

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

09 November 2021

Report of the Director of 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 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-2027

1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 This report presents a draft Housing Strategy for members review and approval ahead of public consultation. The Housing Strategy sets out our strategic approach to housing in the borough for 2022-2027.

A revised and final draft of the Housing Strategy will be brought to members at the February 2022 Communities and Housing Advisory Board meeting for review and approval for adoption.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 This Strategy will replace the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 which was in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, endorsed by members in 2017. Each of the three West Kent authorities is developing their own Housing Strategy, to better reflect local priorities and challenges.
- 1.2.2 A Housing Strategy for Tonbridge and Malling enables the Council to establish our housing priorities and approach to housing in the Borough. Recent legislative and policy changes have created a challenging housing context which we need to respond to for our level of need and changing demand profile. Adopting a Strategy will help shape our strategic response to focus limited resources efficiently and establish priorities in a local context.
- 1.2.3 The Council will continue working with local authority partners including Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council through joint projects, contributing to the delivery of our Strategy.

1.3 About the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027

- 1.3.1 Setting a vision “For Tonbridge and Malling residents to have access to good quality and affordable homes that meet their needs, whether renting or buying.” the Strategy has four key priorities to achieve this:

1. Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability
 2. Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness
 3. Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed
 4. Working in partnership.
- 1.3.2 The Strategy fulfils the requirement for a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and encompasses an updated Tenancy Strategy. A copy of the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2023 is in **Annex 1** of this report.
- 1.3.3 The Strategy outlines objectives for each priority, which will be delivered and monitored through annual action plans. Actions will also be supported by a framework of policies and procedures being developed across the housing service (see **Annex 2** for the draft year 1 action plan 2022-2023).
- 1.3.4 Priority 1 Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability – focusses on improving existing homes across tenures, with measures to improve standards, energy efficiency and make best use of homes through addressing empty homes and occupancy of social housing (for example through a review of our Allocations Scheme and considering ways to address under-occupation).
- 1.3.5 Priority 2 Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness – outlines our approach to increasing and improving homeless prevention through a partnership working, including addressing rough sleeping, and widening the housing options available such as enabling access to the private rented sector.
- 1.3.6 Priority 3 Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed – captures the importance of understanding and analysing local housing need to inform policy decisions and housing delivery in the borough and TMBC’s role in influencing delivery, for example through a Local Housing Company.
- 1.3.7 Priority 4 Working in partnership – highlights the importance of partnership working in achieving the priorities and objectives of the Strategy at a time of limited resources, to share expertise and best practice. Health and wellbeing is connected to good quality affordable housing and collaborative working enables effective service delivery to improve people’s lives.

1.4 Consultation

- 1.4.1 Two workshops were held with housing staff to seek their views on the proposed priorities and objectives of the Strategy in September and discuss any changes or ideas.
- 1.4.2 Member engagement workshops were held on 28 and 29 September and 7 October to discuss the draft vision, priorities and objectives of the Strategy.

These were led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Kim Tanner and a total of 23 Members attended across the three workshops, with the key matters highlighted being long term empty properties within Registered Provider housing stock, the importance of helping existing residents find homes local to them (for example, children being able to find a home of their own), importance of having strong relationships with Registered Providers and the delivery of services to their tenants, and interest in ways the Council could take a more pro-active role in relation to housing delivery such as a Local Housing Company. A record of all the comments and queries raised at the member engagement workshops is provided in **Annex 3**.

- 1.4.3 Public consultation will be carried out between November 2021 and January 2022 and will include notifying a range of partners and stakeholders including third sector organisations about the consultation alongside promoting to residents.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 The Strategy will be produced in pursuit of the delivery of our mandatory and statutory functions under the Housing Acts.
- 1.5.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their district and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results every five years. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 delivery plan requires a rough sleeping element to be included in local authority homelessness strategies, with annual action plans.

The Housing Strategy includes our approach to homelessness and rough sleeping, meeting this requirement.

- 1.5.3 Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to have a Tenancy Strategy. An updated Tenancy Strategy is included in the Housing Strategy. The last Tenancy Strategy was adopted in 2013.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The Housing Strategy is being delivered in house. The Housing Needs Research that will inform delivery of the Housing Strategy will cost £31,811.33 excluding VAT, agreed and budgeted for in 2018 within the housing reserve.
- 1.6.2 A Housing Strategy focussed on local need and priorities can help with future funding opportunities.
- 1.6.3 Actions to deliver the objectives of the Strategy will be informed by budgetary considerations.

1.7 Risk Assessment

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

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Communications – the draft Housing Strategy and public consultation process will reflect Corporate Communications Guideline requirements including accessibility requirements.
- 1.8.2 Climate Change – the Housing Strategy will contribute towards achieving the commitments of the TMBC Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030 through the objectives under Priority 1.
- 1.8.3 Equalities/Diversity – a EqIA will be completed when revising the draft Strategy following public consultation, to consider the impact of the Strategy and any measures we need to take relating to equality and diversity.
- 1.8.4 Having a Housing Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on delivering aims of existing policies such as:
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Health and Safety.
- 1.8.5 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.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 for public consultation [**Annex 1**] and that approval of the final consultation material be delegated to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

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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