

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 10th November, 2014

Present: Cllr A G Sayer (Chairman), Cllr D J Trice (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr C Brown, Cllr D J Cure and Cllr M Parry-Waller

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs P Bates, P F Bolt, N J Heslop, B J Luker, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Luck, D W Smith, Ms S V Spence and Mrs C J Woodger

PART 1 - PUBLIC

SH 14/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However Councillor N Heslop referred to a potential interest in any items that might have implications for the Bridge Trust on the grounds that he was a member of its Board.

SH 14/24 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board held on 19 May 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SH 14/25 GLOSSARY

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health submitted a glossary of terms used within the reports to the Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

SH 14/26 MOBILE HOMES ACT 2013 - CHANGES TO CARAVAN SITE LICENSING

The joint report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Cabinet Member for Housing provided an update on the recent changes to legislation surrounding caravan site licensing on permanent residential caravan sites. The report set out details of a proposed Fees Policy in respect of charges for applications or transferring site licences and for monitoring compliance with caravan site licence conditions. The Board noted that, since 4 February 2014, an owner of a relevant protected site wishing to enforce site rules was required to deposit a copy of the site rules with the Council and that the

Council should create an up-to-date register of site rules and publish this on line.

RECOMMENDED: That the Cabinet commend the following to the Council

- (1) an application fee of £335 be charged for processing a new caravan site licence for a relevant protected site;
- (2) an application fee of £110 be charged for the transfer of a licence to a different licence holder for a relevant protected site;
- (3) no charge be applied for alterations to existing site licence conditions attached to a caravan site licence;
- (4) a fee of £60 be charged for administering the deposit of site rules, maintaining and publishing the site rules online; and
- (5) a consultation exercise be undertaken with residents and site owners on the four larger relevant protected sites identified in paragraph 1.2.6 of the report to determine their view regarding annual compliance monitoring of site licence conditions detailed in paragraph 1.3.5 of the report and the charging of a fee for this function. The findings of the consultation exercise be reported to a future meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board.

* Referred to Cabinet

SH 14/27 HOUSING LIAISON PANEL REPORT

Decision Notice D140126MEM

The joint report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Cabinet Member for Housing explained the outcome of a successful programme of meetings with the Council's Registered Provider Partners at the Housing Associations Liaison Panel Meetings and in particular discussion about the Affordable Rent model. It described steps for pursuing possible future policy directions, making representations to (and influencing the approach of) the Council's Registered Provider Partners.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) a review of the Borough Council's planning practice to consider the changing environment regarding the funding and provision of affordable housing be undertaken, within the context of the evidence that will support the new local plan and a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board;

- (2) there be a review of the Borough Council's approach to negotiating with and influencing its Registered Provider Partners to address concerns regarding the affordability and sustainability of tenancies for some household types in relation to the Affordable Rent model; and
- (3) the Borough Council continue to engage with its Registered Provider Partners through the Housing Associations Liaison Panel to ensure that the existing social and affordable housing stock and future pipeline of affordable homes meets the Council's strategic requirements and addresses identified housing need.

SH 14/28 PRESENTATION - HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME REVIEW

The joint report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Cabinet Member for Housing, together with a presentation by the Chief Housing Officer, provided an update on the review of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. Details of proposed revisions to the Scheme, which had been in operation since September 2013, were set out in the presentation and particular reference was made to the need to address operational and strategic issues which had emerged since implementation of the scheme, to consider recent Government guidance and to reflect changes in the housing market and economy. Details of the proposed timetable for revisions to the scheme were presented at the meeting and the Board noted that a detailed report would be submitted to its meeting on 23 February 2015.

A number of Members expressed concern about the proposal to disqualify applicants if they did not meet the financial thresholds and preferred the retention of the current criteria whereby they would be classified in 'Band D'. Other Members expressed concern that retention on the scheme provided a 'false hope' that an applicant would be offered affordable housing and expressed a preference for disqualification. The Board commended officers for a comprehensive report on a complex issue.

RECOMMENDED: That, subject to a re-evaluation of the proposed financial thresholds and inclusion of a 'Band D' rather than the disqualification of applicants, the proposed content and timetable for revisions to the Housing Allocations scheme, as presented to the meeting, be commended to Cabinet for endorsement. ◀

*** Referred to Cabinet**

[In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.5 Councillor D Cure asked that his vote against the inclusion of a 'Band D' and for the disqualification of applicants be recorded.]

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**SH 14/29 KENT ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY**

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided a summary of Kent County Council's new Kent Accommodation Strategy which identified how the provision, demand and aspiration for housing, care and support services would be met for adult social care across the County. The report outlined the objectives of the Accommodation Strategy, identified matters relevant to Tonbridge and Malling and highlighted weaknesses in provision in residential care and older person's accommodation in west Kent.

SH 14/30 HCA UPDATE

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided details of the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) recent announcement of capital grant allocations through the Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18 to schemes to be delivered within Tonbridge and Malling. The Board was pleased to note that the HCA had allocated over £7 million of capital grant funding to the Council's Registered Provider Partners to construct new affordable homes within the borough. Members noted that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Housing would be writing to the local Members of Parliament to question whether rental levels set at 80 per cent of market value were "affordable" and the detrimental effect this had on working families.

SH 14/31 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE

The report provided updates on the Review of Empty Homes by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; the Collective Switching Scheme; the Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc) (England) Order 2014 and the West Kent Landlord Fair held on 21 October 2014.

SH 14/32 STRATEGY AND ENABLING UPDATE

The report provided an update on progress made by the Council's Registered Provider (RP) Partners to provide new affordable homes within the Borough between 2012/13 to 2014/15 and described the progress on various housing strategy initiatives.

SH 14/33 HOUSING NEEDS UPDATE

The report provided an update on the activity of the Housing Options team to promote the prevention of homelessness and address the housing needs of local residents. While it was noted that those people requiring emergency accommodation had reduced recently, the number of households seeking advice and/or applying to the Housing Register

for social housing remained significantly high as a result of the economic downturn. Attention was drawn to the County Council's review of the Supporting People Programme and the possible effect this could have on socially excluded groups.

SH 14/34 EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out details of consultations responded to since the last meeting of the Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

SH 14/35 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

SH 14/36 SERVICE OF STATUTORY NOTICES

(Reason: LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out details of statutory notices served since the last meeting of the Advisory Board.

The meeting ended at 9.13 pm