefore generally properties will require a mandatory HMO licence if they contain five or more people in two or more households; and contain shared facilities such as a kitchen, bathroom or toilet regardless of the number of storeys to the property.
- 1.6.4 This change is estimated to significantly increase the number of licensable HMOs within the borough from the current twelve to between twenty and thirty. Further work is ongoing by the PSH team to determine the numbers and location of these licensable HMOs.

## **1.7 Legal Implications**

- 1.7.1 The Council has a duty to process mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant applications under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

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

- 1.8.1 The funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant programme and associated initiatives e.g. West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme, Occupational Therapists within the housing team and One You Your Home advisor are funded through the Council's Better Care Fund allocation.

## **1.9 Risk Assessment**

- 1.9.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers: Nil

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