

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET**

Decision Made: 11 July 2012

**REVIEW OF THE HOUSING CONSULTATIVE BOARD**

**Issue for Decision**

When the Housing Consultative Board was formed it was agreed to undertake a review of the Board to determine whether it should continue.

**Decision Made**

That the Housing Consultative Board be retained, giving consideration to the outcome of the Governance review.

**Reasons for Decision**

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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.

On 25 June 2012 the Housing Consultative Board considered the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services reviewing the role and contribution made by this Board.

A Member informed the Board that a governance review was currently being undertaken regarding the future of Overview and Scrutiny Committees which may or may not have an influence on this Board.

The Board felt it would be prudent to take the results of the governance review into consideration at the appropriate time.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

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

### **Background Papers**

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: <b>20 July 2012</b>
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