

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING AND PLANNING SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

19 March 2024

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AND HOMELESSNESS CONSULTANCY REVIEW

Summary

This report updates Members on a recent consultancy review of temporary accommodation and homelessness. A copy of the consultant's report is provided. The report also seeks Members agreement to an action plan to implement the recommendations from the report.

1.1 Background

Housing consultants, Andy Gale and Anna Whalen, reviewed our temporary accommodation and homelessness service in December 2023. This follows a similar review they undertook two years previously. They sought to review the progress we had made and identify further improvements that we could make.

1.2 Report

1.2.1 A copy of the final report is provided at Annex 1.

1.2.2 Members will see that the housing team has made significant progress since the last review. The consultants note that we have managed to reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation when almost all other local authorities have seen a rise. Our significant progress on prevention work is highlighted and our temporary accommodation rate per 1,000 households is now below the South East and all England average.

1.2.3 The consultants note that given the continued demands on homelessness services and need for temporary accommodation we will be unable to buck this trend and to continue to manage our temporary accommodation numbers we need to have a service that is working at the maximum level of efficiency and effectiveness.

1.2.4 The report provides a number of recommendations where we need to renew our focus and practice to ensure that we are doing all we can to manage demand.

1.3 Action Plan

- 1.3.1 An action plan is provided at Annex 2. This brings together all the recommendations from the report. An ambitious timetable is provided for this plan, this has been influenced by current priorities within the service and the need to carefully manage change for the teams. An integral part of our approach to implementing these actions will be to support and train staff to ensure a knowledgeable and confident approach to all aspects of the work.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Housing Act 1996 provides the statutory basis for homelessness and temporary accommodation duties.
- 1.4.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness and provide home services to all those affected.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The Council receives an annual Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation towards its homelessness duties.
- 1.5.2 Most of these recommendations can be completed within existing resources including use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- 1.5.3 The recommendations on staffing have still to be fully considered and at this stage it is unknown if proposals could result in growth to the establishment. Further reporting to Members on this will follow as required.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 If the recommendations from this report are not fully implemented there is a risk that numbers in temporary accommodation will increase more than they would otherwise thus having a negative impact on the Council's finances.

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **NOTE** the temporary accommodation and homelessness service review report provided at Annex 1;
- 1.7.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the action plan provided at Annex 2.

Background papers:

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Nil

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