

09 November 2017 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks  
Despatched: 01.11.17


## Cabinet

### Membership:


Chairman, Cllr. Fleming; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Lowe  
Cllrs. Dickins, Firth, Hogarth, Piper and Scholey



### Agenda


There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.


	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. <b>Minutes</b> To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 October, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
2. <b>Declarations of interest</b> Any interests not already registered.		
3. <b>Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)</b>		
4. <b>Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet Advisory Committees</b>		
5. <b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19</b> 	(Pages 5 - 24)	Adrian Rowbotham, Nick Scott Tel: 01732 227153/7397
6. <b>Mid-year appointments to other organisations</b>	(Pages 25 - 26)	Vanessa Etheridge Tel: 01732 227199

### REPORTS ALSO CONSIDERED BY THE CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEES

7. <b>West Kent Homelessness Strategy</b> 	(Pages 27 - 100)	Hayley Brooks Tel: 01732 227272
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- |     |  |                      |                                    |
|-----|--|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 8.  | <b>Affordable Housing Company</b><br> | (Pages 101 -<br>118) | Lesley Bowles<br>Tel: 01732 227335 |
| 9.  | <b>Annual Review of Parking Charges for 2018-19</b>  | (Pages 119 -<br>132) | John Strachan<br>Tel: 01732227310  |
| 10. | <b>Christmas Parking 2017</b><br>     | (Pages 133 -<br>138) | John Strachan<br>Tel: 01732227310  |

 Indicates a Key Decision

 indicates a matter to be referred to Council

#### EXEMPT INFORMATION

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or [democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2017 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllrs. Dickins, Hogarth, Piper and Scholey

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Firth and Lowe

Cllr. Pett was also present.

32. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 14 September 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

33. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

34. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

There were none.

35. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet Advisory Committees

There were none.

36. Business Rates Retention Pilot 2018/19

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report which advised Members that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had invited local authorities to participate in a pilot of 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19. It was expected to be financially beneficial to have a Kent Pilot and discussions were continuing as to how gains could be shared and split between themes. The submission deadline was 27 October 2017. It was requested that authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder whether the council should participate when the final proposals for the pilot scheme were known.

The Chief Finance Officer informed Members that the DCLG had advised that applications which cover a full county area were more likely to be looked on favourably and therefore all boroughs and districts, KCC and Medway would need to agree. Discussions were already underway, and following the presentation of a report a further proposal was requested and was considered at a meeting on 6

October 2017. A further Kent Leaders meeting would take place on 19 October 2017 before the submission deadline on 27 October 2017.

The pilot scheme was only for one year and there was competition to become a pilot. Local Government Futures projected that £24.8m extra Business Rates would be retained and another estimate was £18m. The current proposal set out a 70% Financial Stability Fund (allocated to parties) which would result in all districts receiving at least an additional 2%. Regional growth funds would receive 30%. Based on the projected retention figures, the Council would receive an additional £560,000 or £410,000. All figures were dependent on the actual Business Rates collection next year, as well as appeals resolved and outstanding.

As part of the bid, it was necessary to state what would happen if the bid was not successful. KCC currently had a pool excluding the council and Dover District Council and had been advised they would like to join the pool as a backup bid. The money for the pilots had been set aside by the Government and, if successful would mean that other grants received from Government would be stopped.

Resolved: That authority be delegated to the Finance Portfolio Holder in consultation with the Leader to decide whether the council should participate in 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19 if a Kent Pilot is proposed.

### 37. Draft Housing Assistance Policy

The Housing Standards Team Leader presented the report which sought approval from Council for approval for the Housing Assistance Policy. The policy set out the way in which the funding provided by the Better Care Fund for mandatory disabled facilities grant and discretionary assistance for improved collaboration with Health and Social care services was administered; along with the Council's own discretionary assistance.

The Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the same report and were advised that further to writing the report it had become apparent that the repair or buying of furniture would also be useful to add to the Hospital Grant and this would include within Registered Social Landlord properties.

In response to questions he advised that the Council's maintenance team would be the ones to repair or fit new purchases. If the grant scheme was underspent in the year, the money is carried forward to the next financial year. It was anticipated that there would not be any overspend as the Housing Standards Team Leader had the ability to delay payments up to 6 months and therefore could be spent in the following financial year.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council, to approve, subject to amendments to the Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG) to include 'the repair or

**Cabinet - 12 October 2017**

buying of furniture' which would include within Registered Social Landlord Properties, the proposed Housing Assistance Policy in order to ensure increased funding provided via the Better Care Fund is delivered to those who have not previously been able to obtain financial assistance; and to update the criteria for the Council's own discretionary financial assistance.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.28 PM

CHAIRMAN

**IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS**

This notice was published on 16 October 2017. The decisions contained in Minute 36 stake effect immediately. The decision contained in Minute 37 takes effect on 24 October 2017.

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## COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/19

### Cabinet - 9 November 2017

Report of: Chief Finance Officer  
Status: For Decision  
Also considered by: Council - 21 November 2017  
Key Decision: Yes

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**Executive Summary:** This report provides details of the recommended Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2018/19, which is to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2018.

Each financial year, the Council must consider whether to confirm or revise its existing CTR scheme. This report sets out a proposed revision to the existing CTR scheme, the results of the resident consultation and the Equality Impact Assessment.

Members' are asked to consider the information detailed and make recommendations for the CTR scheme to be adopted for 2018/19, to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2018.

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**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Scholey  
**Contact Officers** Adrian Rowbotham, Chief Finance Officer Ext. 7153  
Nick Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits. Ext. 7397

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**Recommendation to Cabinet:** To consider and agree the following recommendation to Council:

That Cabinet agree to recommend to Council the recommendations set out below.

**Recommendations to Council:** That

- (a) the outcome of the public consultation, as set out in Appendix A of this report, is considered and noted.
  - (b) Members have due regard to their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and consider the potential impacts of the proposed change on working age claimants with the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex, as set out in the Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix B of this report.
  - (c) it is approved that the current CTR scheme is amended as follows and adopted to take effect from 1 April 2018:
    - (i) That a self-employed applicant and/or his/her self-employed partner
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who is in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment (standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component) or Disability Living Allowance (middle or high rate of the care component) or Armed Forces Independence Payments be made exempt from the Minimum Income Floor

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**Reason for recommendation:** The decision on any amendments to the Council's CTR scheme must be taken by Council. In order to comply with prescribed requirements, the decision of Council must be made by 31 January 2018 in order for any amendments to take effect from 1 April 2018.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1 The CTR scheme replaced Council Tax Benefit with effect from 1 April 2013.
- 2 Pensioners are protected from the impact of a CTR scheme. Consequently, eligible pensioners receive a discount on their Council Tax bill equivalent to the same amount as they would have received under the Council Tax Benefit scheme.
- 3 CTR for working-age people is provided through a means-tested discount. It is calculated using similar criteria to the Council Tax Benefit scheme but, because pensioners are protected, the level of financial support that can be provided to working-age claimants is less than it would have been under the Council Tax Benefit scheme. This is necessary in order to keep the cost of our scheme under control.
- 4 The key components and eligibility criteria for calculating CTR for working-age claimants are:
  - Regardless of financial circumstances, everyone pays the first 20% of their council tax liability;
  - A minimum level of income, known as the Minimum Income Floor, is applied to self-employed earners after two years of trading: and
  - Anyone with more than £16,000 is not entitled to CTR.
- 5 As with previous years, the existing scheme needs to be updated to take into account the inflationary increase in the personal allowances used to calculate entitlement to CTR (these allowances represent the basic living needs of a claimant and his/her family). This will ensure the scheme is compliant with the Prescribed Requirements for all local schemes, determined by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and also aligned with the Housing Benefit scheme, determined by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 6 Provision for this uprating is contained within the CTR scheme (Section 13A Policy) for 2017/18.
- 7 The minor amendment being proposed to the existing CTR scheme is in respect of the Minimum Income Floor, and this is as follows:



- An unintended consequence of the Minimum Income Floor is that it disproportionately penalizes self-employed applicants and/or their partner's who are disabled. In order to eliminate this unfairness, it is proposed to make self-employed applicants and/or their self-employed partner exempt from the Minimum Income Floor if they are in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment (standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component) or Disability Living Allowance (middle or high rate of the care component) or Armed Forces Independence Payment.
- 8 This amendment is a financially beneficial change to those affected but the financial impact on the overall cost of the CTR scheme is minimal. It is estimated that the number of people affected is 3 and that the overall cost of the proposal will amount to £2,100, with the Council's share of this sum being approximately £250.

### The Consultation

- 9 Consultation requirements are governed by section 13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and as such, paragraph 3 of Schedule 1A sets out the general consultation requirements. This states that consultation should always be undertaken where an existing scheme is to be revised or replaced, in the same way as when making the original scheme.
- 10 To effect changes to the CTR scheme for 2018/19, the Council has a legal duty to carry out a public consultation and assess the impacts of the proposed change with regard to equalities. The Council therefore conducted an online consultation which included the proposed amendment, agreed by Members, and this was available on the Council's website from 11 September 2017 to 20 October 2017.
- 11 The number of responses received was extremely low. With only 18 responses, it is evident that this does not provide a representative view from residents across the District.
- 12 The results of the consultation are shown in Appendix A. Members will note that of the 18 responses received:
- the majority of respondents, 39%, did not agree with the proposal to retain the existing CTR scheme for 2018/19, and
  - only 14 responses were made in respect of the proposed amendment to the Minimum Income Floor and of those responses, 50% agreed with the proposal.
- 13 There is also an obligation for the Council to consult with major precepting authorities. Despite sending invitations, no responses have been received from Kent County Council, the Fire Authority or the Police.

### **Exceptional Hardship Policy**

- 14 The Exceptional Hardship Policy was introduced alongside the CTR scheme for 2017/18. The purpose of this policy is to provide financial support in exceptional cases where claimants are considered to be vulnerable and most at risk at not being able to pay their council tax.
- 15 The Exceptional Hardship Policy will continue to be an integral part of the scheme for 2018/19.

#### Key Implications

##### Financial

The estimated impact on Council Tax income from the CTR scheme in 2017/18 is £5.5million.

As detailed in point 8, making a minor amendment to the Minimum Income Floor rules and retaining all other parameters and eligibility criteria for the 2018/19 scheme will ensure that there will be no significant financial impact to the Council and the major precepting authorities (Kent County Council, Fire Authority and Police).

##### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 requires local authorities to consider whether to revise its CTR scheme or replace it with another scheme.

The Council must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, by no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

To comply with this requirement, the Council has updated its section 13A Policy for 2018/19 with the proposed amendment.

The amendment being recommended for inclusion in the CTR scheme for 2018/19 is detailed in point 7.

##### Equality Impact Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

A full equality impact assessment on the CTR scheme was produced when the scheme for 2017/18 was updated to include the introduction of the Minimum Income Floor, an increase in the minimum council tax contribution from 18.5% to

20% and the various changes that were made to align the scheme with changes that had been introduced into the Housing Benefit scheme.

This assessment has been reviewed and updated to take into account the minor amendment being proposed to the Minimum Income Floor in the CTR scheme for 2018/19, a copy of which is detailed in Appendix B.

<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A - Summary of consultation responses Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment
<b>Background Papers</b>	Local Support for Council Tax scheme - Report to Council (27 November 2012) <a href="http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&amp;MId=1464">http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&amp;MId=1464</a>  Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2014/15 - Report to Council (17 December 2013) <a href="http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&amp;MId=1665">http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&amp;MId=1665</a>  Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2015/16 - Report to Council (4 November 2014) <a href="http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s19897/07b%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Support%20Scheme%202015-16.pdf">http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s19897/07b%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Support%20Scheme%202015-16.pdf</a>  Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2016/17 - Report to Council (3 November 2015) <a href="http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s25847/08c%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Support%20Scheme%202015-16.pdf">http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s25847/08c%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Support%20Scheme%202015-16.pdf</a>  Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2017/18 - Report to Council (22 November 2016) <a href="http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s29630/06c%20Council%20Tax%20Reduction%20Scheme%20CTRS%202017-18.pdf?J=1">http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s29630/06c%20Council%20Tax%20Reduction%20Scheme%20CTRS%202017-18.pdf?J=1</a>  Local Support for Council Tax Scheme rules 2017/18 <a href="https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/757/council_tax_support_local_scheme_201718">https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/757/council_tax_support_local_scheme_201718</a>  Local Government Finance Act 2012 <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents</a>  Minutes of Cabinet 14 September 2017

## Agenda Item 5

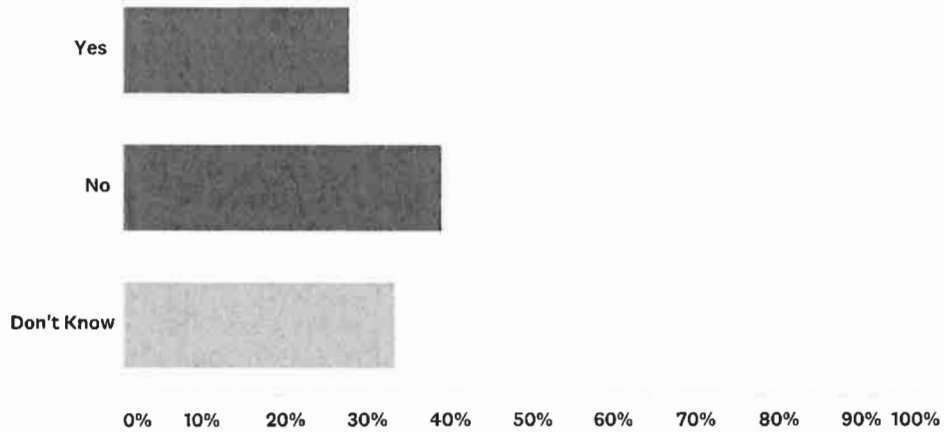
<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s32246/170914%20Cabinet%20Minutes.pdf?J=1>

Section 13A Policy for 2018/19 (Full Council only)

Adrian Rowbotham  
Chief Finance Officer

**Q1 Should the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19 remain the same as our current scheme for 2017/18? (Please click here to view our current scheme).**

Answered: 18 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	27.78%	5
No	38.89%	7
Don't Know	33.33%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>18</b>

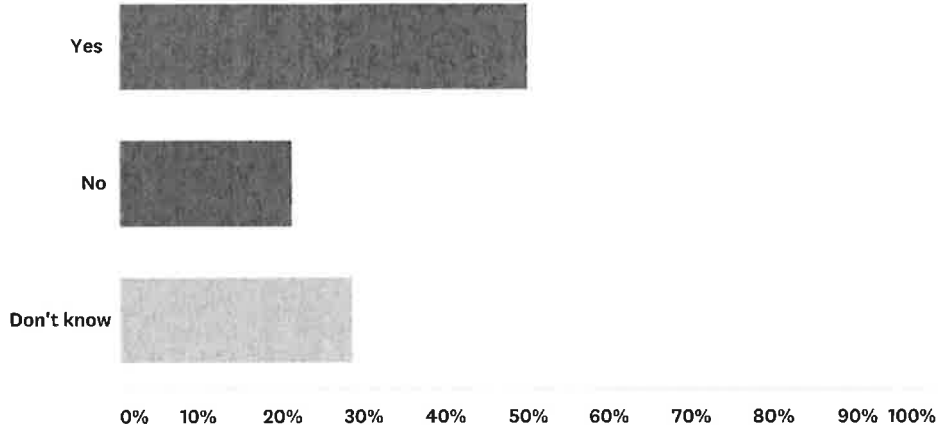
#	IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS TO MAKE ON YOUR ANSWER, PLEASE GIVE THEM BELOW.	DATE
1	Haven't got time to read 164 pages	10/10/2017 3:46 PM
2	There should be greater support for those affected by the disastrous rollout of Universal Credit, the destruction of disability benefits etc.	9/29/2017 5:56 PM

Q2 For our 2018/19 scheme, we are proposing a single amendment that will take effect from 1 April 2018. That is to make self-employed applicants and /or their self-employed partner exempt from the Minimum Income Floor if they are in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment (standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component) or Disability Living Allowance (middle or high rate of the care component) or Armed Forces Independence Payment.

