

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

28 May 2019

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 ACTIVITY WITHIN THE HOUSING SERVICE DURING 2018/19

Summary

This report updates Members on the activity of the Housing Service in the financial year 2018/19.

1.1 Private Sector Housing Activity for April 2018 to March 2019

1.1.1 The Private Sector Housing (PSH) team responded to a total of 226 service requests. The breakdown of the service requests are shown below:

Service request activity	Number of requests
Housing conditions	110
Illegal eviction/landlord harassment	3
Caravan site	12
Empty home visits	4
Immigration related visits	3
Rent deposit visits	27
Temporary accommodation visits	39
Arrange Public Health funeral	2
Hospital Discharge Scheme	13
One You	13
Total	226

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, one landlord was served Improvement Notices under section 11 and 12 of the Housing Act 2004 to undertake repairs, these were not complied with and it resulted in service of Emergency Prohibition Orders to prohibit the occupation of three flats due to significant fire hazards. Improvement Notices were also served on another landlord for repairs, which have only been partially complied with and prosecution is now being considered. A section 29 Notice under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 was served on an empty property owner to remove the danger to public health from broken glazing. The Notice was not complied with and works in default undertaken to board up the window concerned. A Prohibition Order under the Housing Act 2004 was also served on an empty property owner to ensure if the property is sold the necessary remedial works are undertaken before it is occupied.

1.1.3 In addition, three houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licences with conditions were issued with two outstanding HMO licence applications to be processed. Also three caravan site licences and associated conditions were transferred to new owners and two new caravan site licenses issued.

1.1.4 For the period April 2018 to March 2019, 118 mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and 19 discretionary DFGs were completed. These were for the following works:

- Access to bedroom – 1 case
- Provision of ground floor bedroom/bathroom facilities – 10 cases
- Provision of a stair lift or through floor lift – 31 cases
- Stair lift repair – 2 cases
- Provision of level access shower facilities or bathroom adaptations – 85 cases
- Over bath shower – 4 cases
- Improving access – 22 cases
- Safety related works – 10 cases
- Other, including additional WC facilities, kitchen works and specialist baths – 10 cases.

1.1.5 There may be grants in 1.1.4 that cover more than one area of work and therefore the numbers will not add up to the total number of grants completed.

1.1.6 I am pleased to report a £933,852 mandatory DFG and £209,063 discretionary DFG spend against a total budget of £1,399,000 (including additional allocation) for DFGs. This includes those cases where works have started but may not yet be

completed and therefore not included in the figures in 1.1.4. In 2018/19 we also recovered £27,584 of mandatory DFG and £4,900 of discretionary 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.

- 1.1.7 The Council continues to progress a high number of DFGs compared to neighbouring local authorities. Often those cases to provide ground floor bedroom and bathroom facilities are for children involving extensions and represent some of the biggest spend, approaching the maximum of mandatory and discretionary DFG funding of £60,000.
- 1.1.8 The 2019/20 allocation for DFGs through the Better Care Fund is £1,184,711 a slight increase on last year's funding. It is proposed that any underspend from 2018/19 be carried forward into 2019/20.
- 1.1.9 For the period April 2018 to March 2019, thirteen Housing Assistance cases were completed. These included:
- Bringing an empty property back into use by providing empty homes assistance for roofing, electrical and heating works.
 - Helping to make 8 homes warmer by providing Warm Homes Assistance for heating/boiler replacement; and
 - Helping to make 4 homes safer through Home Safety Assistance providing a specialist fire alarm for a person with a hearing impairment, repairs to a WC, providing and fitting a smoke detector, and electrical work to a shed including a new front door.
- 1.1.10 In 2018/19 we spent £17,803 on housing assistance cases against a £60,000 budget. We also recovered £31,395 from owner occupiers who sold their properties where a housing assistance grant had previously been awarded.

1.2 Housing Options and Support Activity

- 1.2.1 The last Activity Report in May 2018 to this Board reported that the new Homelessness Reduction Act had been implemented in April 2018 and reported on early activity. The purpose of this report is to look at the period of April 2018 – March 2019 and the key delivery outcomes.
- 1.2.2 The previous Housing Options and Support Manager left the authority in September 2018 and a new Housing Options and Support Manager started in post in November 2018.

- 1.2.3 A Triage Officer was piloted in the early part of 2019 and as a result of this, interim arrangements have been agreed to continue this role whilst a service review is ongoing.
- 1.2.4 Early indications, in the report which was presented to this Board in May 2018, suggested that business increased in the first month after the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This trend has continued across the first year of delivery of the new legislation.
- 1.2.5 Further detail on the number of approaches are demonstrated below (This is all applicants who approached the Council for advice and assistance and may or may not have resulted in duties owing).

