

Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

17 March 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Information



Cabinet Member	Cllr Robin Betts, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy
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Cabinet Member Update – Housing

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update to Members on key activity in the Housing Service during 2025/26.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance.

3 Housing Improvement

- 3.1 The Council continues to deliver a successful Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme with 69 mandatory and 4 discretionary DFGs already delivered this year, with more approved. In addition to this core work, the Council also utilises funding from its Better Care Fund Allocation to partnership fund schemes including Hospital Discharge Coordinators, a Hoarding support service and a Handypersons scheme.
- 3.2 There has been an increase in damp and mould casework following the introduction of Awaab's Law and a focus on ensuring that private sector landlord duties are being met.
- 3.3 The management of the Windmill Lane Gypsy & Traveller site is delivered by Kent County Council, who have an established team with specialist roles. TMBC officers act in a client function and have built on good working relationships to ensure that the site is being well managed on behalf of the borough.

- 3.4 The officer team is preparing for the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act, undertaking key training and focusing on implementation of early phase requirements. This will continue to be a focus through the coming year.
- 3.5 The Council has established a fixed term Empty Homes Officer post to provide some focused attention for this key area of work, progress on which was reported to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee in [January 2026](#).

4 Housing Solutions

- 4.1 The Council entered 2025/26 with a significant Housing Register application backlog. Additional staffing resource has been deployed to manage this backlog, alongside the Register team developing their work on Housing Register reviews, Local Lettings Plans and outreach advice. There has been a significant reduction in waiting times and numbers of applications waiting for assessment, with cases currently being assessed from January 2026. In addition to this, all annual review processes for households on the register, ensuring that their housing need details are regularly updated, are all in place. This is a real achievement for the Housing service against the context of an already high and potentially increasing number of applications to join the Housing Register.
- 4.2 The service had 177 approaches relating to Homelessness in January 2026 (this figure includes approaches by individuals and duty to refer). When an applicant approaches the service, an initial assessment is completed, and this determines the action that will be taken on the case. If a household is threatened with homelessness within 56 days (so for example they have a s21 notice) then a prevention duty will be accepted which means the case officer will work with household to try and help them to keep their home. If they are already homeless, then the case officer will accept a relief duty and work with them to find an alternative home. When a household approaches and we believe they are homeless, this is when we also consider if TA should be provided.
- 4.3 The Council accepted 31 prevention cases and 23 relief cases and ended 16 preventions and of these 15 were successful and ended 29 relief duties of which 16 were successful. A successful prevention or relief means that we kept them in their own home or found an alternative. Some examples of how this is done may be via mediation with parents, to stop a family eviction, payment of a DHP to clear arrears, or an offer of social housing could be made to move someone on from TA. The service also completed one formal private rented sector offer in January 2026, which was managed by our Move-On Officer, and it is anticipated that use of PRSO will increase with changes in the procedures and as the team develop relationships with landlords in the district. The service also dealt with 20 calls out of hours.
- 4.4 The completion of the Housing Solutions restructure has taken place, with the introduction of a Senior Accommodation Officer to oversee the 'end to end' process for Temporary Accommodation (TA). This includes officers focused on

move on options for households should they be placed in TA. When coupled with the increased focus on prevention work, as evidenced by the statistics provided above, this is enabling the team to more closely manage the journey of a household in TA and to seek quicker resolution to their housing need. Members will recall from KPI monitoring that the Council's TA need has been as high as 160 households over the last two years. This number has been steadily decreasing and whilst there are always external factors beyond the control of the Council that will impact it, the level is now sitting at around 100 households. The budget for 2026/27 has been set on the basis of 120 households in TA.

- 4.5 As part of this, the team has now taken on full operational management of the Council's owned and managed Temporary Accommodation, including the units at Bridge House in Tonbridge, which represents the largest concentration of TA that the Council manages. There has been a focus on compliance with housing standards, ensuring our legal processes for licences are robust and implementing detailed monitoring of household placements.
- 4.6 Whilst the number of households in TA will always be a significant factor, the unit cost of the TA being utilised also plays a large role in managing the financial impact of TA delivery on the Council, as does management of rental income and debt. For the former, the increased number of Council owned units has been beneficial, alongside excellent collaborative working between Housing and Finance, with assessment of nightly paid TA costs informing priorities for moving households between TA placements where appropriate or ending use of the most expensive nightly paid TA. For the latter, an audit was undertaken on rent and debt management, resulting in the Council moving towards a rent management solution offered by the provider of our Choice Based Lettings software. This approach will be implemented in the coming months, to ensure that TA rent and debt are appropriately managed and to further contribute to a reduction in the cost of delivering TA.
- 4.7 The Housing team has also administered a number of Local Lettings Plans this year, in line with the Council's adopted policy. A detailed update on this work is attached to this report at **Annex 1**.