Agenda Item 5

Do you think this option should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2018/19?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 4



**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

Yes	50.00%	7
No	21.43%	3
Don't know	28.57%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>14</b>

#	IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS TO MAKE ON THIS OPTION, PLEASE GIVE THEM BELOW.	DATE
1	Revalue the council tax bands so that the large number of very wealthy households in Sevenoaks pay more. The Wildernesse Estate and Killington should pay far more	9/29/2017 5:58 PM
2	The council can easily afford this, they have about 2-years' worth of reserves	9/19/2017 12:02 PM

**Q3 If you would like us to consider any other options, please give your comments below.**

Answered: 3 Skipped: 15

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	c	10/11/2017 11:25 AM
2	Please look at adjusting council tax bands and introducing much higher rates for houses worth more than £1m	9/29/2017 5:58 PM
3	No	9/17/2017 6:55 AM

## Agenda Item 5

Consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

**Q4 If you have any further comments regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme that you haven't had the opportunity to raise elsewhere, please give them below.**

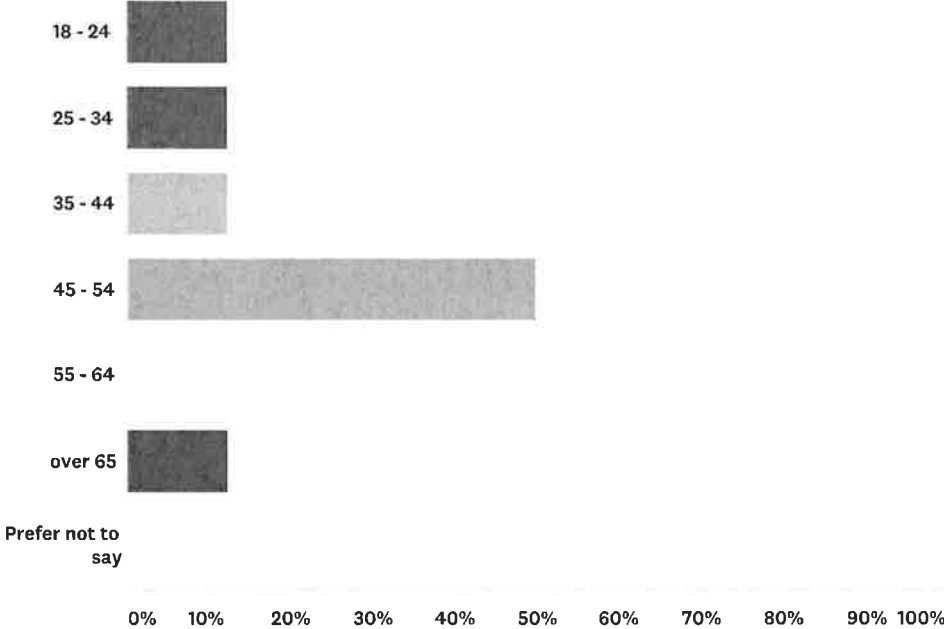
Answered: 1 Skipped: 17

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	No	9/17/2017 6:55 AM



### Q5 Age

Answered: 8 Skipped: 10



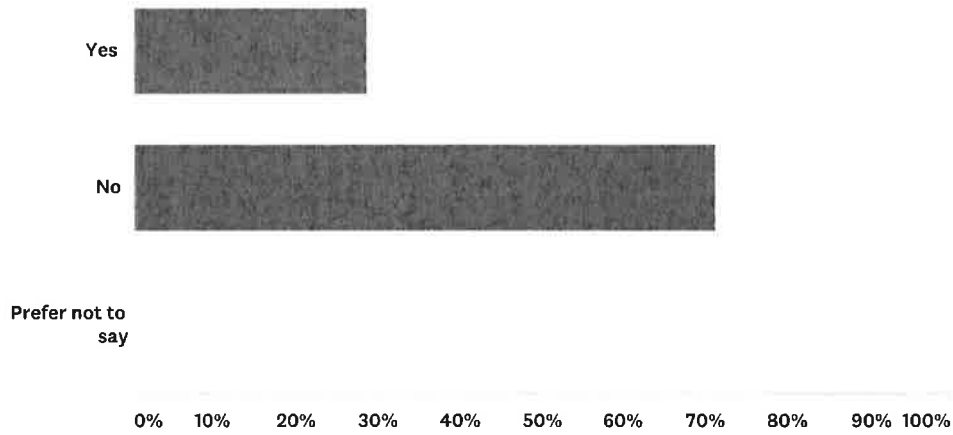
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18 - 24	12.50%	1
25 - 34	12.50%	1
35 - 44	12.50%	1
45 - 54	50.00%	4
55 - 64	0.00%	0
over 65	12.50%	1
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		8

## Agenda Item 5

Consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

**Q6 Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?**

Answered: 7 Skipped: 11



### ANSWER CHOICES

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

TOTAL

### RESPONSES

28.57%

71.43%

0.00%

2

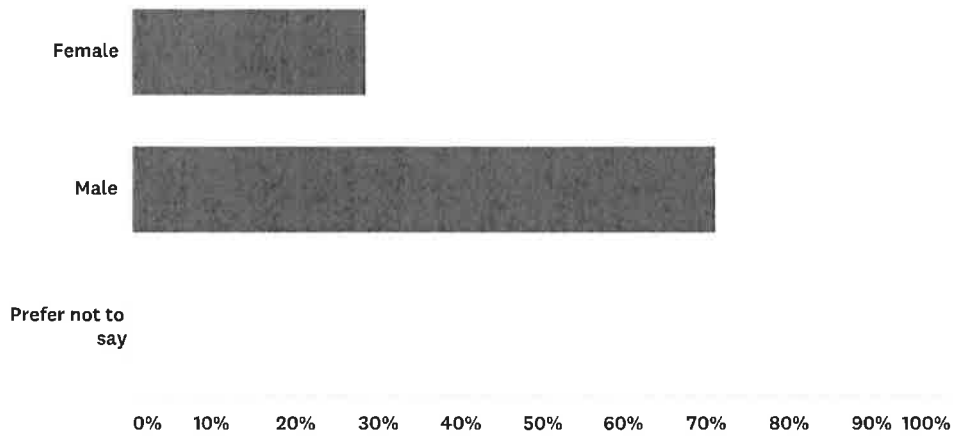
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### Q7 Gender

Answered: 7 Skipped: 11



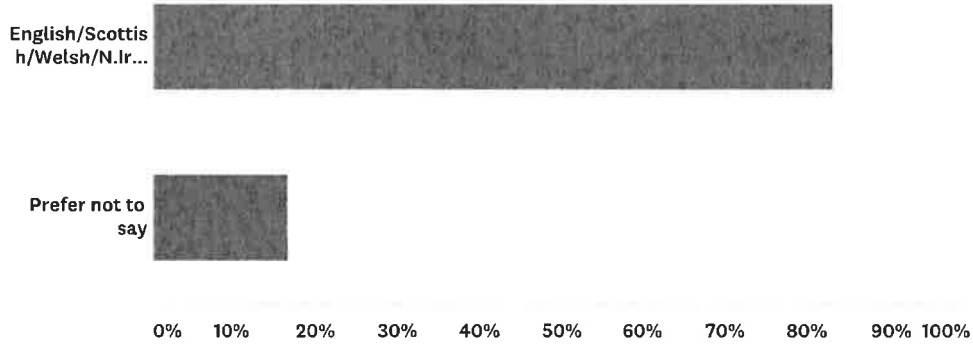
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	28.57%	2
Male	71.43%	5
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

# Agenda Item 5

Consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

## Q8 Race

Answered: 6 Skipped: 12



### ANSWER CHOICES

English/Scottish/Welsh/N.Irish/British

Prefer not to say

TOTAL

### RESPONSES

83.33%

16.67%

5

1

6

# OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

1 white other

DATE

9/27/2017 9:19 AM

**Appendix B**

**Equality Impact Assessment  
Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Authority:	Sevenoaks District Council
Date EqIA commenced:	September 2017
Date second stage EqIA finalised after consultation closed, prior to final decision being taken:	November 2017
Job titles of officer(s) involved in completing the EqIA:	Head of Revenues & Benefits

<b>Contents</b>	
Summary of decision to be made and scope of equality impact assessment	Page 2
Assessment of the proposed change to the scheme from 2018, against the protected characteristics	Page 3
Annex 1 - claimant data	Page 6

## **Summary of decision to be made**

Since 1 April 2013, the Council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council has the ability to determine the level of reduction given to working-age applicants only. The scheme for pension-age applicants is determined by Central Government.

For our 2018/19 scheme, we are proposing a single amendment that will take effect from 1 April 2018. That is to make self-employed applicants and /or their self-employed partner exempt from the Minimum Income Floor if they are in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment (standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component) or Disability Living Allowance (middle or high rate of the care component) or Armed Forces Independence Payment.

## **Scope of this equality impact assessment**

- Proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme from 1 April 2018.

## **How is the decision relevant to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty?**

The need to ensure that the scheme is not unlawfully discriminatory is relevant to the first aim of the duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The need to consider how we can take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and whether people with disabilities may need to be treated more favourably, in how the scheme is designed, is relevant to the second aim of the duty to advance equality of opportunity.

The proposed service change could also be relevant to fostering good relations with regard to maintaining the confidence and trust in the local authority by people with protected characteristics who may use our services.

## Proposed changes to the scheme from 1 April 2018

There is a single potential option to adjust the scheme. Current claimant data for the option is provided in Annex 1. Where the option applies to new claimants, we have provided data for current claimants (where available) as an indication of the possible impacts as it is not possible to predict who may apply after 1 April 2018. Findings from the data are summarised below.

### Disability

As the option proposed is a financially advantageous change, there is no adverse impact on working-age claimants with a disability.

### Carers

As the option proposed is a financially advantageous change, there is no adverse impact on working-age claimants who have a carer in the household.

### Sex

As the option proposed is a financially advantageous change, there is no adverse impact on working-age claimants who are either male or female.

### Age

Claimants of pension-age are protected from any changes to the CTR scheme. As the option proposed is a financially advantageous change, there is no adverse impact on claimants of working-age.

### Race

This information is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction. However, as the option proposed is a financially advantageous change, there is no adverse impact on working-age claimants who are from a Minority Ethnic background.

### Armed Forces Community

This is considered in this equality impact assessment as part of the commitments within the Community Covenant. Armed forces personnel deployed on operations overseas, who normally pay Council Tax, benefit from a tax-free payment on the cost of Council Tax paid directly by the Ministry of Defence. Following the announcement by the Chancellor in his 2012 Budget statement, Council Tax Relief will be worth just under £600 (based upon 2012/13 Council Tax) for an average six-month deployment based on the average Council Tax per dwelling in England. This will continue to be paid at a flat rate to all eligible personnel. More information is available at [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk). We also disregard income from war disablement pensions, providing eligible claimants with a higher Council Tax reduction.

## Other protected characteristics

We do not collect information about the following characteristics from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of Council Tax Reduction:

- Religion of belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

## Conclusions - proposed change to the scheme from 1 April 2018

The proposed change to the scheme will result in working-age claimants, including those with protected characteristics, paying less towards their Council Tax bill from 2018-19. Pension age claimants, who also have protected characteristics, will not be affected as they are protected from any changes by Central Government.

As the option proposed is a financially advantageous change, there are no working-age claimants who will be adversely affected by the proposal.

In complying with our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, we must have 'due regard' to the following:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - In deciding whether to take this option forward, we must ensure that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not unlawfully discriminate against any protected characteristics. This can be achieved by using the findings of this equality impact assessment to inform the decision about whether to take this option forward or not.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
  - In deciding whether to take this option forward, we must consider how we can minimise disadvantage experienced by people with protected characteristics, take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life. The Public Sector Equality Duty does not prevent us from taking a decision about our Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Should we decide to take forward an option that may put people with protected characteristics at a disadvantage, we should consider taking action to mitigate those impacts. The Equality Act allows us to treat some people more favourably than others in meeting their needs. This would allow us to protect some income received by people with disabilities and carers, provide exemptions for some claimants with protected characteristics or take the needs of people with protected characteristics into account within the Exceptional Hardship Policy which was



Equality Impact Assessment  
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

- Foster good relations between people from different groups.
  - In deciding whether to take this option forward, we may wish to consider whether our decision could impact on wider community relations between people with protected characteristics.

Finally, we will continue to monitor the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on claimants with protected characteristics. We will provide reports to indicate whether the impacts are in line with our predictions or whether any further action may need to be taken to mitigate any impacts.

Equality Impact Assessment  
Annex 1 - Claimant data

Option affecting existing claimants from 2018 (we cannot estimate data for new claimants)												
	All	Disability	No Disability	Carer	Non Carer	Female	Male	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
<b>Exemption from the Minimum Income Floor</b>												
Current number of claimants under this criteria (number)	3	3	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	2	1
Current number of claimants under this criteria (%)	< 1%	< 1%	0%	0%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	0%	0%	0%	< 1%	< 1%
Average weekly Council Tax Reduction increase under this criteria (current claimants)	£13.42	£13.42	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£13.42	£13.42	£13.42	£13.42	£13.42	£13.42	£13.42

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Protected characteristics of claimants of pension age - not affected (for information)							
Pension age	All Claimants	Disability	No Disability	Carer	Non Carer	Female	Male
Current number of claimants	2845	1057	1788	85	2760	1744	1101
Proportion of claimants	100%	37%	63%	3%	97%	61%	39%
Current average CTAX reduction (weekly)	£19.73	£20.52	£19.26	£23.78	£19.60	£19.53	£20.04

Notes: Claimant data is based on the lead applicant so the actual impacts will also depend on household composition.  
Ethnicity, religion/belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy & maternity, marital and civil partnership and gender reassignment data is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of Council Tax Reduction.

**MID YEAR APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2017/18 - EXECUTIVE**

**Cabinet - 9 November 2017**

Report of Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

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Portfolio Holder Cllr. Fleming

Contact Officer Vanessa Etheridge Ext.7199

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**Recommendation:** That the following appointments be made to fill the current vacancies:

- (a) Becket Trust Housing Association - to be advised at the meeting; and
  - (b) High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Joint Advisory Committee - Councillor Matthew Dickins.
- 

**Introduction**

- 1 It is the responsibility of the Cabinet to confirm the Council's executive appointments to other organisations.
- 2 There are currently two vacancies on two organisations: Becket Trust Housing Association and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Joint Advisory Committee.

**Key Implications**

Financial

Attendance at meetings of Outside Bodies to which an Elected Member has been appointed by the Council constitutes an approved duty and there are costs involved.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

In not appointing to this Outside Bodies, there is a risk that the Council's designated representation will not be fulfilled.

Equality Impacts

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.

## Agenda Item 6

### Conclusions

Members are requested to consider and approve the appointments.

### Background Papers

[Annual Council Agenda and Minutes - 9 May 2017](#)

**Jim Carrington-West**

**Chief Officer Corporate Services**

**Item 7 - West Kent Homelessness Strategy**

The attached report was considered by the Housing & Health Advisory Committee on 10 October 2017. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Housing & Health Advisory Committee (10 October 2017, Minute 25)

The Housing & Health Manager presented the report. A new West Kent Homelessness Strategy had been developed by the three West Kent Councils and the report sought adoption, by Council, of the Strategy.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet to recommend to Council, adoption of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy.

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**WEST KENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

**Cabinet - 9 November 2017**

Report of	Chief Officer, Communities & Business
Status	For Consideration
Also considered by	Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017 Council - 21 November 2017 (for decision)
Key Decision	No

**Executive Summary:** A West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2016-21 has been developed and stakeholders have been consulted. Members are asked to recommend that this Strategy is adopted.