Year	Number of approaches to the Council for advice and assistance with homelessness
April 2017 – March 2018	841
April 2018 – March 2019	1057

- 1.2.6 Of these 1057, in 2018 – 2019, the Council prevented 164 households from becoming homeless, and relieved 135 households' homelessness. The Council made a final s184 (homelessness) decision on 41 cases.
- 1.2.7 For the period April 2017 – March 2018, prior to the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the Council prevented 150 cases of homelessness, relieved 4 cases and made 167 s184 (homelessness) decisions.

1.3 Rough Sleeping

- 1.3.1 As reported to this Board in February 2019, when the Council completed its annual Rough Sleeper estimate during November there was an increase in the numbers rough sleeping. In 2017 the figure returned to MHCLG was 8 and this rose to 12 in 2018, a rise of 50%.
- 1.3.2 Given this increase and the launch of the Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy in the summer of 2018, the Council has worked to tackle this issue in a number of ways. As reported in February 2018 the Council had submitted a bid to MHCLG for a share of the Rough Sleeping Initiative money in partnership with Porchlight and Look Ahead, and was successful in securing funding of £100k to allow us to deliver a Housing First Pilot.
- 1.3.3 Further funding was then announced by MHCLG through its Rapid Rehousing Pathway, and we have led on a bid working closely with Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Porchlight and Look Ahead. Whilst the amount is still to be determined, we have been notified by MHCLG that we have

been successful with our bid to deliver two Rough Sleeper Navigators across the three areas and additionally to provide 15 units of supported lettings across the districts.

- 1.3.4 A Rough Sleeper Protocol has been approved which sets out how to report Rough Sleepers and we are currently working on getting key partners to sign up to this.
- 1.3.5 We have also had approval through the February 2019 Communities and Housing Advisory Board to explore the feasibility of the provision of a Night Shelter in the district.
- 1.3.6 We have also fully reviewed our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and this is now more flexible to allow us to further engage with those who may be rough sleeping.

1.4 Enquiries to the service

- 1.4.1 Being a front line statutory service it is inevitable that the service receives a considerable number of requests from MPs and Councillors on behalf of their constituents, as well as complaints.
- 1.4.2 Applicants also have the right to review if they do not agree with any decisions we may make when they apply to join the housing register (Part VI reviews) and also certain decisions we may make in relation to their homeless application (Part VII reviews).
- 1.4.3 The following table sets out these service requests by month from November 2018 until the end of March 2019:

Month	MP enquiry	Councillor enquiry	Complaint (Stage 1,2 and 3)	Compliment	Part VI review	Part VII review
November 2018	5	3	2	1	3	0
December 2018	9	0	2	1	8	0
January 2019	4	2	1	1	7	0
February 2019	1	0	1	0	4	1
March 2019	9	0	4	0	4	1
Total	28	5	10	3	26	2

1.5 Housing Register

1.5.1 At the time of writing there are currently 1247 live housing applications on the housing register (waiting list). This is an increase in housing register applications of 7% from last years reported figure.

1.5.2 The table below shows the distribution of live applications on the housing register by size of property required over the last 6 months:

Month	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	Total
October 2018	601	344	152	64	10	1171
November 2018	604	346	152	65	10	1177
December 2018	612	347	150	65	10	1184
January 2019	612	346	150	64	10	1182
February 2019	617	373	164	68	10	1232
March 2019	630	369	166	66	10	1241

1.5.3 There have been 208 lets between October 2018 and March 2019. The table below shows the type of accommodation and the number of lets by month for the last two quarters of 2018 – 2019:

Month	Sheltered Housing	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	Total
October 2018	7	21	15 Flats 4 Houses	0 Flats 8 Houses	0	0	55
November 2018	6	9	11 Flats 8 Houses	0 Flats 8 Houses	0	0	42
December 2018	2	10	6 Flats 6 Houses	0 Flats 10 Houses	0	0	34
January 2019	5	12	4 Flats 1 House	0 Flats 7 Houses	0	0	29
February 2019	2	8	6 flats 3 Houses	0 Flats 3 Houses	1	0	23
March 2019	2	6	4 Flats 7 Houses	0 Flats 6 Houses	0	0	25
Total	24	66	75	42	1	0	208

1.5.4 The following table shows the waiting times of applicants who have been housed via Kent Homechoice during the period 01 October 2018 and 31 March 2019, for all bands, broken down by size and type of accommodation. The figures in grey depict the previous 6 months (April 2018 – September 2018) and show that

generally waiting times remain consistent. Whilst these figures can be useful in demonstrating the timescales involved from application to being allocated, there are many variables that will impact on these figures and the average is the best guide to use.