5 Housing Strategy and Enabling

- 5.1 There are approximately 36 Registered Providers and 1 non-Registered Provider with a total of 7,978 affordable homes in Tonbridge and Malling. These range from small charitable providers to large not for-profit and for-profit providers, with the main stockholder being Clarion Housing with over 7000 homes. A list of government data for Registered Providers with stock in Tonbridge and Malling can be found in **Annex 2**, a summary of the providers with a higher number of homes or with recent delivery activity in the borough is as follows:

Registered Provider	Total Social Stock (unweighted)	General needs self-contained units (unweighted)	Supported housing/ housing for older people units (unweighted)	Low cost home ownership
Clarion Housing Association Limited	7043	6,358	292	392
Moat Homes Limited	715	274	50	391
Town and Country Housing	349	160	109	80
Hyde Housing Association Limited	302	233	6	63
Southern Housing	255	219	-	36
Golding Homes Limited	192	189	-	3
Orbit Housing Association Limited	147	147	-	-
Orbit Group Limited	108	6	-	102
Housing 21	127	-	127	-
Sage Homes RP Limited	95	53	-	42
Sage Rented Limited	8	8	-	-
West Kent Housing Association	78	49	5	24
Non Registered provider				
MHS	114	89	0	25

Data for Registered Providers is from the Regulator of Social Housing data look up tool: [RP social housing by local authority area 2024](#)

- 5.2 Affordable Housing providers with over 200 homes in the borough were invited to meet with Members on the Housing Association Liaison Panel across a series of four dates. Meetings have taken place with Moat Homes, Town and Country Housing, Hyde Housing, Clarion Housing, Golding Homes and MHS.
- 5.3 The meetings were generally positive, and all parties welcomed the opportunity to discuss key issues. Providers highlighted they have continued to face a range of challenges in delivering and maintaining affordable housing, with financial, operational, regulatory and strategic pressures. Providers have had to balance continued improvements to existing stock (including fire safety and damp/mould remediation) with delivering new homes, with several providers citing this impacting on ability to take S106 affordable delivery. Operational challenges include labour shortages and costs increases, and investment needed relating to retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency. Providers are hopeful increased certainty relating to government funding and rent setting will improve the situation.
- 5.4 Engagement with affordable housing providers will continue, including a further round of HALP meetings to ensure direct discussion and engagement with those who did not take up the offer of a meeting in the first round – likely to include Orbit Housing, Southern Housing, West Kent Housing and Sage Homes.
- 5.5 In addition to meetings, performance data was requested from Registered Providers, an exercise that will be repeated annually. This data is attached at **Annex 3**.

- 5.6 As part of the Council's acceptance of Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (LAHF3), a tender exercise was carried out in summer 2025 to deliver modular units at the Bluebell Hill car park site. Working with the successful contractor, ZedPods, planning approval has now been secured for a 12 2-bed unit scheme, delivery of which will take place in 2026/27. This scheme was predominantly funded through LAHF3 and developer contributions.
- 5.7 As part of the requirements for LAHF3, the Council also had to provide some resettlement units for eligible Afghan households. These are being delivered predominantly through use of existing assets, including maisonettes in Martin Square and a street property on Pembury Road. There will be a further report to Members regarding the management of these properties in the coming months, with the aim for them to be occupied as soon as possible, working in partnership with officers at the County Council.
- 5.8 The Council leases 9 units at Union Street in Maidstone, working with the Care Group, who also provide support services under a Service Level Agreement. These units are designed to house single people with high support needs. The scheme continues to be well used and to enable the Council to meet its statutory duties to these households.
- 5.9 Additional units have now been conditionally leased in Tonbridge, with the owner currently working to convert and fit out the units by March 2027, at which point the Council will take possession to utilise these for TA.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 All of the work outlined in this report is delivered either within Council budgets or through external funding.
- 6.2 The Government provides Councils with a separate Homelessness Prevention Grant to support activity related to homelessness. There are some changes to this funding formula as part of the Fair Funding Review and these have been accommodated in budget planning.
- 6.3 The Better Care Fund is also a separate Government grant with its own conditions.

7 Cross Cutting Issues

- 7.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity
- 7.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.
- 7.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.
- 7.2 Equalities and Diversity

7.2.1 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.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - Local Lettings Plan update Annex 2 - Registered Provider list Annex 3 - Registered Provider performance data