**This report supports the Key Aims of the Community Plan** in providing the right support at the right time, reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing for all.

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Michelle Lowe  
**Contact Officer** Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

**Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee:** That Members recommend approval of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy to Cabinet

**Recommendation to Cabinet:** That, subject to comments from Housing and Health Advisory Committee, Members recommend approval of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy to Full Council

**Recommendation to Full Council:** That Members approve the West Kent Homelessness Strategy as a District Council policy.

**Reason for recommendation:** The Council has a legal requirement to produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years. This Strategy identifies the homelessness priorities of this Council and supports the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy.

**Introduction and Background**

- 1 The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the need for local authorities to have a Housing Strategy. However, there is still a legal requirement for local authorities to have a Homelessness Strategy.

## Agenda Item 7

- 2 A joint West Kent Homelessness Strategy has been in place from 2011-2016 developed jointly by Sevenoaks District, Tonbridge & Malling Borough and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils. Many of the housing and homelessness issues facing local authorities are shared across West Kent and the three local authority areas have similarities in terms of housing stock and homelessness demand.
- 3 Under Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have a legal duty to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years. With increasing numbers of households contacting the Council for homelessness advice and assistance every year and an ongoing lack of affordable private and social rented houses, there is a need for a strategy that sets out objectives and actions to prevent homelessness.
- 4 This joint Strategy will help the three Councils work together to address and prevent homelessness, share good practice and pool resources where appropriate. This Council has decided to deliver its own separate Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy which sets out the housing priorities for this District.
- 5 The West Kent Homelessness Strategy is set out at Appendix A and the evidence data to support this work at Appendix B.

### Summary of the Strategy

- 6 The Strategy sets out the actions being taken by West Kent councils on homelessness and providing affordable housing options. This work aims to prevent homelessness at the earliest stage, to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes for purchase and rent and support those most at risk of homelessness with improving their health, wellbeing and quality of life.
- 7 The Strategy provides four key objectives for the Housing Advice Teams at each council to focus on over the next five years:
  - Improving the availability of accommodation for all and preventing homelessness;
  - Improving housing supply;
  - Improving housing standards;
  - Improving health and wellbeing.
- 8 A six week consultation period for the draft Strategy ran from 16 June to 28 July 2017. Responses were invited from all our partner organisations, residents and other housing colleagues across Kent. Five consultation responses were received and the full responses are set out at Appendix B of this report. A summary of the responses are below, with the amendments made to the draft Strategy in light of these comments:



Name/ Organisation	Summary of response	Response to comments and amendments to draft Strategy
West Kent Housing Association	Stated it was an ‘interesting document with good information and the use of case studies was informative and useful. Actions from the strategy appear realistic and deliverable.’	Comments noted, no amendments required
Andrew MacDonald, Kent County Council 18+ Care leaver Service  and  Nick Crick, Kent County Council, Specialist Children’s Services	Asked for information on Care Leavers and the role local housing authorities have to play in assisting KCC with rehousing care leavers to be included in the Strategy.	<p>The following paragraph has been added to page 26 of the Strategy:</p> <p><i>Care leavers, of which Kent has a disproportionately large number, are a particularly vulnerable group. Kent County Council has duties under the Leaving Care Act 2000 towards eligible, relevant and former relevant children and young people and has a statutory duty to ensure that all such young people who meet the criteria for services as care leavers are placed in suitable accommodation when leaving care, transitioning to adulthood.</i></p> <p><i>In response to this, we will work in partnership with Kent County Council’s 18+ Care Leaver Service to find the best solutions for Care Leavers. This may require exploring more creative options including shared accommodation where suitable and appropriate.</i></p>
M Booker, Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum	This response set out a number of recommendations for the three West Kent councils, including:	
	To lobby for political changes so housing need can be addressed more effectively	Noted
	The West Kent councils exploring building and renting affordable housing themselves via an arm’s	This will be explored as an

Name/ Organisation	Summary of response	Response to comments and amendments to draft Strategy
	length development company	action with the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy, using affordable housing contributions.
	Make greater use of ‘No Use Empty’	SDC currently works with KCC on the ‘No Use Empty’ scheme and has already brought 16 homes back into use in 2016/17. This work will continue within the Housing Strategy Action Plan
	Explore Build to rent schemes	This action has been included within the Housing Strategy action plan to be explored further.
	Provide assistance with down-sizing	‘Small is Beautiful’ scheme is a partnership initiative with WKHA to incentivise residents to down-size. We will consider a private sector version.
	Lobby for legislative changes for assured shorthold tenancies to provide greater security of tenure	Noted
	<p>Explore how planning system may be used to prevent houses with shared accommodation being converted to family homes</p> <p>It also highlighted the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability of housing</li> <li>• Decline in one bed housing stock</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. This forms part of the Housing Strategy Action Plan and the new Local Plan to:</p> <p>Work with Planning Services to ensure that affordable housing policies provide for a range of housing sizes and types to meet specific housing needs including social rent, HMOs for single people, move on accommodation, special needs housing and housing for older people. HAs will only convert if there is no longer a need</p>

Name/ Organisation	Summary of response	Response to comments and amendments to draft Strategy
Elizabeth Akenhead, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Kent Branch	The Councils need to do much more to ensure that sufficient affordable and social housing is provided, including building properties themselves.	Ambition 2 includes objectives to improve the housing supply including affordable housing. This will be taken forward within the Housing Strategy Action Plan.
	Within the new housing targets, raising the achievement of affordable housing would save hundreds of acres of greenfield land, thus helping to protect the countryside in a Borough where most of the countryside is in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Metropolitan Green Belt.	Noted.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

In 2017/18 this Council receives a Flexible Homelessness Support Grant from Government to deliver targeted homelessness prevention services. It is recognised that the Homelessness Reduction Act will put additional burdens on the Council's Homelessness team. Further New Burdens funding may be available from Government in early 2018 to support Councils with the transition and implementation of new duties as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act from April 2018.

This Council successfully bid for £94,000 for 2017/18 and 2018/19 from the DCLG Trailblazer funding to deliver targeted outreach HERO advice services to prevent homelessness and address health and wellbeing issues for vulnerable families across the District.

All actions and services delivered as part of the West Kent Homelessness Strategy are funded through external funding or existing Council housing budgets as part of this Council's duties as a local housing authority.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Under Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002, this Council has a legal duty to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years. No other legal implications have been identified.

## Agenda Item 7

### Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

The strategy will provide assistance to all residents at risk of homelessness. The Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix D.

### Resource (non financial)

Work and actions within the West Kent Homelessness Strategy will be delivered from existing resources as form part of the Action Plan within the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy.

### **Conclusions**

A new West Kent Homelessness Strategy has been developed by the three West Kent Councils and Members are asked to adopt the Strategy following a consultation period.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A - West Kent Homelessness Strategy

Appendix B -West Kent Homelessness Evidence Data

Appendix C - Consultation responses

Appendix D - Equalities Impact Assessment

### **Background Papers**

None

**Lesley Bowles**

**Chief Officer Communities & Business**

# **West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021**

*(Sevenoaks District Council version)*



**Final version 20/08/17**

## West Kent Homelessness Strategy

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## Executive Summary

West Kent is a generally affluent area. It has a buoyant economy, above average levels of home ownership and high house prices. However, many residents face real challenges finding affordable housing, whether in the private or public sector, buying or renting.

Recognising this, our vision is:

*“To increase the availability of good quality affordable homes for purchase and rent whilst reducing homelessness and contributing to building the West Kent economy. We want our residents to live in safe, good quality homes that meet their needs”.*

This strategy is set against a backdrop of ongoing radical reform in housing policy. With recent legislative changes such as the Housing & Planning Act 2016, the Welfare Reform & Work Act 2016 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the pace of reform is accelerating. We expect these changes to have significant impacts on the delivery and availability of affordable housing in West Kent. Added to this is the uncertainty caused by the decision to leave the European Union and the impact this may have on the housing market.

We are seeing:

- a reduction in the supply of existing affordable rented housing
- a focus on housing for sale, particularly through the Starter Home Initiative and fewer new affordable rented homes
- an increase in homelessness
- it becoming more challenging for people on low or moderate incomes (working or non-working) to find solutions to their housing needs.

Further pressure will come from the anticipated growth in population across West Kent over the life of this strategy, and into the next decade. The population is ageing, which is creating pressures on health resources. There has also been a growing acknowledgement in recent years of the close links between housing, health and wellbeing.

At the same time, Council budgets have significantly reduced and there are fewer resources available to support the implementation of this strategy. This will mean a changing relationship with customers who seek our help. We will have to:

- focus support on the most vulnerable
- manage the expectations of the people who seek our help
- build resilience and encourage communities to support each other, so that people are able to find their own solutions to their housing problems
- use existing partnerships creatively, and develop new ones.

To address these issues, we have identified four ambitions that will guide our work over the coming years. These are:

Ambition 1: Improving the availability of housing for all and preventing homelessness

Ambition 2: Improving Supply

Ambition 3: Improving Standards

Ambition 4: Improving health and wellbeing

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The strategy has been developed with input from our key partners and stakeholders from across the private, public and voluntary sectors. These relationships are key to the success of this strategy and we will work closely with these – and with new partners - to deliver our ambitions over the coming years.



## Section One: Introduction

### Our Vision

West Kent is a generally affluent area with a buoyant economy, above average levels of home ownership and high house prices, which create significant affordability challenges for our residents. However, it contains areas of deprivation, and there is strong demand for affordable housing across all tenures.

In developing our Homelessness Strategy for West Kent our vision is:

***“to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes for purchase and rent whilst reducing homelessness and contributing to building the West Kent economy. We want our residents to live in safe, good quality homes that meet their needs”.***

### About this strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy. While councils are not required by law to produce a Housing Strategy it is seen as good practice to do so. Please note that Sevenoaks District Council have produced a separate Housing Strategy so this Strategy will only focus on the Homelessness elements of this work.

The three West Kent local authorities - Tunbridge Wells District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council – have a long history of working together successfully on housing and homelessness initiatives. We have previously published two Joint Homelessness Strategies, setting out how we intend to work collectively and individually to relieve homelessness across West Kent.

We see this document as an effective way of building on the achievements of the last Joint Homelessness Strategy and our most recent individual Housing Strategies; advancing the work we have done individually and jointly since 2011; and setting out how we will work over the next five years to meet our statutory duties and responsibilities. As non-stock holding authorities, these duties and responsibilities include:

- enabling the forward supply of affordable housing
- the prevention of homelessness and assisting homeless households
- improving housing conditions, including enforcement in the private rented and owner occupied sectors
- building partnerships to promote the health and wellbeing of residents
- implementing Kent-wide adopted strategies.

The strategy has been written against the backdrop of far-reaching reform of housing and social welfare policy, the impacts of which are not yet fully known. This means that the document will have to be flexible enough to accommodate the impacts of these changes as they unfold throughout the life of the strategy.

### Who is this strategy for?

## Agenda Item 7

We want this strategy to be an accessible document that is used by both internal and external stakeholders. We expect that it will be of particular interest to:

- both existing residents and people looking for a home in West Kent, particularly those looking for affordable housing, as it sets out a realistic picture of how we will support them to find practical solutions to the housing problems they face
- private developers and Registered Providers proposing to build new homes in West Kent as it sets out our expectations and highlights our commitment to working in partnership
- public bodies and voluntary sector organisations that provide services in West Kent, as it sets out our priorities and how we want to work with partners to deliver our vision
- the councils themselves, as it sets out how we intend to take forward the councils' ambitious approach to tackling housing issues.

### **How this strategy was developed**

The strategy was developed between October 2015 and September 2017.

A Project Team comprising ten representatives of the three councils were established which met regularly over the period. The Project Team worked with key stakeholders to seek their input through workshops in April and June 2016. A list of the organisations who attended these events is at Appendix I.

The draft strategy was subject to public consultation during the summer of 2017.

All key objectives have been subject to Equality Impact Assessments in the development of this Homelessness Strategy and, where necessary, adjustments made to address any potentially negative effects. These assessments will be reviewed regularly.

## Section Two: Context

Over the last five years or so, social housing has undergone profound change. Recent legislation including the Housing & Planning Act, the Welfare Reform & Work Act have set out far-reaching policy changes in housing, planning and welfare that seemed unthinkable when we wrote the last strategy. More recently, the Government's White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' has acknowledged the difficulties many face in obtaining accommodation and sets out ambitious aims for getting more homes built more quickly. In addition, the Homelessness Reduction Act, which is to be enacted in April 2018, will extend the duties local authorities have to people in a homeless situation who are not in priority need for assistance.

These legislative changes will have significant impacts on the delivery and availability of affordable housing in West Kent. They will intensify the challenges we currently face including:

- a reduction in the supply of existing affordable rented housing
- less Government funding available to build housing for social and affordable rent, with more of a focus on building housing for intermediate tenures and for sale, which will result in the supply of new affordable rented homes diminishing
- further welfare reform affecting many lower income households (working and none working) across West Kent, which will make it more challenging to find solutions to their housing needs.
- additional demand for on local authorities from people facing homelessness

Taken in the round, the impacts of these changes are likely to be far reaching. They will create challenges for residents (particularly those on lower incomes or in receipt of welfare support), local authorities, housing associations and the voluntary sector.

At the same time, with all three Councils' budgets significantly reduced since 2010 and less funding for new affordable housing, there are fewer resources available to support the implementation of this strategy.

This means a changing relationship with customers who seek our help: focusing support on the most vulnerable and with an increased emphasis on mature and honest conversations so our customers have realistic expectations and are assisted to find their own solutions to housing problems.

### The National Policy Context

#### Reform of social housing

Social housing has undergone significant reform in the last five years and is facing further change including:

- housing associations facing an estimated 14% cut in their resources as a result of rents being reduced by 1%/year to 2020;
- a shift to fixed-term tenancies for social housing tenants;
- housing associations having the option to introduce a 'pay-to-stay' scheme for social housing tenants on higher incomes

## Agenda Item 7

- housing associations being encouraged through the regulatory system to use their assets to deliver new homes

### **Greater focus on home ownership**

The Government has been strongly committed to extending home ownership for the last few years, with the priorities being:

- help up to 200,000 people become home owners through the various affordable home ownership schemes available, which include Starter Homes, Shared Ownership, Help to Buy and Right to Buy.
- There will be a policy expectation through the National Planning Policy Framework that housing sites deliver a minimum of 10% affordable home ownership units, including Starter Homes.
- Aimed at first time buyers between 23 and 40, Starter Homes will be priced at up to £250,000 (after a 20% discount on the open market value). Local authorities will have a duty to promote the supply of Starter Homes on 'all reasonably sized sites'.
- Local authorities will also be expected to work with developers to ensure 10% of properties built on housing sites are affordable home ownership units, although other affordable tenures such as rented homes can be provided alongside
- incentivise first time buyers, including with Help to Buy, interest-free equity loans and new models of affordable home ownership;
- introduce the Right to Buy (RTB) for housing association tenants. Homes lost through RTB can be replaced with shared ownership or outright sale, and not necessarily in the same area;
- However, there has been a welcome shift in policy during 2017, as set out in the Government White Paper 'Fixing the Broken Housing Market' and with the most recent Affordable Housing Funding Programme launched by the Homes and Communities Agency (2016-21) including grant for building affordable rented homes

### **Welfare Reform**

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced wide-ranging changes to the welfare system, aimed at simplifying the benefit system, making work more financially worthwhile, restricting entitlement to benefits and reducing the overall welfare bill. Universal Credit replaces a range of benefit entitlements with one single monthly payment. The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and other legislation continues the reform agenda with:

- a lower 'benefit cap' which was introduced in 2016
- Housing Benefit, child benefit, tax credits and a range of other working age benefits frozen for four years;
- removing the eligibility for Housing Benefit of most young people aged 18-21 from 2018;
- capping Housing Benefit for new private tenants at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels, with people under-35 able to claim only for a room in a shared house;
- capping rents for supported, general needs and sheltered social housing at LHA levels from April 2019;
- continuing the roll out of Universal Credit, with the direct payment of rent benefit to tenants;
- replacing Council Tax Benefit with Council Tax support;
- a new national 'Living Wage' for over-25 year olds from April 2016.

