

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**27 APRIL 2011**

**REPORT OF THE CABINET**

**1. FUTURE ROLE OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**1.1 Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To consider the future role of the Strategic Housing Advisory Committee.

**1.2 Recommendation Made**

1.2.1 That the Strategic Housing Advisory Committee be disbanded.

1.2.2 That a new body named the 'Housing Consultative Board' be created, with the terms of reference as set out below:

Revised terms of reference

<b>Committee and Membership</b>	<b>Functions</b>	<b>Delegation of Functions</b>
Housing Consultative Board  7 Members of the Authority	To give advice to the Cabinet and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for housing on; a) Housing Strategy, housing needs and the Housing Investment Programme  b) The provision of housing including the type, size and tenure  c) The delivery of new affordable homes  d) Homelessness, temporary accommodation and the provision of housing advice  e) The Council's Allocation Scheme and performance of the housing register  f) The Supporting People Programme  g) Changes to housing legislation, regulation and policy	Not Applicable

1.2.3 That the new Housing Consultative Board be reviewed after 12 months to determine its effectiveness and its continued existence.

1.2.4 That the Constitution be amended accordingly.

### 1.3 **Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 The Cabinet considered the future role of the Strategic Housing Advisory Committee at the Cabinet meeting on 09 March 2011 and agreed in addition to the recommendations above, that, as part of the review of standing committees, an all-party advisory body for Cabinet and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration be formed with terms of reference as set out above.

1.3.2 It was agreed that there was 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.

#### 1.3.4 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 proposes 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 of 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

### 1.3.5 Action Plan

To assist the Housing Consultative Board in developing its work programme an action plan has been drawn up 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.

## 1.4 **Alternatives considered and why not recommended**

1.4.1 The status quo could be maintained, but this approach is limited in its sphere of influence and out-dated in terms of its relationship with Golding Homes and is not recommended as a positive way forward. The aspiration is to create a degree of housing expertise within this Board that would be diluted through alternative mechanisms.

1.4.2 It could be recommended that no single body is required to advise the Cabinet and Cabinet Members on housing matters. However, this would fail to recognise the important and fundamental role of housing in providing stable communities that promote opportunities and prosperity. Central government is exploring ways of devolving responsibilities to local councils and their communities; it would be remiss not to have an advisory committee for housing with a broad housing remit in order to respond to this new agenda.

## 1.5 **Background Papers**

1.5.1 None

## **EVALUATION BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 6 APRIL 2011**

In accordance with Article 15.02 (a) of the Constitution, the Standards Committee has evaluated the proposed amendments to the Constitution and believes that their implementation will help to ensure that the aims and principles of the Constitution are given full effect by putting in place a process which will enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively, and which creates a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to public account.