

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**9 MARCH 2011**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND COMMUNITIES**

**Report prepared by John Littlemore**

#### **1. ADDENDUM TO THE CABINET REPORT 9<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2011 FUTURE ROLE OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

##### **1.1 Revised Recommendation of the Director for Regeneration and Communities**

1.1.1 That the Cabinet recommends the Council disbands the Strategic Housing Advisory Committee;

1.1.2 That the Cabinet agrees as part of the review of standing committees an all-party advisory body for Cabinet and Cabinet Member be formed with terms of reference on matters relating to housing in Maidstone;

1.1.3 That the Cabinet recommends to the Council that the new body is named the Housing Consultative Board; and exists for an initial 12 month period after which time its effectiveness is reviewed.

##### **1.2 Background**

1.2.1 The coalition government has proposed a number of major changes to housing statute and policy that have will have a significant impact across a number of areas including the economic wellbeing of Maidstone. The Cabinet deferred making a decision to the report presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2011 and requested that officers review the role and purpose of a housing advisory body in the light of these proposals.

1.2.2 A discussion with Cabinet Members suggested that there is merit in having an all-party body to advise the Cabinet and Cabinet Members on matters related to housing. However, it was also felt important to differentiate this new body from the role of SHAC, which was in effect to monitor the progress of the promises made prior to stock transfer.

##### **1.2.3 Key Issues**

Over the next 12 months the key areas the Council needs to respond to are:

- (i) Affordable rent – respond to the new regime for providing affordable housing; develop the Council’s policy with affordable housing providers in connection with new and existing homes; develop cross-authority agreements and delivery of the West Kent Local Investment Partnership
- (ii) Tenure strategy – the Localism Bill propose a new duty on local authorities to adopt a tenure strategy and there will be a need to develop the new tenure strategy in conjunction with our housing providers to take account of the range of suggested changes e.g. the use of fixed term tenancies
- (iii) Allocation scheme – the Localism Bill provides the context for greater self determination as to who can access the housing register and who is given priority which will require a review the current allocation scheme
- (iv) Alterations to the homelessness statute – review our homelessness strategy; policy and practice in response to the proposed changes to the homelessness legislation; review the impact of housing benefit changes
- (v) The impact of welfare reform and changes to housing benefit – including the provision of homes in multiple occupation; collective response with partners to encouraging employment, increased poverty and homelessness; responding to migration from London as a consequence of housing benefit changes

### 1.3 Action Plan

1.3.1 To assist the Housing Consultative Board in developing its work programme an action plan was suggested and the table below sets this out around the five key issues. The action plan, once developed further, could then be used to assess the impact and relevance of the HCB at its 12 month review.

Issue	Outcome	Key milestones
Affordable rent	<p>New affordable homes continue to be delivered</p> <p>The new affordable rents remain accessible to applicants on the housing register</p> <p>A broader range of applicant is assisted</p> <p>Agreement is reached with registered providers as to the percentage of existing social rented homes that are converted to affordable rent</p>	<p>Follow progress of the Localism Bill</p> <p>Influence government policy</p> <p>Negotiate with registered providers and other stakeholders</p> <p>Develop new policy on affordable rent</p> <p>MBC adopts affordable rent policy in partnership with local affordable housing providers</p>

<p>Tenure Strategy</p>	<p>Consensus is reached between registered providers and MBC on the application of new tenures</p> <p>A tenure strategy is adopted expeditiously in order to support new housing delivery</p> <p>The new approach does not result in an increase in homelessness or use of temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Follow progress of the Localism Bill</p> <p>Influence government policy</p> <p>Negotiate with registered providers and other stakeholders</p> <p>Develop new tenure strategy</p> <p>Develop advisory services to inform and assist tenants on fixed term tenancies</p> <p>MBC adopts tenure strategy</p>
<p>Allocation scheme</p>	<p>MBC has a clear mandate as to who should be given access and priority to affordable housing</p> <p>The identified priority groups housing needs are met through a scheme quota or other outcome lead measure</p>	<p>Review the allocation scheme</p> <p>Consult with stakeholders and service users</p> <p>Review position in relation to Kent wide scheme</p> <p>Adopt new allocation scheme or confirm existing</p>
<p>Homelessness</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy is updated</p> <p>Homelessness prevention outcomes remain positive in proportion to the approaches for assistance</p> <p>The use of inappropriate temporary accommodation does not exceed the agreed target</p>	<p>Follow progress of the Localism Bill</p> <p>Review homelessness strategy in the response to statutory reform</p> <p>Agree new policy and procedure as required</p>
<p>Benefit changes</p>	<p>The changes do not have a negative impact on Maidstone's economy</p> <p>Homelessness does not increase as a result of the changes</p>	<p>Develop our understanding of the impact of the changes</p> <p>Respond to changes in a positive and active manner</p> <p>Work with partners and stakeholders to implement initiatives to bring about positive change</p>

#### 1.4 Revised terms of reference

<b>Committee and Membership</b>	<b>Functions</b>	<b>Delegated of Functions</b>
<p>Strategic Housing Advisory Committee</p> <p>7 Members of the Authority</p>	<p>To give advice to the Cabinet and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for housing on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Housing Strategy, housing needs and the Housing Investment Programme</li> <li>b) The provision of housing including the type, size and tenure</li> <li>c) The delivery of new affordable homes</li> <li>d) Homelessness, temporary accommodation and the provision of housing advice</li> <li>e) The council's Allocation Scheme and performance of the housing register</li> <li>f) The Supporting People programme</li> <li>g) Changes to housing legislation, regulation and policy</li> </ul>	<p>Not Applicable</p>