### **Planning policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012, set out the Government's planning policies for England. It provided a framework within which councils

and local people can produce Local or Neighbourhood Plans reflecting the needs and priorities of their local communities. This includes encouraging local authorities to create plans that see housing built in support of economic growth in rural areas. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduces significant changes to the planning system aimed at increasing housing supply including:

- introducing automatic planning consent on land allocated for housing, with a presumption in favour of development on small sites;
- a duty to keep a register of self or custom-build sites and publish a Brownfield Register;
- removing the need to assess the specific accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers;
- strengthening powers to protect the Green Belt and increase density around commuter hubs.

The New Homes Bonus, introduced in 2011/12 to incentivise local authorities to encourage residential development has brought almost £10 million of additional resources into West Kent. The Government is consulting on limiting the bonus, reducing the resources available.

### Other policies

Other recent national policy issues relevant to this strategy include:

- **Tackling rogue landlords in the private sector:** the Housing and Planning Act 2016 contains measures to tackle 'rogue' private sector landlords including banning orders and a national database of rogue landlords/letting agents. This should make it easier to act on the worst landlords and so help improve standards in the private rented sector.
- **Space Standards:** with national minimum space standards for new homes abolished, some councils are exploring micro-units ('pocket homes') as a way of meeting the needs of young people in areas of high demand and cost.
- **Buy-to-let:** changes announced in the 2016 Budget limit tax relief for buy-to-let landlords and impose a higher rate of stamp duty. These changes will make buy-to-let less attractive commercially and reduce supply in the private rented market
- **Emerging institutional investment in rented housing:** institutional investors (such as pension funds) are increasingly funding affordable rented housing. Accessing this market could be an important source of funding for rented housing in future.

### Other national strategies and guidance

Other national strategies and guidance relevant to this strategy include:

- **The Health and Social Care Act 2012** which brought fundamental change to the NHS, giving local authorities a larger role in public health promotion and wellbeing;
- **The 2014 Care Act** which gives authorities a duty to consider the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of people needing care and to provide preventative services to help keep people healthy ;
- **The Better Care Fund** which provides financial support for councils and NHS bodies to jointly plan and deliver local services;
- **The 2011 Localism Act** led to changes in allocation policies, enabling local authorities to define those persons qualifying for social housing as those with a local connection and to use the private rented sector to discharge housing duties;
- **No Second Night Out:** a vision to end rough sleeping;
- **Making Every Contact Count:** a joint approach to preventing homelessness;
- **Social Justice: Transforming Lives 2012:** a strategy aimed at tackling multiple disadvantage and poverty through a multi-agency approach.
- **Deregulation Act 2015:** which prohibits retaliatory evictions

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- **Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015** which will stop landlords letting the least energy efficient homes

### The Kent Regional Context

There are a range of County policies and initiatives which will impact on this strategy (see Table I).

**Table I: Kent-wide plans and policies**

Document	Relevance
Vision For Kent 2012-22	Countywide strategy for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Kent's communities, led by Kent Council Leaders
Better Homes: localism, aspiration and choice (2011)	A Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway
Every Day Matters: Kent's Children and Young People's Plan (2013-2016)	Kent's Multi agency Strategic Plan for Children and Young People, developed by the Kent Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Board
Rural Homes: Supporting Kent's Rural Communities	Kent Housing Group's cross-County Protocol to help deliver affordable local needs housing in rural parts of Kent and Medway.
Growing the Garden of England	Strategy for environment and economy in Kent
Think Housing First	Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board's (Housing) strategy to reduce health inequalities through access to good quality and affordable housing
Mind the Gap: Building Bridges to better health for all	Kent's Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Better Homes, Greater Choice	Kent Social Care Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care
Sustainable Lettings Protocol	This document's purpose is to ensure that future housing developments within Kent meet the objective of creating long lasting sustainable communities
Growth & Infrastructure Framework	Framework developed by Kent County Council to provide comprehensive picture of growth and infrastructure and to help prioritise investment to create new jobs, homes and infrastructure
Initiative	Impacts
The 'No Use Empty' Scheme	KCC's empty property strategy
The Kent Health & Wellbeing Board	Committee of KCC which lead on work to improve the health and wellbeing through joined up commissioning across the NHS, social care, public health and other services.
Ongoing monitoring of the West Kent Local Investment Plan by the HCA	Although reaching the end of its life, the HCA continues to monitor the implementation of the LIP

West Kent councils also operate some successful shared services with neighbouring authorities including Tunbridge Well's Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership with Swale and Maidstone Council whose shared services include Housing benefit, Council Tax and Legal.

The three West Kent local authorities are holding discussions to explore the broader national devolution agenda. These conversations are focused on looking at potential ways we could continue to improve how we work together, drive forward further efficiencies, and enable smarter collaboration in the future.

### **The Local Policy Context**

This 2016-2021 Homelessness Strategy is one of a number of plans, strategies and policies that will deliver our vision over the coming years. These are set out in Table 2.

**Table2: the Local Policy Context**

Tunbridge Wells BC	Tonbridge & Malling BC	Sevenoaks DC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision 2026</li> <li>• Our Five Year Plan 2014</li> <li>• Sevenoaks &amp; Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015</li> <li>• Sustainable Community Strategy</li> <li>• Local Plan</li> <li>• Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Development Plan 2010</li> <li>• Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Review</li> <li>• Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2004-09</li> <li>• Empty Homes Policy 2012-17</li> <li>• Tenancy Strategy</li> <li>• Health Inequalities Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy: Local Development Framework</li> <li>• Tenancy Strategy</li> <li>• Housing Assistance Policy</li> <li>• Empty Homes Protocol</li> <li>• Think Housing First: Mind the Gap</li> <li>• Affordable Housing SPD</li> <li>• Sustainable Communities Strategy</li>   <li>• Tonbridge &amp; Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014</li> <li>• Gypsy &amp; Traveller Accommodation Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy Strategy</li> <li>• Empty Homes Action Plan 2015-17</li> <li>• Allocation and Development Management Plan 2015</li> <li>• Under-Occupation Strategy</li> <li>• Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy</li> <li>• Community Plan</li> <li>• Core Strategy 2011</li> <li>• Allocations Policy</li> <li>• Health Inequalities Action Plan</li> <li>• Housing Strategy &amp; Action Plan</li> <li>• Housing Needs Assessment 2016</li> <li>• Affordable Housing SPD 2011</li> <li>• Sevenoaks &amp; Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015</li> <li>• Private Sector Stock Condition Survey</li> </ul>



**WEST KENT: POPULATION AND HOUSING MARKET PROFILE**

	Sevenoaks	Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge & Malling
<b>Population</b>	117,035	116,100	120,800
<b>Projected population growth 2013-2033</b>	+17%	+17%	+19%
<b>Projected household growth 2013-2033</b>	21%	25%	25%
<b>Land within Green Belt</b>	93%	70%	75%
<b>Projected increase in households 65+ to 2033</b>	49%	61%	n/a
<b>Level of owner occupation</b>	73%	66%	71%
<b>Average house price<sup>1</sup></b>	£423,000	£381,000	£350,000
<b>Median income</b>	£36,300	£34,600	£36,800
<b>Ratio of income to house price (national average 6.5)<sup>2</sup></b>	11	9.7	9.3
<b>Average entry level private sector rent p.m. (2-bed)</b>	£1100	£824	£850
<b>Number on council Housing Register</b>	805	940	994
<b>Number of new social lettings 2015/16</b>	211	363	291
<b>Average length of wait before offer (2-bedroom flat Band B)</b>	18 months	16 months	15 months
<b>Net need for additional affordable homes (per year)</b>	422	341	277

All data taken from Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015/TMBC SHMA Update report 2014 except where detailed in footnotes.

<sup>1</sup> Median house price (June 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Lowest quartile (entry level) house price

<sup>3</sup> As at 31.3.17

<sup>4</sup> During 2016/17

<sup>5</sup> During 2016/17

## Section Three: Our Achievements

### Progress against 2011-16 Joint Homelessness Strategy and the individual local authorities' Housing Strategies

#### Tonbridge and Malling:

- Welfare Advisor offering enhanced benefits advice;
- Working with the Elderly Accommodation Council to improve understanding and support for older people needing housing advice;
- Exceeding targets to deliver more new affordable homes;
- Young Persons Scheme and Coldharbour developments providing new affordable homes
- Land and planning permission secured, ready to commence construction of a new domestic violence refuge;
- Improved access for residents to energy efficiency measures through engagement the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership.

#### West Kent:

- 1326 new affordable homes between 2011-16;
- Joint service mapping with the Bridge Trust and publication of the West Kent Homelessness Directory;
- Empty homes brought back into use through participation in the *No Use Empty* project led by Kent County Council;
- At least 2 West Kent Landlords Forums held each year for the last 9 years, attended by an average of 60 landlords at each event: helping us to work better with private landlords and improve the quality and availability of private rented accommodation for those in housing need.

#### Tunbridge Wells:

- Modernised sheltered housing;
- Additional homes for disabled residents;
- Regeneration of Sherwood and Ramslie Estates and Rusthall completed;
- Winter shelter in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Churches providing local bed spaces in winter months;
- Joint funded Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker with Tunbridge Wells Churches continuing rough sleeping prevention work throughout the year;
- Increased housing options for homeless applicants, including widening access to private rented accommodation.

#### Sevenoaks:

- New specialist housing scheme for people with learning disabilities;
- New sheltered housing schemes in Swanley;
- A wide range of low-carbon initiatives to improve thermal efficiency of housing and reduce fuel poverty;
- Energy switching service with surgeries focused on older people to identify wider housing, health and well-being issues;
- Joint funded initiatives with WKHA for tenant incentive scheme to reduce under-occupation;
- £1.8m provided through planning gains to deliver a wide range of housing strategy measures
- Bespoke shared ownership product "A Home of Your Own" assisted 20 households to purchase a share in a home;
- 49 long-term empty homes brought back into use;
- Housing Energy and Retraining Options (HERO): advice and support on employment, debt, benefits and education;
- £94,000 DCLG Trailblazer funding for SuperHERO prevention service;
- Flying Start: tenant sustainment workshop for people at risk of not maintaining a tenancy;
- Private Sector Lettings Scheme: improving access to private rented housing, providing deposit bonds, rent in advance, Landlord incentives and property accreditation to raise quality standards.

## Section Four: Key Challenges

The previous chapter outlined the policy context within which this strategy is set. It identified that far-reaching changes to social housing, welfare reform and the shift from rent to home ownership are likely to have a significant impact on the West Kent local authorities' ability to provide housing options for their residents. This section explores these impacts in more detail and sets out the challenge for the authorities in the coming years, highlighting:

- how housing demand is increasing
- how the supply of affordable homes has not kept pace with demand, and is likely to diminish further
- how affordability, particularly for middle and lower income households, across all sectors of the market is worsening, and
- how homelessness is likely to increase as a result.

### Housing Demand

Demand for all types of housing in West Kent is high and is likely to remain so.

- the population is predicted to grow by 16 -19% by 2033<sup>3</sup> with the trend being for more, smaller households.
- the greatest need will be for 2-3 bedroom market properties, and 1-2 bedroom affordable homes. Restrictions on benefit entitlements may further increase demand for smaller affordable homes and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- there are currently over 2,700 households on the three Housing Registers
- the housing market is once again buoyant and both house prices and private sector rents are rising faster than inflation.

Calls to the Housing Options services seem to be broadening in their scope. Consequently, the advice and signposting provided has needed to adapt to become more holistic to include financial guidance, health related advice and community safety awareness in addition to core accommodation issues. That also means that the housing services must be closely linked to other sections of the local authority and external agencies and organisations

High demand for affordable rented accommodation from homeless households has meant increased use of temporary accommodation. Across West Kent its use has increased by a third since 2011 and costs have more than doubled to £354,000 in 2014/5. Temporary accommodation is, in the main, self-contained but there is some use of costly nightly-paid emergency provision. On average, households stay in temporary accommodation for 69 days, a situation likely to worsen. We have a challenge to source an adequate supply of appropriate temporary accommodation for the increasing numbers of homeless households requiring longer stays.

### Case Study: Reducing numbers in emergency housing

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) has seen an increase in numbers of households needing emergency accommodation from an average of 5 in 2011/12 to 13 during 2015/16.

<sup>3</sup> Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015; Tunbridge and Malling SHMA Update Report 2014. All net figures.

Emergency accommodation is typically a room in a bed and breakfast with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities for a single homeless applicant, and a self contained chalet or flat for homeless families with children. The accommodation is often outside the borough due to lack of availability locally. Being out of area puts additional pressure on our homeless applicants, disrupting their employment and education, as well as being costly to provide.

In order to secure an alternative source of local temporary accommodation we worked with Town and Country Housing Group (TCHG) to lease one and two bedroom flats to house homeless accepted applicants who were waiting for a longer term offer. TWBC managed the properties day-to-day while TCHG retained responsibility for repairs. As well as proving cost effective alternative emergency accommodation, this initiative made good use of flats on the Sherwood estate which were due to be demolished as part of a regeneration project.

### **Housing Supply**

The need for affordable housing is currently estimated at 422 homes/year in Sevenoaks, 341 homes in Tunbridge Wells and 277 homes in Tonbridge and Malling<sup>4</sup>. Supply has not kept pace with need. Over the last five years the average number of affordable homes developed each year has been 49, 100 and 113 respectively, meaning that there is a growing gap between supply and demand.

Challenges to our ability to deliver more housing include:

- high land values, with land supply constrained by Green Belt and AONB restrictions, particularly in Sevenoaks where 93% of land falls within the Green Belt
- HCA funding available having an emphasis on home ownership, with more limited resources for new rented housing
- rent reductions impacting on housing associations' business plans, resulting in many cutting back on future development plans or focusing on building other forms of housing including intermediate tenures and homes for outright sale;
- the introduction of the voluntary Right to Buy for housing association tenants, which will potentially diminish the stock of rented housing, in part because the high cost of re-provision may mean that replacement homes are provided outside the area.

As well as an overall shortfall, there are mismatches in the type of housing available that makes it difficult to make the best use of the existing stock.

For example, a mismatch between housing association stock and housing need, plus the size criteria (or 'bedroom tax'), has meant that in Sevenoaks District Council's area there is a good supply of larger accommodation (3-bedroom+) compared to a potential shortage of smaller homes. There are also significant levels of under-occupation (homes with two or more 'spare' bedrooms), particularly amongst older person households. While matching up under-occupying and overcrowded households could be an answer, it is not always easy to achieve.

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<sup>4</sup> Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015; Tonbridge and Malling SHMA Update Report 2014. All net figures.

Almost 1500 mainly private sector homes have been empty for more than 6 months across West Kent - a considerable waste of resource. Tackling this issue is a challenge as properties are empty for a variety of reasons including difficulty in selling or letting the property; renovation work; repossession; probate/inheritance issues; or the owner is being cared for elsewhere or is in hospital. The local authorities employ a range of tactics (including formal enforcement action) to encourage owners to bring properties back into use.

### **Case Study: bringing back empty homes into use**

A flat above a local shop had lain empty for 12 years and could not be let as it was accessed through the shop. A loan from 'No Use Empty' enabled the owners to refurbish the flat, creating a separate entrance via an external staircase. In addition, the refurbishment converted part of an old store room adjacent to the shop to create a second flat. Tunbridge Well's 'NO Use Empty' loan brought the flat above the shop back into use and allowed the owners to create a second unit for rent.