Property type	Number of lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered accommodation	42	6 weeks	9 years	14 months
	24	4 weeks	3 years	5 months
1 bed general needs	87	8 days	7 years	14 months
	66	4 weeks	11 Years	14 months
2 bed flat or maisonette	53	4 months	30 months	10 months
	46	9 weeks	28 Months	9 months
2 bed house	42	4 months	8 years	23 months
	29	13 weeks	4 years	18 months
3 bed house	54	4 months	3 years	14 months
	42	8 months	4 years	16 months
4 bed house	0	No averages	No averages	No averages
	1	25 months	25 months	25 months

1.6 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

- 1.6.1 As detailed in a previous report to this Board, we have four Syrian Families established within the Borough and the work continues to support the families and find new landlords, so that the Council can fulfil its commitment to house 10 families.
- 1.6.2 We have recently sourced a new landlord who wishes to join the scheme and work is currently ongoing to move one of the current families whose property is now not meeting their needs, due to them having another baby, into this new property.
- 1.6.3 The landlord whose property we are moving them from wishes to house a new family and continues to engage with the scheme.
- 1.6.4 Kent County Council have recently reviewed the scheme, and have improved their landlord offer, and are currently seeking to formalise the support contract. The Council continues to work proactively with this project and support it.

1.7 Temporary Accommodation

- 1.7.1 The Council has seen an increase in numbers utilising Temporary Accommodation, however this is in line with the national trends outlined in a previous report and the anticipated increases with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

1.7.2 As previously reported the Council had agreed to the acquisition of a property to use as Temporary Accommodation which has now been finalised. We had also negotiated units of accommodation with Clarion, we have agreed more and are currently looking to extend the numbers. All of this assists us with keeping those who require temporary accommodation within the district.

1.7.3 At the time of writing there were 54 households in Temporary Accommodation. The following table gives a breakdown of these households:

Household type	Housing Association	T&M Accommodation	Nightly paid, privately managed	Nightly paid, privately managed - Shared Facilities	Total
Couple with no children			1		1
Couple expecting a child			2		2
Couple +1			5		5
Couple +2			1		1
Couple +3	1				1
Couple 4+			2		2
Single person			3	8	11
Single person & 1 child	1	1	12		14
Single person & 2 children	1	2	9		12
Single person & 3 children		1	3		4
Single person & 4 or more children	1				1
Grand Total	4	4	38	8	54

1.7.4 Between the dates October 2018 and March 2019, 92 households have moved on from Temporary Accommodation

1.7.5 Competition for Temporary Accommodation continues to be strong in the South East, and out of area placements continue, with the furthest placement being Folkestone.

1.7.6 The following table gives a breakdown of placements by area as at the time of writing:

Area	Housing Association	T&M Accommodation	Nightly paid, privately managed	Nightly paid, privately managed - Shared Facilities	Total
Folkestone and Hythe			1		1
Gravesham			1		1
Maidstone			12		12
Medway			20	4	24
Swale			1		1
Sevenoaks				3	3
Tonbridge & Malling	6	5			11
Tunbridge Wells			1		1
Grand Total	6	5	36	7	54

1.8 Affordable housing update

1.8.1 Officers continue to work 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 2018/19 and those due to come forward in 2019/20.

1.8.2 Two new extra care housing schemes completed in 2018, in Larkfield and Tonbridge, with Rapport Housing and Care (formerly known as Abbeyfield Kent). Extra care (sometimes known as assisted living) enables older people to live independently, with some support tailored to their needs. They bring much needed specialist provision to the Borough, and feedback from the new residents is very positive. Another Rapport scheme is due in Watlington in 2020.

1.8.3 Lawson House, Martin Square, Larkfield has 74 apartments for rent (a mix of one and two bedrooms), 20 of which are specifically for veterans. Apartments are advertised via Choice Based Lettings and allocated through a panel of representatives from Rapport, Kent County Council and TMBC.

1.8.4 Rosewell House, Tonbridge has 59 apartments (a mix of one and two bedrooms) with some available to rent and some purchased through Older Persons Shared Ownership (OPSO). Apartments for rent are advertised via Choice Based Lettings, and OPSO are processed via the Government's [Help to Buy](#) scheme.

1.8.5 Peters Village is a new development in Wouldham, on the banks of the river Medway. There are several phases of development, with Orbit, Hyde and Moat all having affordable housing on the site. Orbit have completed 17 homes for rent and 18 for shared ownership so far, and both Hyde and Moat have units completing over the coming months.

1.9 Legal Implications

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

1.9.2 The Council has a statutory duty under Parts VI and VII of the Housing Act linked to Allocation of Social Housing and Homelessness and the provision of Temporary Accommodation.

1.10 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.10.1 The funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant programme is funded through the Council's Better Care Fund allocation.

1.10.2 The number of households where the Council has relieved the homelessness has increased, with the number of decisions reducing. The prevention and relief of homelessness is more cost effective to the Council.

1.11 Risk Assessment

1.11.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

Nil

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