

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

20 July 2021

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 STRATEGY

This report outlines the key themes for a TMBC Housing Strategy and an updated project plan for members review and approval.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 is a joint strategy in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The Strategy has four ambitions to deliver its 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”:

- Ambition 1 – Improving the availability of housing for all and preventing homelessness
- Ambition 2 – Improving housing supply
- Ambition 3 – Improving the standard of housing
- Ambition 4 – Improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.

1.1.2 Sevenoaks District Council published their own Housing Strategy ‘Wellbeing Starts at Home’ in 2017, and Tunbridge Wells intend to have their own local housing strategy too.

1.2 Tonbridge and Malling Housing Strategy

1.2.1 Having our own housing strategy will give the opportunity to establish our housing priorities, plan for meeting current and future need and govern the effective delivery of housing related services. A Strategy will also mean we develop an action plan and can monitor delivery against priorities and targets.

1.2.2 The Housing Strategy will be an overarching document setting TMBC’s priorities and approach to housing. Officers have an ongoing programme of updating and developing a range of policies and procedures to deliver on strategic objectives.

- 1.2.3 TMBC will continue to work with local authority partners including Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council through joint projects.
- 1.2.4 Members endorsed a project plan for a TMBC Housing Strategy in February 2020, **Annex 1** shows an updated project plan with revised timescales. An important element of this is engagement, with staff and partner organisations but also with Members. Officers intend to run a set of workshops between August and October this year to expand on the themes below and gather detailed Member feedback.
- 1.2.5 The vision along with priorities and ambitions for the Housing Strategy are yet to be explored and agreed. The content of the Housing Strategy will cover the following key areas of work and issues:
- **Increasing housing supply:** building the right homes in the right places which people can afford and want to live in
 - **Preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping**
 - **Existing homes:** improving quality, standards and conditions, and making best use of existing homes
 - **Specialist and supported housing**
 - **Promoting health and wellbeing through housing**
 - **Strong and inclusive communities** where people want to live and supporting vulnerable people
 - **Building strong partnerships** to work innovatively and maximise resources.
- 1.2.6 The Housing Strategy has a different policy responsibility to the Local Plan but will work in tandem, with the Strategy and Affordable Housing Delivery Statement giving additional housing related information to the planning policy framework and requirements of the Local Plan.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 The Strategy will be produced in pursuit of the delivery of our mandatory and statutory functions under the Housing Acts.
- 1.3.2 There is a requirement for TMBC to have a Homelessness Strategy and a Rough Sleeper Strategy; these elements will be incorporated into the Housing Strategy.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 Most of the work required to produce a Housing Strategy is intended to be delivered in house. Where specific pieces of work are required, these will be built into budget processes, as the Housing Needs research was in the 2019/20 budget.

- 1.4.2 Having a robust Housing Strategy in place that focusses on local need can help with future funding opportunities.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Not having an up-to-date Strategy could put TMBC at risk of challenge particularly in the case of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 An EqIA will be undertaken to accompany the production of the strategy document and presented to Members with the draft Strategy.
- 1.6.2 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- 1.7.1 Communications – the Housing Strategy will reflect the requirements of the Corporate Communications Guidelines.
- 1.7.2 Equalities/Diversity – an EqIA will help us consider how this policy applies to the Housing Strategy work.
- 1.7.3 A policy and procedure programme will ensure all necessary policies and supporting documents are updated or developed to deliver the strategic objectives of the Strategy.
- 1.7.4 Having a Housing Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on delivering aims of existing policies such as:

Healthy Lifestyles

Health and Safety

Climate Change

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members ENDORSE the key areas of work for the forthcoming Housing Strategy and **APPROVE** the Housing Strategy Project Plan [Annex 1].

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:

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Nil

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