### **Case Study: bringing back empty homes into use**

Tonbridge & Malling use a range of options including advice and information, 'No Use Empty' loans, Home Improvement Assistance and enforcement action to facilitate and encourage owners to bring long term empty properties back into use.

As a result of effective partnership working with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS), and Circle Housing Russet (now Clarion), five long term empty KFRS properties were returned to use as much needed affordable housing units. The properties near Larkfield had historically been used as day crew accommodation for the Fire Service. However, changes in service requirements meant they were no longer needed and, after careful consideration, KFRS decided to sell the empty properties.

With support from Tonbridge & Malling, Circle Housing Russet successfully obtained Homes & Communities Agency Empty Homes Funding of £225,000 to bring the homes into use as affordable housing available to families in need on the housing register.

### **Affordability**

Securing affordable housing is a challenge in all sectors of the housing market across West Kent.

### **Home ownership**

Despite low unemployment compared to Kent and the South East and above average incomes, high property values mean that home ownership is out of reach for many in West Kent.

The problem is most acute for lower income households for whom houses prices are between 9 and 11 times the average income<sup>5</sup>. The problem is even more severe in rural areas, where the average house costs 17 times the average income.

<sup>5</sup> Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015, TMBC SHMA Report 2014

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Irrespective of the Government's focus on affordable home ownership, purchasing a property will therefore remain out of reach for many households, with both the income levels and the deposit needed to secure a mortgage representing a significant barrier. To purchase a stake in a shared ownership property, many households have to rely on parents or relatives for help with deposits: Sevenoaks DC has already seen several households relying on deposits of £50,000 plus to buy a share at mortgage levels they can afford.

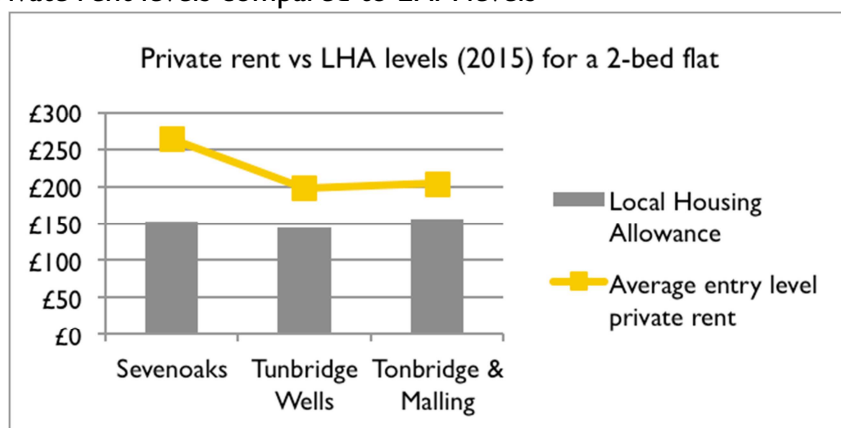
Starter Homes have been introduced by the Government to assist first time buyers under 40 to purchase a home. However, it has been estimated that in order to buy a home costing £250,000 (after the 20% discount has been applied) a household would have to earn £58,000/year plus put down a £47,000 deposit. If mortgage lenders are prepared to offer 95% mortgages, the buyer would need a lower deposit of £13,000 but need to earn £67,000/year.<sup>6</sup> This puts Starter Homes out of reach for households on lower or average incomes.

### The private rented sector

West Kent has a thriving, growing private rented sector and for many, private rent is an effective solution to their housing needs. However, fuelled by buy-to-let investors, the sector has boomed over recent years and rents have risen faster than inflation. This means that private renting is becoming increasingly out-of-reach to many lower income households.

With LHA rates frozen, analysis<sup>7</sup> has shown that, by 2020, private rents across four-fifths of the UK will be out of reach to households claiming welfare support for housing costs. In West Kent, entry-level private rents already exceed LHA levels (see Figure 1), putting the sector out of reach for households reliant on benefits: on one day in April 2016, Right Move (property website) had no 2-bedroom properties available in Tunbridge Wells district for private rent at rent levels below the LHA cap of £765/month.

Figure 1: private rent levels compared to LHA levels



Where households can access private rented housing, they may not find the longer term security they seek in order to put down roots in an area. In 2014/15 the most common cause of homelessness in West Kent was the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, most often due to rents being increased and the affordability pressures this brings.

Other barriers to private renting include: in Tunbridge Wells

<sup>6</sup> figures based on Shelter, October 2015

<sup>7</sup> Shelter, July 2015

- recent changes to the benefit cap, which will mean that over 300 households across West Kent have a shortfall (averaging £61 per week in Sevenoaks).
- the requirement to meet income thresholds set by letting agents (30 times the monthly rent) plus upfront costs such as one month's rent in advance, deposits and administration fees.
- benefit claimants and non-working households need to have a guarantor who either earns at least £30,000/year or who is a homeowner
- Universal Credit, which will see housing subsidy paid directly to residents, may make landlords more reluctant to accept tenants on benefits.

#### **Case study: the costs of securing a private rented home**

In order to secure a 2 bedroom flat with a rental of £795 per month, the prospective tenant typically has to pay:

Referencing fees : approximately £300

Deposit: 6 weeks' rent - £1100

Rent in advance : 1 month: £795

**Total: £2095**

If the applicant is not earning a salary of more than 30 times the monthly rent (£23,850 in this case) they will usually need a guarantor, most often a UK-based home owner who also earns 30 times the monthly rent.

Many of the people approaching the local authorities for help with housing do not have sufficient savings to cover these upfront costs, and don't have a family member or friend who would qualify as a guarantor. To get round this issue, all three LAs operate a rent deposit scheme.

TWBC's scheme provides payment up front to landlords or agents (after a property inspection has been carried out to ensure it is in good condition.) We then set up an affordable repayment plan with the applicant, so the money we have paid out can be recycled for other homeless families. Once the applicant has repaid the loan, any monies due back from the deposit at the end of the let are transferred to them, so they can use this to help them with their next move.

#### **Affordable housing**

Whilst Starter Homes and other intermediate housing products such as shared ownership will help some households find a suitable home, in West Kent there remains a substantial number of households who will be unable to access either home ownership or the private rented sector. For this group, affordable or social rented housing is the only realistic option. However, with the current focus on home ownership, the supply of social and affordable homes available to rent is expected to diminish.

Even where affordable housing is available, there may be barriers to accessing it.

- some housing associations are introducing affordability criteria for new tenants, both to ensure tenancies are sustainable and to protect their future income
- in Sevenoaks applicants on the Housing Register need to earn £33,400 or less, while households accessing shared ownership generally earn more than £40,000. This means that there are few potential housing options for households earning £30-40,000.

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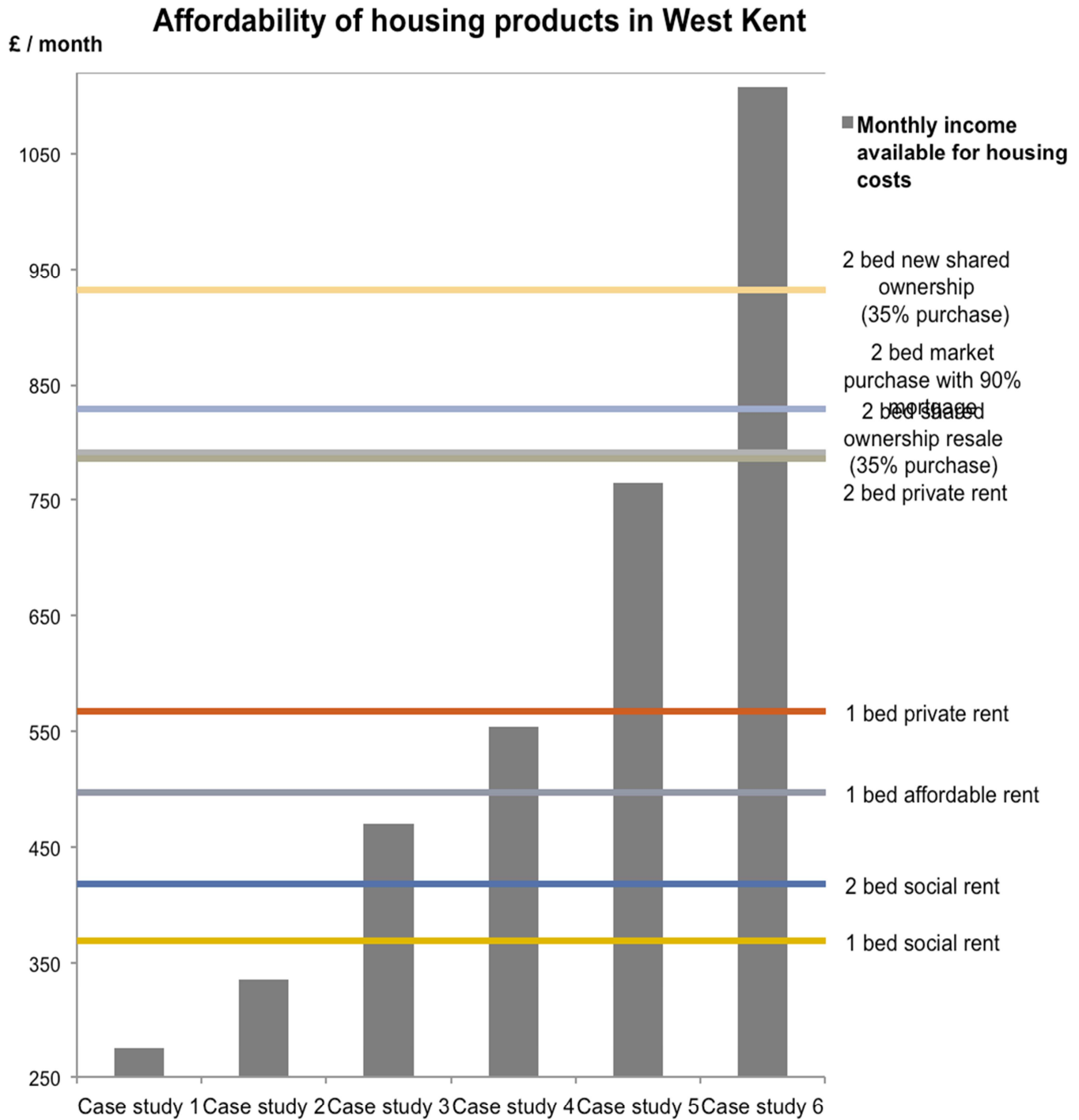
In summary, residents continue to face increased pressure on the affordability and accessibility of housing, with fewer housing options available. We anticipate that there will be a marginal group of low to middle income households who are unable to access any of the home ownership products, who are priced out of the private or affordable rented sector, and who have no realistic hope of being allocated social housing (see Figure 2). Dealing with the needs of this group will be one of the main challenges for us in the coming years.

### **Figure 2: Accessing affordable housing in West Kent**

This chart highlights the difficulties lower income households have in accessing affordable housing in West Kent.

- The horizontal lines indicate the price of various housing products (based on the average monthly cost for a typical entry level property).
- The columns show the amounts that six different household types have available to spend on housing each month, as described in the case studies below. The case studies are real examples and are typical of the households who seek housing advice and assistance from the councils each year.





**Case study 1**

**Household:** A single man aged 18, Tonbridge and Malling area, told to leave by his parents

**Employment/Income:** Employed on the minimum wage of £5.60 / hour. Not entitled to receive benefit to help with housing costs (from 2017 under current proposals). Based on affordability criteria (30% of income), this young man could afford to spend £291 on housing each month.

**Outcome:** His circumstances mean this man is not eligible for social housing, and cannot afford the average rent for the smallest self-contained property in the private sector. He would need to look for a room in a shared property, and have savings to pay a deposit. However, at this time there were no rooms advertised within his limited budget.

<p><b>Case study 2</b></p> <p><b>Household:</b> An unemployed young person (aged 29) living in Tonbridge and Malling without savings</p> <p><b>Employment/Income:</b> Reliant on benefits, he is able to claim housing costs of up to £335/month through Universal Credit (based on the High Weald LHA shared room rate).</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> This person does not have high enough priority to successfully secure social housing. Few rooms in shared housing are advertised at this low cost and it is likely to be difficult to secure accommodation without savings to pay a deposit, without a guarantor, and in competition with other applicants who may be in employment.</p>
<p><b>Case study 3</b></p> <p><b>Household:</b> A single person, aged 40, living in Tunbridge Wells</p> <p><b>Employment/Income:</b> Entitled to claim welfare benefits to cover the social rent of £470 per month for a suitable housing association property. Total monthly income is £720.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> While this applicant would be entitled to social housing, s/he is excluded by the affordability criteria introduced by some registered providers. Using Office of National Statistics estimates of his anticipated monthly outgoings (£849), s/he would be assessed by the housing association as having a shortfall of £128 each month. He would therefore be assessed as unable to sustain a social rent tenancy and so be denied a tenancy by the housing association.</p>
<p><b>Case study 4</b></p> <p><b>Household:</b> A couple with 1 child living and working in Sevenoaks.</p> <p><b>Employment/Income:</b> Annual household income of £22,177. Applying affordability criteria, up to £554 / month could be available for housing costs (30% of income).</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> This family could afford social rented properties, but with substantial waiting lists it may be difficult to secure suitable accommodation and will depend upon their circumstances. They are unable to afford a 2 bedroom property in the private rented sector or to access home ownership. They would need further benefits advice to assess their circumstances and determine if they are eligible for additional benefits.</p>
<p><b>Case study 5</b></p> <p><b>Household:</b> A lone parent with 2 children seeking a 2 bedroom property in Tunbridge Wells.</p> <p><b>Employment/Income:</b> The family receive £1,667 each month in wages and partial benefits, including payment for housing costs.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> At the time of looking the family is unable to find any suitable property in the private rented sector within the LHA cap of £765 per month within a 5-mile radius of Tunbridge Wells. The cheapest property advertised in the private rented sector costs £795/month. In a competitive rental market and without anyone able to stand as guarantor, the family are not able to negotiate any rent reduction. To cover the shortfall and stay close to established family networks and children's schools, the family must pay the extra £30 / month from their overall benefit income. This means 48% of their total income will be spent on housing costs.</p>
<p><b>Case study 6</b></p> <p><b>Household:</b> A working couple with 1 child living and working in Sevenoaks</p> <p><b>Employment/Income:</b> Annual income of £44,341. Each month, the couple have £1,108 available to meet housing costs (30% of income in accordance with affordability criteria).</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The household is able to access affordable home ownership. However, to purchase a 35% stake in a 2 bedroom resale shared ownership home the family must have access to a deposit of £3,675.</p>

## Homelessness

### Advice and support

Providing housing advice and help to those who are homeless or threatened with it is a core service for the councils. In 2016/17 2,400 households approached the three councils for housing advice and assistance.

In future, we expect to see growing demand for information and advice services, more applications to join the Housing Register and more complex cases than in the past. There has also been a significant change to the advice and assistance duty through the recently passed Homelessness Reduction Act. From April 2018, this places additional duties on councils to help prevent homelessness of all families and single people. Councils must also ensure that everyone who qualifies for help under homelessness law receives advice in writing on the housing options available to them.

At the same time, the authorities will have to manage with fewer resources and fewer housing options.

Residents approaching us for help and support are presenting with increasingly complex needs. In the past, our housing association partners have offered wider support services that have complemented our advice and prevention work in areas such as employment and training, welfare advice, support and community investment. However, financial pressures mean some providers are withdrawing these services to focus on their core landlord activities. Given the emphasis placed on work as a route out of benefits and low incomes, this will leave a significant gap in services. To meet this challenge, we will need:

- understanding of the needs of our customers and how they are best able to access services, making it easier and cheaper for residents to access information and advice directly;
- effective management of customer expectations and demand for housing support, with households being encouraged to proactively help themselves;
- a joined-up approach linking welfare and work advice;
- new models for delivering housing advice, embracing new technology and with more self-servicing.

