

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

16 July 2018

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 NEEDS SURVEY

Summary

This paper outlines a proposal to commission some detailed and important housing needs research to inform our strategic approach to housing provision and development management. The research will assist in the consideration of planning applications and liaising with developers and Housing Associations. It will provide an insight into the housing needs and aspirations of the Borough's population, showing the Council where pressures and local variations of need arise.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Council's SHMA (Strategic Housing Market Assessment) contains some housing needs analysis, including high level identification of affordable housing needs. The approach outlined in this report will involve focussed and localised research to provide more detailed information and analysis about housing needs in all respects. This finer grain information will build on the existing SHMA research, using similar sub-areas and will complement the Local Plan.
- 1.1.2 The 2014 SHMA and housing register data is currently used to inform an appropriate breakdown of affordable housing provision on new developments, in conjunction with existing planning policies. The further research into the will serve to update this and provide critical evidence about the detailed type and size of properties most needed across different areas of the Borough.
- 1.1.3 More detailed housing needs analysis from the research will supplement the SHMA and develop a more robust evidence base for housing needs. The research will help determine local housing priorities for areas within the borough and inform negotiations with developers and registered housing providers.
- 1.1.4 Understanding the housing needs of the borough is important to assist the Council in delivering the aims of the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy, prepared in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge

Wells Borough Council, includes an aim to improve supply by communicating the level of housing need and size/type of affordable housing needed, and in which locations, to developers.

- 1.1.5 The neighbouring boroughs of Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells have both commissioned housing needs research recently, broadly on the same basis as is proposed in this report and clearly our own work will assist in dealing with cross boundary development issues and needs.
- 1.1.6 It is intended that when completed the analysis will be shared with developers, Registered Providers and investors to inform their decisions and also with Parish Councils and local organisations to share an appreciation of housing need locally.

1.2 Housing needs research

- 1.2.1 The proposed research will comprise of household surveys (providing primary data) alongside secondary data analysis, such as population growth, house prices and income data. The work proposed incorporates:
- a comprehensive household survey, with the potential to provide data at ward or sub-area level (to be determined in consultation with the Council);
 - a comprehensive review and use of relevant secondary data sources;
 - engagement with stakeholders including estate and letting agents, registered providers, voluntary bodies and support groups;
 - a review of particular client groups relevant to the council's requirements, including hard to reach and vulnerable groups.
- 1.2.2 The final report will include a detailed analysis of housing need and a review of housing market demand. Specifically, it will identify the scale of housing need and demand, including affordable need, tenure (market/affordable rented/intermediate tenure), property type, size and designation (general needs/older person). It will also identify the aspirations and expectations of households moving within the general market.
- 1.2.3 To date officers have been liaising with Arc4, a specialised housing survey company that has a strong and track record in the field of preparing Housing Needs Studies involving primary research. Arc4 have recently worked with other Local Authorities in the preparation of their Housing Needs Studies, including Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- 1.2.4 Arc4 have provided options for the survey work and a range of project costs. The final cost will depend on how the areas of the borough are broken down for the survey work but at this stage it seems the most appropriate approach for Tonbridge and Malling is to base the analysis on sub-areas, to strike a balance

between data accuracy, cost and consistency with the SHMA, at an estimated cost of £35,000.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 The proposed research will significantly strengthen our knowledge and ability to negotiate the type of affordable and general housing that is needed in various areas across the Borough. It will therefore be an important tool to influence our housing functions and accompany our statutory planning duties.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 Provision for such housing surveys has been made within an earmarked reserve. This work is also very closely related to our work on the Local Plan for which there is also an earmarked reserve for such expenditure. The research is anticipated to cost in the region of £35,000, subject to final specification, which can be accommodated from these earmarked reserves.
- 1.4.2 As mentioned in this report, officers have been working in partnership with a specialist housing research organisation, Arc4, in coming to the specification for this project. It is intended that Arc4 is now engaged to carry out this work, both due to their specialist skills and experience in this field of housing research work and due to their extensive local knowledge of the west Kent area. Also as mentioned previously, Arc4 have undertaken similar commissions for our neighbouring authorities and bearing in mind the cross boundary issues and in particular the Borough Council's Duty to Cooperate on such issues, the sharing and analysis of information will be important. Consequently, on this occasion there are sound reasons, judged in the context of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, of expediency and value for money, to appoint Arc4.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Having detailed housing needs information will help inform negotiation with Registered Providers and developers to ensure the right type of housing is built in the right places.
- 1.5.2 The research will inform and support negotiations for affordable housing provision. This will help establish priorities when negotiating with developers and Registered Providers e.g. if provision is reduced due to viability. The research will also support negotiation of specialist housing provision or special build standards, such as fully accessible units. This reduces our risk of being open to challenge from customers who have specialist housing needs.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out at this stage. It is likely housing needs research will have an overall positive impact because it will analyse the housing market, provide greater insight into the needs, demands and

aspirations in local communities and assist the Council working in partnership with others to address the issues identified.

- 1.6.2 Any primary research will need to be representative of all minority groups and adhere to the Equality Act 2010.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- 1.7.1 Detailed housing needs research will inform the implementation and review of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the Local Plan.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 It is RECOMMENDED CABINET APPROVE the commissioning of a Housing Needs Research and Survey as detailed in this report.

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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