

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING CONSULTATIVE BOARD

27 JUNE 2012

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR FOR REGENERATION
AND COMMUNITIES**

Report prepared by John Littlemore

1. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING CONSULTATIVE BOARD

1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 The decision to form the Housing Consultative Board contained a commitment to review the role and contribution made by the Board to decide whether to retain the Board

1.2 Recommendation of the Director for Regeneration and Communities

1.2.1 That the Housing Consultative Board recommends to Cabinet to retain the Housing Consultative Board.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Housing Consultative Board was created following the dissolution of the Strategic Housing Advisory Committee in May 2011. The purpose of creating the Housing Consultative Board (HCB) was to provide advice to the Cabinet and Cabinet Member with responsibility for housing. This was felt to be particularly relevant in the context of the significant changes that were being proposed by the newly elected coalition government at that time.

1.3.2 Of particular concern at the time was the raft of changes being proposed as part of the Localism Bill. This included changes to local authority allocation schemes, tenancy law, and the homelessness legislation.

1.3.3 During the past 12 months the HCB has met three times to consider reports and has come together a further three times for training and discussion. Issues considered by the HCB included:

- The Maidstone BC Housing Strategy 2011 – 15

- Tenancy law reform – The Department for Communities & Local Government consultation
- Common Assessment Framework for Kent – access to social housing
- Regeneration Plans for Parkwood – presentation by Golding Homes and facilitated discussion
- Options Responding to the Increase in Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness
- MBC Tenancy Strategy

1.3.4 Training sessions have been provided on:

- The Homelessness legislation and housing advice
- The council's Allocation Scheme and Choice Based Lettings
- Housing Standards and Management of Social Housing

1.3.5 The HCB has provided advice to the Cabinet and Cabinet Member on the content and layout of the Housing Strategy whilst in draft form. The HCB provided a commentary of the response to the DCLG's proposal to make amendments to the Grounds for Possession as they relate to nuisance. The HCB offered suggestions on the proposed Common Housing Assessment Framework.

1.3.6 During the course of the year the HCB has been able to provide a cross party view on various housing issues. This has ranged from matters affecting existing social housing tenants and the wider community. The views expressed by the HCB also assisted the council in being the first local authority in Kent to adopt a Tenancy Strategy.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The alternative option would be to dissolve the HCB but this is not recommended as the HCB has provided a useful mechanism for Members to comment on a wide range of strategic housing issues; provided a platform for Members to increase their knowledge in a fundamental area of local government; and has a role to play in providing further advice on the following topics:

- The review of the Housing and Homelessness Strategies
- The role of Members in referring complaints to the Housing Ombudsman
- The new Allocation Scheme
- Empty Homes initiative
- Housing Assistance Grants to the private sector
- The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Housing matters affect the council's three priorities of having a growing economy, to be a decent place to live and corporate &

customer excellence. Whilst the priority of Maidstone being a decent place to live is an obvious connection there have been reports and discussions at the HCB that makes the links across to the other priorities. An example of this is the welfare reforms and worklessness.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The HCB provides an environment for Members to enhance their knowledge concerning matters relating to housing. This provides an opportunity for Member development that may not exist elsewhere. In addition this provides the Cabinet and Cabinet Member with assistance in reaching decisions on key topics that are recognised as having a broad remit and significant impact.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

1.7.2 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.9 Cabinet Report May 2011

1.9.1 Appendices

1.9.2 None

1.9.3 Background Documents

1.9.4 None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected:

.....