

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET

05 July 2022

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

#### Part 1- Public

#### Executive Non Key Decisions

## 1 HOUSING STRATEGY 2022 – 2027

### 1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 This report presents the final draft of the Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 for review and approval for adoption, following public consultation from 06 March to 13 April 2022.
- 1.1.2 The Housing Strategy sets out our strategic approach to housing in the borough for 2022 – 2027.

### 1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 This Strategy replaces 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 will now have their own Housing Strategy, to better reflect local priorities and challenges.
- 1.2.2 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.
- 1.2.3 A Housing Strategy for Tonbridge and Malling enables the Council to establish our housing priorities and approach to housing in the Borough. Adopting a Strategy will help shape our strategic approach to focussing limited resources efficiently and establishing priorities in a local context.

### 1.3 About the 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 A copy of the final draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 is in **Annex 1** of this report. The Strategy encompasses an updated Tenancy Strategy. The Strategy notes an action to develop a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 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 section 4 of the Strategy for the 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 developing a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan, 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 Workshops with housing staff to discuss the proposed priorities and objectives of the Housing Strategy were held in September 2021.
- 1.4.2 Member engagement workshops were held on 28 and 29 September 2021 and 7 October 2021 to discuss the draft vision, priorities and objectives of the Strategy.
- 1.4.3 The member engagement workshops were led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Kim Tanner, and a total of 23 Members attended across the three

workshops. Key matters highlighted included 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.

- 1.4.4 Public consultation took place between 06 March 2022 and 13 April 2022, with an online questionnaire. The consultation was open to the public and email invitations to participate were sent to stakeholders, parish councils and private landlords.
- 1.4.5 A summary of the consultation responses and comments can be found in Appendix B of the Strategy.

## **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 2022 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, and sets an action to develop a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy with an action plan.

- 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 (section 2 of the 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 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.8.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived negative impact on end users. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out, provided in **Annex 2**.

## 1.9 Policy Considerations

- 1.9.1 Communications – the Housing Strategy will reflect Corporate Communications Guideline requirements including accessibility requirements.
- 1.9.2 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.
- 1.9.3 Equalities/Diversity – a EqIA has been carried out to consider the impact of the Strategy and any measures needed to take relating to equality and diversity.
- 1.9.4 Having a Housing Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on delivering aims of existing policies such as:
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Health and Safety.
- 1.9.5 Policy work will be included in annual action plans to ensure all necessary policies and supporting documents are updated or developed to deliver the strategic objectives of the Strategy.

## 1.10 Recommendations

- 1.10.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 for adoption [**Annex 1**] and that approval of minor changes to the year 1 action plan 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:

Nil

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