### Preventing homelessness

Where possible, the councils work with individuals and households to prevent homelessness. In 2016/17 they achieved this for over 500 households. With the cost to the public pursue of providing temporary accommodation and subsequent re-housing amounting to at least £5,300 per case per year, prevention is clearly cost effective<sup>8</sup>. Homeless prevention tools included providing support to sustain existing tenancies, providing employment advice and assistance and working with migrant communities at risk of sleeping rough.

#### **Flying Start - Helping to bring families back together**

Flying Start is Sevenoaks' pre-tenancy workshop & support service. During 2016/17 they have helped over 100 households on a one-to-one basis. They have also held a series of workshops with over 75 attendees.

<sup>8</sup> Heriot Watt University 2007: Demonstrating the cost effectiveness of homelessness

One of these was Mrs X who was referred to Flying Start by Sevenoaks Citizens Advice. She was desperate to find a home in Sevenoaks for her and her teenage daughter who had been separated following family breakdown. Mrs X's daughter was living with friends to enable her to get to school whilst Mrs X stayed with friends and worked in Tunbridge Wells as a nurse. We met with Mrs X to discuss her housing options, which were limited due to the high cost of renting in Sevenoaks. We suggested she sign up with the Private Sector Letting (PSL) scheme offered by Sevenoaks District Council, prepared a household budget for her to understand what she could afford and began approaching landlords who promoted outside the conventional marketing methods. Mrs X and her daughter also attended a pre-tenancy workshop and, soon after, contacted our PSL team. They located a suitable property and, after financial checks from HERO and the PSL team, Mrs X secured the home for a new life with her daughter.

### **Case Study: using rent deposits to prevent homelessness**

A young household consisting of a mother and baby approached the Housing Options service as they were threatened with homelessness due to domestic issues with the extended family.

In order for the family to move on in a planned way and to prevent homelessness, the Options Officer found a property in the private sector. The home was suitable but was needed energy efficiency work as its low energy performance rating constituted a Category I hazard for Excess Cold.

Initially the landlord was reluctant to work with the Council as she was able to command a rent well above Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. Following lengthy negotiations, the Council assisted the landlord with an additional insurance premium to give security against non-payment of rent. This was accompanied by a Housing Assistance Loan to install a new heating system. A month's rent in advance and a deposit equivalent to another month's rent was supplied by the Council, and the landlord agreed to an initial 12 month tenancy. The tenancy has been sustained successfully with no issues and the family have been settled in their home for over three years.

### **Homeless acceptances**

After a prolonged period of declining homelessness<sup>9</sup>, the number of households presenting themselves as homeless and the numbers accepted as homeless have doubled over the last three years across the three authorities. There were 299 homelessness applications made in 2016/17 and 156 households were accepted as homeless.

Around two thirds of households accepted as homeless have children, with most being lone parents. The most common reason for homelessness is the loss of a tenancy (mostly private rented tenancies, most commonly because as landlords are increasing the rent) or because family is no longer willing or able to accommodate them.

Sourcing good quality temporary accommodation is a constant challenge. We want to continue to limit the use of temporary accommodation, and particularly bed and breakfast accommodation. To achieve this we need to improve the supply of good quality alternatives and must work closely with private sector landlords and the voluntary sector to do this.

<sup>9</sup> The picture does differ significantly across the three authorities due to the different operation of allocation policies.

Placing families in emergency accommodation outside the area is becoming increasingly common due to a lack of affordable emergency accommodation locally.

### The Housing Register

Each authority maintains its own Housing Register for those waiting to access social housing. On 31 March 2017, a total of 2739 households were on the three Housing Registers (994 in Tonbridge & Malling, 805 in Sevenoaks and 940 in Tunbridge Wells). As Table 3 shows, the need is mainly for smaller homes.

**Table 3: Composition of the Housing Register by size of accommodation needed**

Local Authority	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4bed + larger	Total
Tunbridge Wells	370	357	163	50	940
Tonbridge & Malling	480	344	117	53	994
Sevenoaks	457	258	69	21	805
<b>Total</b>	<b>1307</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>2739</b>

As households feel the impacts of welfare reform and find themselves with fewer housing options, applications to join the Housing Register are likely to increase.

There are some specific local challenges for certain groups including households renting privately and given notice by their landlord, those experiencing domestic abuse, people asked to leave by friends and family, rough sleepers and offenders. The Housing Register Allocations Policies give additional priority to applicants in particularly urgent situations, such as those fleeing domestic abuse, extreme violence or harassment and those whose health is significantly at risk if they remain in their current unsuitable housing. All the local authorities operate a Sanctuary Scheme, which helps people stay in their current home by fitting additional security measures to make their property safer.

The number of rough sleepers across the three councils has more than doubled since 2010 with 21 found at the last headcount.

Working in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Churches, the Council has supported the Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter. This has offered a safe, warm, local place to stay for rough sleepers during cold weather for the past 4 years. The Council have also joint funded a Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker during the summer months to echo the work of the winter shelter throughout the rest of the year. In 2015/16, the Outreach Worker successfully helped 20 individuals to move into housing (6 people housed through the Housing Register, 12 helped into supported housing, 2 helped to find private rented accommodation).

### Meeting the housing needs of specific groups

#### Housing for young people

Young people face particular challenges in meeting their housing needs including:

- the removal of housing benefit for 18-21 year olds;

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- restrictions on access to self-contained accommodation, with those aged under 35 on benefits only eligible for the shared room rate. Shared housing, while appropriate for some, is often not suitable for vulnerable young people;
- questions over future revenue funding mean that housing-related support faces an uncertain future.

Moving into employment improves the housing options for young people, so our ability to signpost young people to the appropriate employment and training services (such as the Sevenoak's HERO service) and managing transitions into work is key to helping this group.

### **Older people**

The ageing population poses medium to long term challenges of delivering sufficient good quality appropriate housing for older people, not least the increasing proportion of people with dementia.

Further specialist accommodation will be required to meet the needs of this growing community, with an estimated 250 places for older people needed across West Kent each year plus a further 26-40 residential care places<sup>10</sup>.

Meanwhile, there are a number of other short term challenges to increasing the supply of older peoples' housing:

- there is a mismatch between the current supply and demand. Much of the existing sheltered accommodation is unattractive to potential tenants and suffers from low demand. Future demand is likely to be for extra care housing models;
- many housing associations, rather than remodeling stock, are moving out of older people's provision and focusing resources on home ownership;
- uncertainty over future revenue funding is affecting the viability and future investment in older persons' housing for rent with both housing associations and private sector providers withdrawing from the market;
- the introduction of the national living wage is adversely affecting care homes and extra care schemes as the available funding does not cover the higher costs of provision.

The traditional sheltered housing service is also being impacted with many providers withdrawing warden cover as it is no longer viable. It will represent a challenge to ensure that suitable accommodation for residents with more complex needs can continue to be provided, and supply can grow to meet the needs of our ageing population.

As our population continues to age and the number of older households increases, a greater number of older owner-occupiers will face challenges in maintaining the quality of their homes and will seek advice and assistance. In 2016/17 each council provided an average grant of £7,197 to around 226 households to help adapt their homes. This demand will increase, placing extra pressure on the services provided by the Private Sector Housing Teams, and challenges in administering Disabled Facilities Grants efficiently and effectively.

Given the social and financial benefits of health prevention (it is much better and more cost effective to install a handrail at home than to treat a broken hip, for example) we must find opportunities to develop more effective partnerships with the health sector that allow people to continue to remain living at home safely and comfortably for longer.

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<sup>10</sup> Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015, TMBC SHMA Report 2014

**Case study: Disabled Facilities Grant**

TMBC recently completed a Disabled Facilities Grant for a young man in his 20s who, following a motorcycle accident, was a wheelchair user. The man lived with his parents in Tonbridge & Malling.

The council funded a first floor extension to enable room for a through floor lift, larger bedroom and wheelchair accessible bathroom with level access shower and wash/dry WC to be provided. The photos below show the new bedroom and through floor lift and the new shower facility. These adaptations enabled the man to continue to live independently at home with his own bedroom that he could access and a bathroom facility he could use. It allowed a normality to return to the family home with the parent commenting that the work had made a huge positive difference for all of them.

**Case study: providing Housing Assistance**

TMBC recently provided a repayable grant to help the vulnerable homeowners to replace rotten and dangerous windows and relay an uneven, dangerous patio. As a result, the property is warmer, more secure and safer for the couple to continue living independently. The improvement work has given the couple pride back in their home and they are determined to continue improving their home. The grant will be repayable when the property is sold in the future.

**Housing standards**

Good quality housing positively impacts on health, wellbeing and life expectancy. Poor housing has detrimental effects on crime, education and health.

We have a role in ensuring that standards are improved across all tenures. By doing this, and by working to remove hazards within private sector housing, we have the opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and for cost savings to the health system.

The low standard of some housing stock across West Kent has a detrimental impact on health. These figures can vary significantly from year to year, but the latest figures available, which are for 2014/15, show that across West Kent, 240 excess winter deaths were attributed to poor quality housing - 120 in Sevenoaks, 30 in Tonbridge and Malling and 90 in Tunbridge Wells.. Local authorities are required to report on the number of dwellings in the private rented sector with Category 1 hazards: in 2016/17, 118 such hazards were reported.

The high demand for private rented housing means that it is a challenge to ensure that properties maintain even minimum standards, particularly at the lower end of the market. With benefit changes increasing demand for rooms in shared houses, Houses in Multiple Occupation will proliferate, posing a particular challenge in terms of maintaining quality standards.

Energy efficiency and fuel poverty remain key challenges across all tenures, and particularly impact lower income households. Fuel poverty is a significant health and wellbeing challenge across West Kent with between 7.7% (Sevenoaks), 8.6% (Tunbridge Wells) and 10% (Tonbridge & Malling) of households living in fuel poverty. As benefit caps and rising housing costs place additional strain on household budgets, reducing energy costs for low income households will become a greater priority.

## Partnerships

### Registered providers

None of the West Kent local authorities retain ownership of housing having transferred their housing stock many years ago; Sevenoaks to West Kent Housing Association, Tonbridge & Malling to Clarion Housing Group and Tunbridge Wells to Town & Country Housing Group.

There is a long history in West Kent of working closely with partner housing associations and many examples of effective joint working to deliver new housing, innovations in services and increased housing options.

While the three main housing association partners have always had their distinct identities, the challenges they face (less grant funding, rent reductions, welfare reform and deregulation) will impact differently, due to differences in strategic direction, financial capacity and risk appetite. Providers are already making difficult choices about how to best deploy diminishing resources and manage risk. With the HCA's strong focus on viability, some are already cutting back on discretionary spending, focusing on building housing for sale rather than for rent and realigning their businesses to maximise income collection. Some are also considering introducing minimum income limits for rented housing to protect future income streams.

Relationships with our key partners will remain central to us delivering this strategy. However, the partnerships will have to be flexible enough to cope with the inevitable conflicts that will arise between housing associations' need to manage risk and the authorities' responsibility for discharging their statutory responsibilities.

### Health & wellbeing

There is a strong link between housing and health, and housing interventions have been shown to support a wide-range of health outcomes. Local authorities are well placed to contribute to the health agenda, therefore, and particularly through housing strategy. With that in mind, there is a drive to build on this area of our strategy to create an effective out-of-hospital care system.

To deliver this we will need new partnerships to complement existing ones and look for opportunities to work in new and different ways. These will include working with health and social care bodies where partnership working is not currently well developed and where there are likely to be significant opportunities to create future synergies (for example with Clinical Commissioning Groups).

### Case Study – Reducing delayed hospital discharge

This closer joint working has already started across West Kent.

In November 2016, the three West Kent local authorities in partnership with West Kent CCG, set up a pilot Hospital Discharge Scheme at Pembury Hospital. The scheme involves a Health and Housing Coordinator based in the hospital linked to a handyperson. Family Mosaic Home Improvement Agency provides the roles and support of the posts. The aims of the scheme are to enable timely and safe discharge of patients from hospital by providing any necessary housing interventions and also to pro-actively prevent admissions to hospital



through slip and falls prevention work. The project is already showing significant outputs. Within five months over 100 people had been assisted with a safe discharge from hospital. The average cost of helping each patient is very low at approximately £160. The savings to the public sector as a whole within five months are estimated at a minimum of £30,000. The savings to the NHS are estimated at least £47,000.

By working in an integrated way with health, housing and voluntary sector partners, the West Kent authorities are determined to support our residents to lead independent, stable lives that enhance their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

**In summary**

Far-reaching changes to housing, planning and welfare provide a challenging backdrop to this strategy.

Our goal is to enable communities to support each other, for individuals to engage positively and take responsibility for solving their own problems where possible, but to provide housing-related support where it is needed most.

Faced with diminishing resources, we will need to:

- be flexible and innovative;
- build new partnerships that deliver genuinely joined-up approaches to welfare and work advice, and health and housing;
- embrace new ideas and approaches to delivering advice and assistance; and
- manage expectations, encouraging individuals and communities to take responsibility for their own situation, supporting them to help themselves.

**Section Five: Our Ambitions**

To respond to the challenges we face, and to deliver our vision, we have identified 4 key ambitions to guide our work over the life of this strategy.

**Ambition 1**      Improving the availability of housing for all and preventing homelessness

**Ambition 2**      Improving housing supply

**Ambition 3**      Improving the standard of housing

**Ambition 4**      Improving the health and wellbeing of our residents

We have carefully considered how we will achieve these ambitions, and how we will maximise our impact using the resources we have available. They are set out in the table below, along with the objectives that we need to work towards in order to achieve them. The action plan for developing these actions can be found in the Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy.

**Ambition 1 – Improving the availability of housing for all and preventing homelessness**

## Agenda Item 7

To deliver this objective, we will:	
1	Ensure that we are well placed to respond to the changing policy environment, evaluating and reporting on the impact of housing, planning and welfare changes on our residents, on our partners and on our own services.
2	Manage expectations on the availability and affordability of social housing.
3	Ensure that our residents are able to access clear information about the range of housing options available, including new products such as Starter Homes and other forms of intermediate housing.
4	Continue to develop excellent working relationships with social and health services to ensure the availability of appropriate housing for residents with more complex needs and vulnerabilities and ensure that appropriate support and care is provided.
5	Continue to build links with the private rented sector to overcome barriers to housing those in need, particularly those residents on the lowest incomes.
6	Use the experience of our private sector housing teams to work with our registered provider partners to support them to manage risks and meet the challenge of housing affordability for those on the lowest incomes.
7	Explore new technology, online services and other innovative ways of delivering housing advice to those in need, and ensure residents understand what they can do to help themselves to improve their ability to obtain housing including accessing advice on employment, welfare and debt.
8	Work effectively together across West Kent to maximise the options available to prevent homelessness.

Ambition 2 – Improving housing supply	
To deliver this objective, we will:	
1	Work with housing providers to deliver new affordable homes across the West Kent local authorities, promoting a range of types and tenures of affordable homes that will meet local needs.
2	Maximise the resources available to provide new affordable homes through the HCA and other funding sources, and through planning gain.
3	Work together with our partners to manage the reduction in grant funding for affordable housing by exploring different delivery and financial models and attracting new investors into West Kent.
4	Increase the supply of affordable housing by making better use of underused Council land and assets, releasing under-occupied properties, bringing empty homes back into use, and remodelling outdated homes that no longer meet needs.

5	Explore innovative build solutions (such as pre-fab techniques) to reduce development cost and time.
6	Support the delivery of specialist housing that will meet the needs of older residents, including those with more complex needs such as those with dementia.
7	Continue our work with private sector landlord to increase the supply of rented accommodation available to people in housing need.

### Ambition 3 – Improving the standard of housing

#### To deliver this objective, we will:

1	Continue to support schemes to assist with home improvement and energy efficiency measures to improve the quality of housing within West Kent and tackle fuel poverty.
2	Develop a clear communications strategy to promote assistance available to improve housing conditions to private landlords, individual households and home owners.
3	Support new or ‘accidental’ landlords to keep up to date with standards, cooperating with other agencies for effective enforcement.
4	Ensure vulnerable residents and those with special needs are able to access clear information about help and assistance to improve housing conditions and carry out adaptations.
5	Continue to work with landlords to improve the quality of rented housing in the private sector, delivering accreditation and licensing schemes.
6	Take enforcement action where necessary to respond to complaints, ensure mandatory standards are met, and remove category I hazards in the private sector.

### Ambition 4 – Improving health and wellbeing

#### To deliver this objective, we will:

1	Pursue a joined up approach, working together with health and social care partners to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents and to use our shared resources together most efficiently and for maximum benefit.
2	Explore opportunities available to improve housing conditions through the Better Care Fund, national and local schemes, and other funding sources.
3	Where possible, free up bed spaces in specialised accommodation, providing move-on accommodation and tackling culture of institutionalisation in order to get customers to move on to suitable accommodation.
4	Continue to tackle fuel poverty by promoting advice and assistance to improve energy efficiency working with external partners, Kent-wide partners and other local authorities, and targeting key groups of residents such as older people.

## Agenda Item 7

5	Maximise the resources available to deliver adaptations for disabled residents, ensuring that we are able to respond to the increased funding available for Disabled Facilities Grants.
6	Ensure all residents are able to access essential information about health and wellbeing, including those in emergency accommodation.
7	Offer appropriate support to refugee households through resettlement programmes.
8	Roll out the Making Every Contact Count programme across West Kent, and ensure that frontline housing workers and health professionals are well informed about available services and are able to signpost residents appropriately.
9	Work with service users (especially vulnerable individuals with complex problems) so they are able to maintain tenancies, despite reduced availability of support services.

## Section Six: Delivering the Plan

### **Monitoring progress**

Given the pace of change, we recognise that this plan has to be flexible and iterative, so that it adapts to the impacts of changes in the policy environment.

The Project Team will continue to meet at least annually to monitor implementation of the strategy and ensure that the collective actions and objectives identified are taken forward.

Each of the three councils will also monitor the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans individually. A Lead Officer for the Strategy will be identified who will report to Members regularly on progress. The councils will also report progress to the Borough Housing Partnerships and provide regular updates to stakeholders on the councils' websites.

## Appendices

### Appendix One - Project Team and Stakeholder Involvement

#### 1. Homelessness Strategy Project Team

##### **Sevenoaks District Council**

Lesley Bowles – Chief Officer Communities and Business

Hayley Brooks – Head of Housing and Health

Andrew Kefford – Housing Advice Team Leader

Gavin Missons – Housing Policy Manager

##### **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

Linda Hibbs – Private Sector Housing Manager

Satnam Kaur – Chief Housing Officer

Chris Knowles – Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager

Jane Smither – Housing Options Team Manager

Lynn Wilders – Housing Needs Manager

##### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

Janice Greenwood – Private Sector Housing Manager

Jane Lang – Housing Services Manager

Sarah Lewis – Housing Register and Development Manager

#### 2. Organisations attending stakeholder events and other housing partners

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)

Bridge Trust

Change Grow Live Recovery Service (CGL)

Chapter One

Clarion Housing Group

Citizens Advice (CAB)

Golding Homes

Hyde Housing

Homegroup

KCC - Troubled Families Education and Young Persons Services - Preventative Services

KCC Children's Commissioning

KCC Commissioning Team

Kent County Council (Children and Families)

Kenward Trust

Lookahead

Moat Homes

National Landlords Association

NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Orbit

Porchlight

Probation Service

Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI)

South West Kent Community Mental Health Team

SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association)

Town & Country Housing Group  
Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter  
Tunbridge Wells Street Teams  
West Kent Housing Association  
West Kent YMCA  
West Kind Mind

## Appendix Two - Evidence Base

See separate attachment

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## Appendix Three - Glossary of terms

### **Affordable housing**

Subsidised housing provided at a cost below market rates, with regard to local housing prices and local income levels. It includes social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership and intermediate housing and is provided to specified eligible households.

### **Affordable Rent**

Housing let by Housing associations to households eligible for affordable and social housing at a rent that is no more than 80% of the local market value (including service charges where applicable).

### **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

A designated area of land where development is restricted in order to protect and conserve the natural environment.

### **Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)**

The most commonly used type of private rented tenancy. Usually run for 6 or 12 months and tenants must be given at least 2 months' notice to leave. Any deposit has to be protected.

### **Brownfield Sites**

Land that has previously been developed and has the potential for being redeveloped.

### **Buy To Let**

The purchase of a property specifically to rent out (let).

**Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)** Government department in England responsible for increasing housing supply and home ownership, devolving powers and budgets for local growth, and supporting communities with public services.

### **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)**

Help for disabled people who need special adaptations to their home. These are means-tested grants and are available to tenants, owner-occupiers, and landlords.

### **Entry Level**

Suitable or affordable for people entering the market for the first time.

### **Fuel poverty**

An inability to afford to be able to keep one's home adequately heated. A household is fuel poor if it has an income below the poverty line and has higher than typical energy costs (source: *Cutting the cost of keeping warm: A fuel poverty strategy for England*, HM Government (2015)).

### **Green Belt**

Land that is protected from development and maintained as a designated area for open space, forestry or agriculture.

### **Help To Buy**

A government scheme to help households purchase a home, either by lending money towards the cost of a newly built home, or by providing a mortgage guarantee.



### **Homelessness acceptances**

Households that have applied to a Council as homeless under Part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and have been accepted.

### **Homelessness duties**

Duties of a local authority to ensure advice and assistance is provided to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

### **Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)**

The government's housing, land and regeneration agency, and the regulator of social housing providers in England.

### **House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**

This is a building where more than one household lives and shares facilities, such as a kitchen and living room. Under the Housing Act 2004 houses in multiple occupation with three storeys or more, which are occupied by five or more people, who form two or more households must be licensed.

### **Housing Allocations Scheme**

Under section 166 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), every Local Authority is required to publish a summary of its allocations scheme for the allocation of social housing and to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with this scheme.

### **Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**

A method of evaluating the potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. It is used to determine if enforcement action should be taken in relation to risks in the home across all tenures. Where a Category 1 hazard is identified (serious hazard) the local housing authority must take enforcement action to remove/reduce the hazard.

### **Housing Need**

Households who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market.

### **Housing Register**

A list of individuals or households who have applied to the Council for affordable housing and fall within one of the reasonable preference categories or meet the criteria set out in the housing allocations scheme.

### **Intermediate housing**

Housing at prices or rents that bridge the gap between social rents and market prices or rents. Includes shared equity products (for example, Homebuy), low cost homes for sale, and intermediate rent which is usually around 80 per cent of market rents.

### **Local Connection**

An ability to meet the criteria to demonstrate a connection with the local borough. This could include satisfying criteria for an individual or their immediate family to have lived within the borough, or for an individual to be working within the borough.

### **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

The maximum amount of Housing Benefit a tenant that rents from a private landlord is eligible to receive within a local area.

### **Local Plan**

## Agenda Item 7

A development planning framework providing planning policies for change and conservation for the local borough.

### **New Homes Bonus**

The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local authorities to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. It is paid each year for 6 years. It is based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenue raised for new- build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use, with an additional payment for providing affordable homes.

### **Overcrowding**

A household is recognised as overcrowded once it exceeds the bedroom criteria stated in the Local Authority Allocations Policies.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System also contains a hazard associated with lack of space within the dwelling for living, sleeping and normal family/household life. A hazard assessment is undertaken to decide the occupancy level that may typically be expected to use a dwelling. The actual household, taking into account ages and relationships, is then considered to determine if any statutory action is required.

### **Housing Association**

A provider of social housing that is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (including Councils and registered housing associations).

### **Right to Buy (RTB)**

The right of secure tenants of Councils and some housing associations to purchase the home they live in at a discounted rate.

### **Rural Exception Housing**

Sites by rural settlements where development would not normally be permitted, but which will meet local need for affordable housing.

### **Section 106 agreements**

Legal agreements between developers and local authorities to provide contributions to social or physical infrastructure to make a development acceptable, such as provision of affordable housing.

### **Shared Ownership**

Part-rent, part-buy scheme aimed at helping those on low or middle incomes who otherwise could not afford to buy their own property on the open market.

### **Social housing**

Housing provided through a housing association, this could be for social rent, for affordable rent, or for shared ownership.

### **Social rented housing**

Social housing rented to tenants at controlled rent levels to ensure rents are affordable for people on lower incomes.

### **Starter Homes**

A government initiative to help young people (aged under 40) to buy a home at a discounted price.

### **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)**

An assessment of housing need and demand to determine the future balance of housing in terms of tenure, type, location and affordability.

**Supporting People**

A government scheme to provide funding to support vulnerable people to live independently.

**Temporary accommodation**

Housing provided to homeless households who are waiting for an offer of permanent accommodation or provided in an emergency. This may include Bed and Breakfast (B&B), or hostel accommodation.

**Universal Credit**

The new benefit introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 to replace a number of different benefits with one single benefit claim. This will affect households of working age who claim in work and out of work benefits, such as Income Support, Income based Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.

**Unsuitable housing**

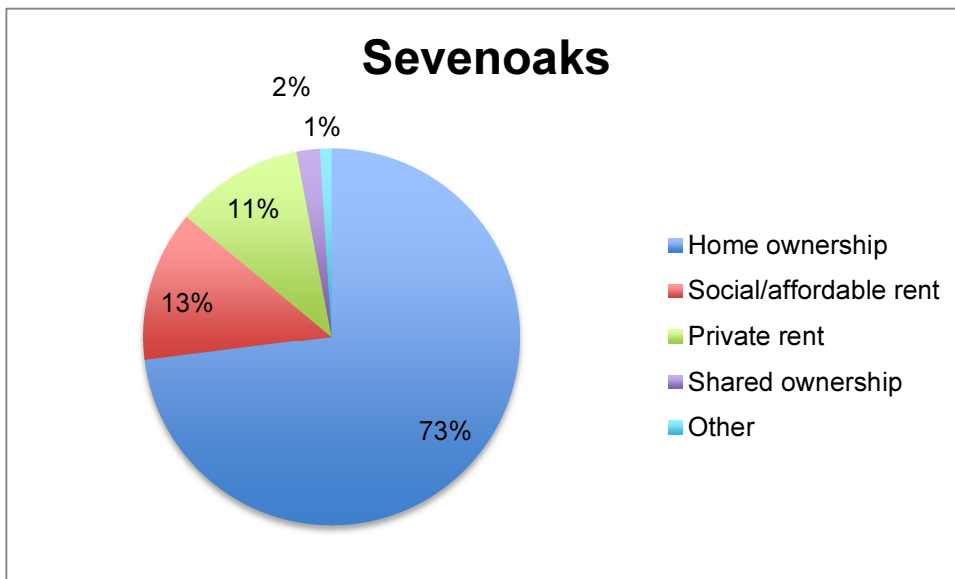
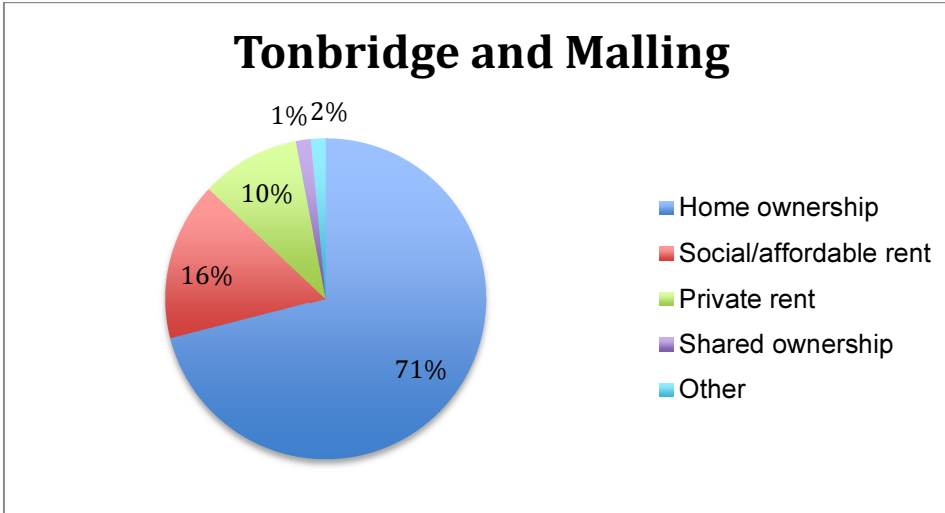
Housing which is in some way unsuitable for the needs of a household, whether because of its size, type, design, location, condition or cost.

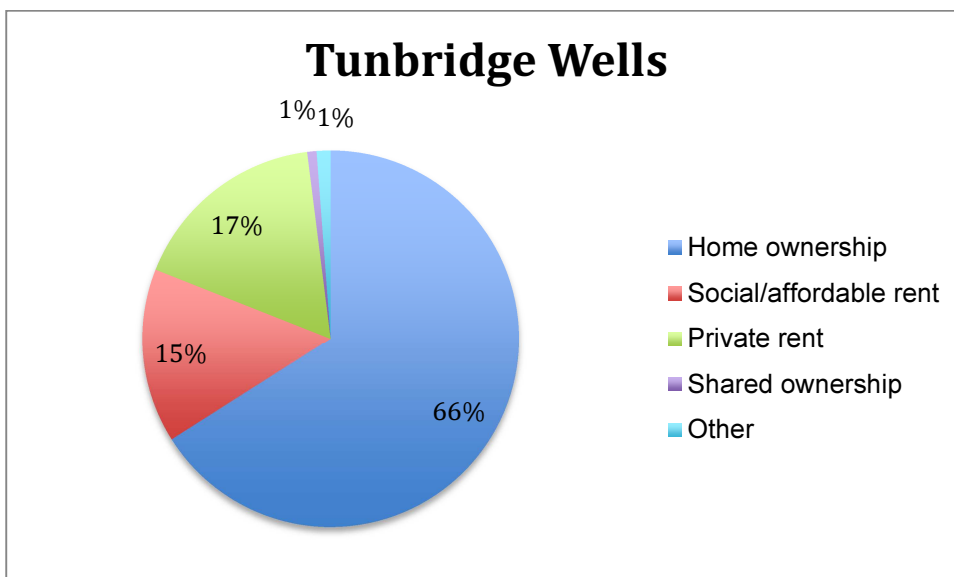
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**West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy - Evidence Base**  
 (Strategy - Appendix 2)

A summary of the data used as evidence for the West Kent Homelessness Strategy is presented below.

**1. Tenure of housing stock within each Local Authority**





Source: 2011 Census

## 2. Social Housing Stock

	<b>Total social housing stock (31 March 2017)</b>
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	7,642
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	8,905
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	7,200

Source: Local Authority data

## 3. Population

	<b>Sevenoaks</b>	<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>
<b>Population</b>	117,035	116,100	120,800
<b>Projected population growth 2013-2033</b>	+17%	+17%	+19%*
<b>Projected household growth 2013-2033</b>	21%	25%	25%*
<b>Projected change in population aged 60-74 (2013-33)</b>	23.9%	37.4%	34.5%*
<b>Projected change in population aged 75+ (2013-33)</b>	71%	83.2%	95.1%*

\*Figures for 2011-2031

Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)

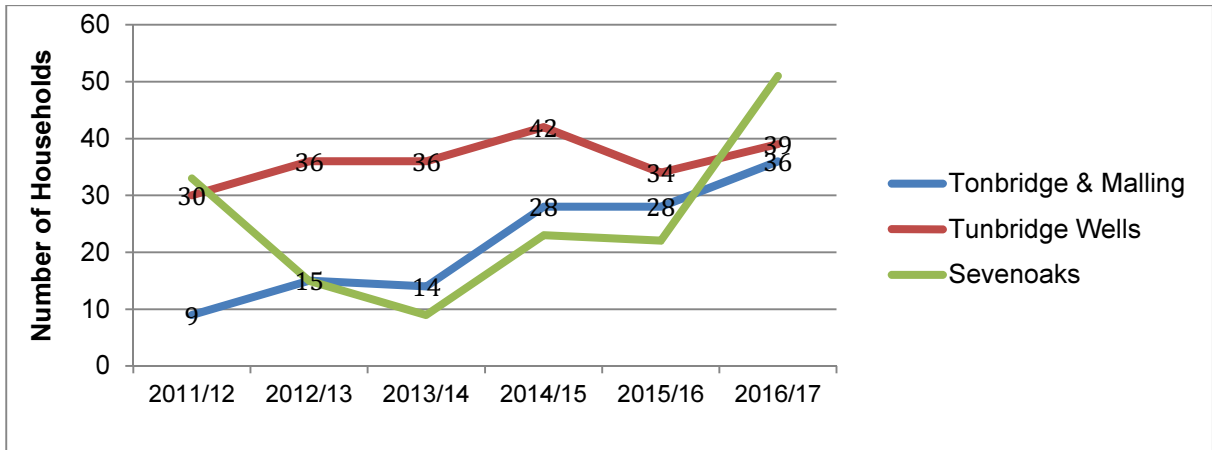
SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

## 4. Black and minority ethnic (BME) population

	<b>Sevenoaks</b>	<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	<b>Kent</b>	<b>UK</b>
<b>BME population (Non-white: British/Irish)</b>	8%	6.9%	10%	10%	19%
<b>Key BME group (White: other)</b>	3.6%	2.9%	4.3%	3.6%	4.6%

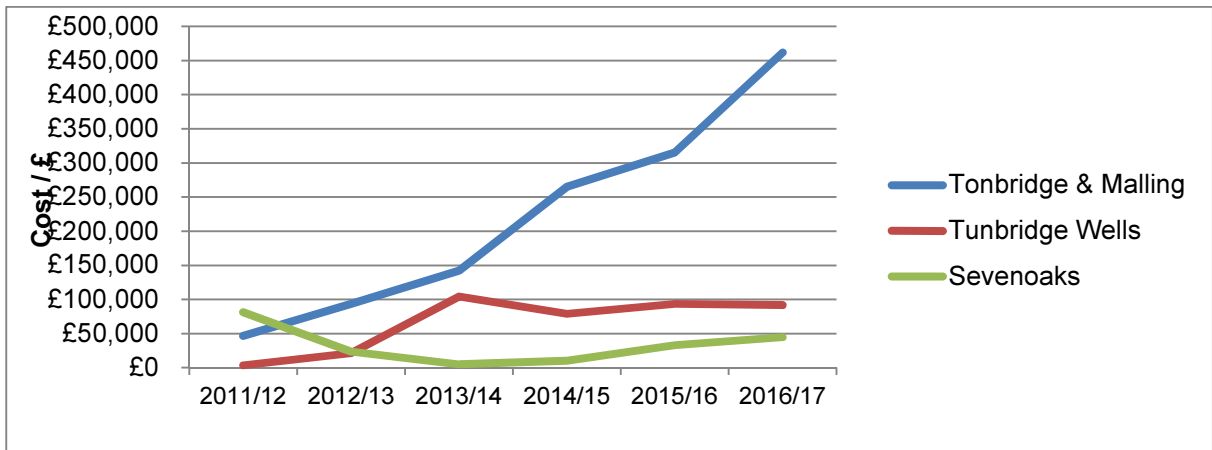
Source: ONS (2011 Census)

**5. Use of temporary accommodation**



Source: Local Authority data

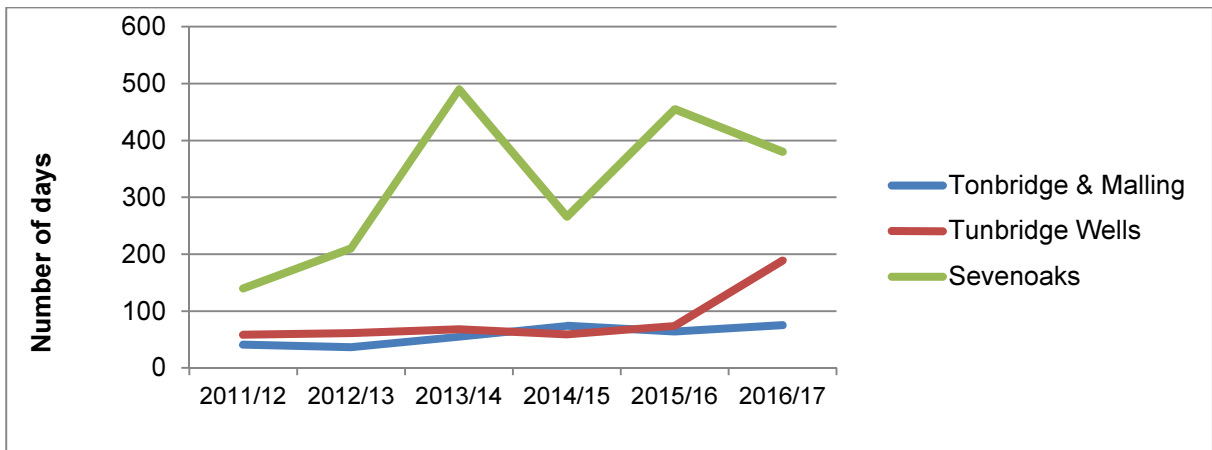
**6. Cost of temporary accommodation**



Source: Local Authority data

Note: An arrangement between Sevenoaks DC and West Kent Housing Association to provide properties for use as temporary accommodation means expenditure on temporary accommodation is substantially less than the other West Kent local authorities.

**7. Average length of stay in temporary accommodation**



Source: Local Authority data

**8. Housing supply**

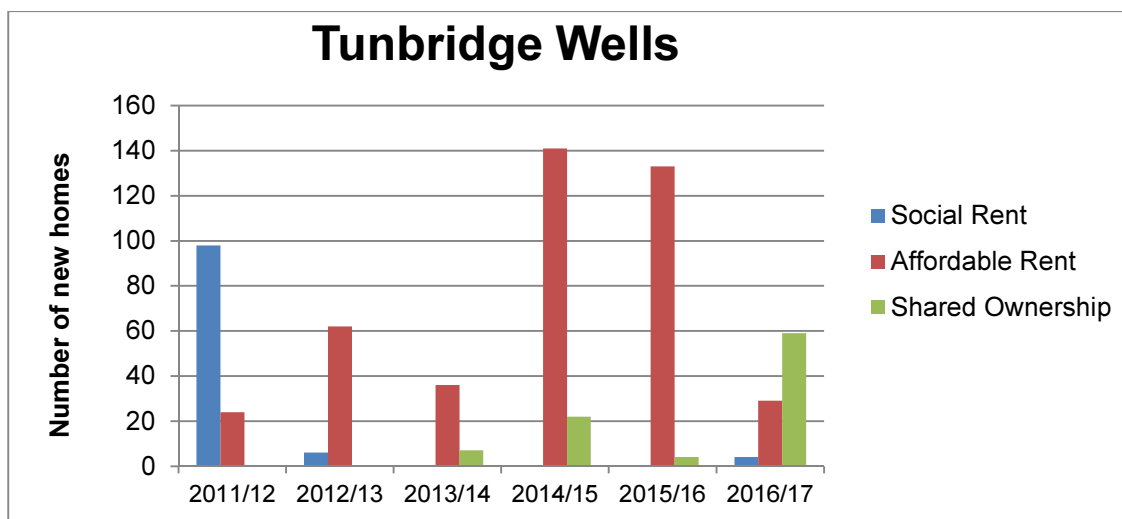
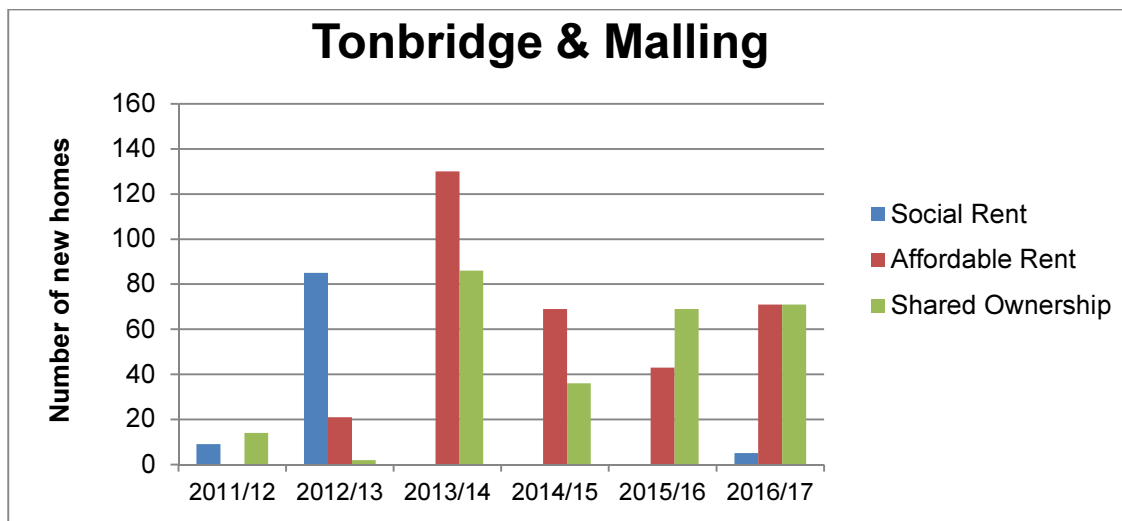
8.1 Estimate of affordable housing need

	Number of homes / year
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	422
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	341
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	277

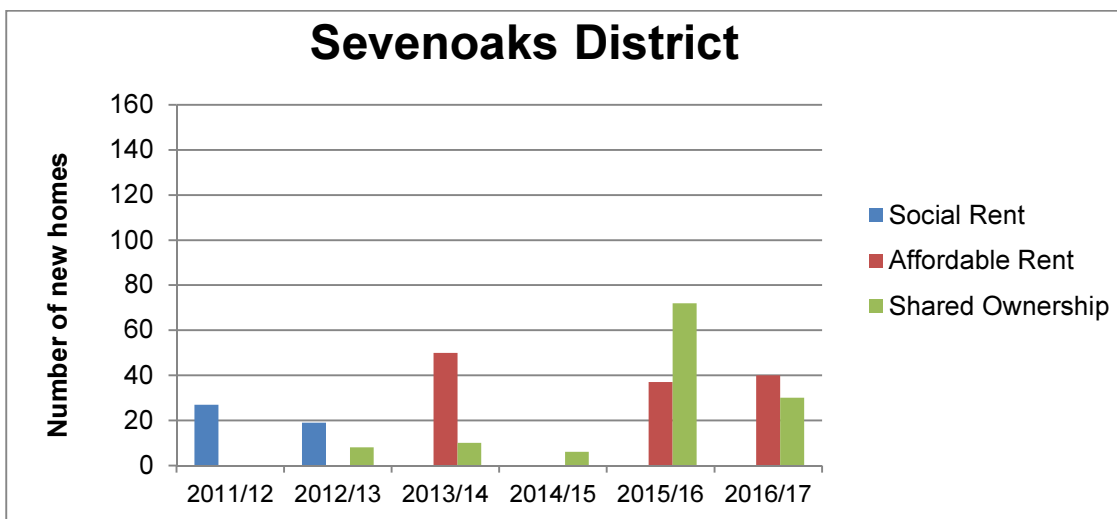
Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)

Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)  
 SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

8.2 New affordable homes developed







Source: Local Authority data (TWBC also had 4 intermediate market rent homes and 48 Extra care rented homes)

**9. Under occupation and empty homes**

	Number of households in social rented sector under-occupying	Number of homes empty for a period of more than 6 months
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	321	430
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	438	419
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	256	514

Sources: Local Authority data:  
 Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)  
 Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)  
 SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

**10. Income and Unemployment**

	Sevenoaks	Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge and Malling
Median income	£36,272	£34,644	£35,765
Unemployment level (16-34)	6.2%	5.6%	6.2%*

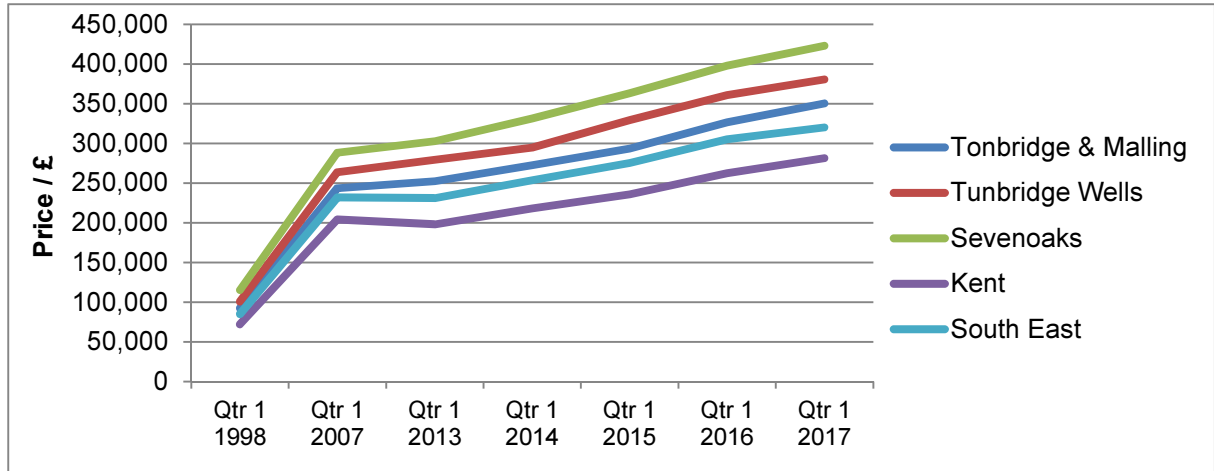
\*Average for age 16-64 (2012)  
 Source: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)  
 Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)  
 SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

**11. House prices**

	Median House Price
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	£302,000
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	£275,000
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	£260,000

Source: House prices & transactions 2016 Kent County & District authorities, taken from HM Land Registry: [http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/28354/House-prices-and-sales-2015.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/28354/House-prices-and-sales-2015.pdf)

**12. Increase in median house price (1998-2017)**



Source: House prices & transactions 2016 Kent County & District authorities, taken from HM Land Registry: [http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/28354/House-prices-and-sales-2015.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/28354/House-prices-and-sales-2015.pdf)

**13. Weekly Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (Set in 2015)**

	NW Kent	Ashford	Maidstone	Medway/ Swale	High Weald
<b>Shared rate</b>	£70.84	£67.10	£68.28	£65.66	£77.39
<b>1 bed</b>	£124.69	£119.09	£123.58	£110.67	£135.36
<b>2 bed</b>	£153.02	£145.43	£157.56	£138.08	£176.56
<b>3 bed</b>	£174.43	£168.00	£180.45	£153.02	£223.19
<b>4 bed</b>	£242.40	£223.63	£235.41	£198.11	£336.82

**14. Increase in private sector rental costs (2011-14)**

	Sevenoaks	Tonbridge and Malling*	Tunbridge Wells
<b>Increase in median private sector rent prices</b>	16%	10%	10%
<b>Inflation</b>	6%		
<b>National growth</b>	3%		

\*Figure for period: 2011-13

Source: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)  
 Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)  
 SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

**15. Growth of private rented sector**

	Housing stock: Private rented housing 2007*	Housing stock: Private rented housing 2015
Sevenoaks	6.8%	11%
Tonbridge and Malling	6%	10%
Tunbridge Wells	10.6%	17%

\*West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2011-16

**16. Distribution of income levels across populations of each local authority area**

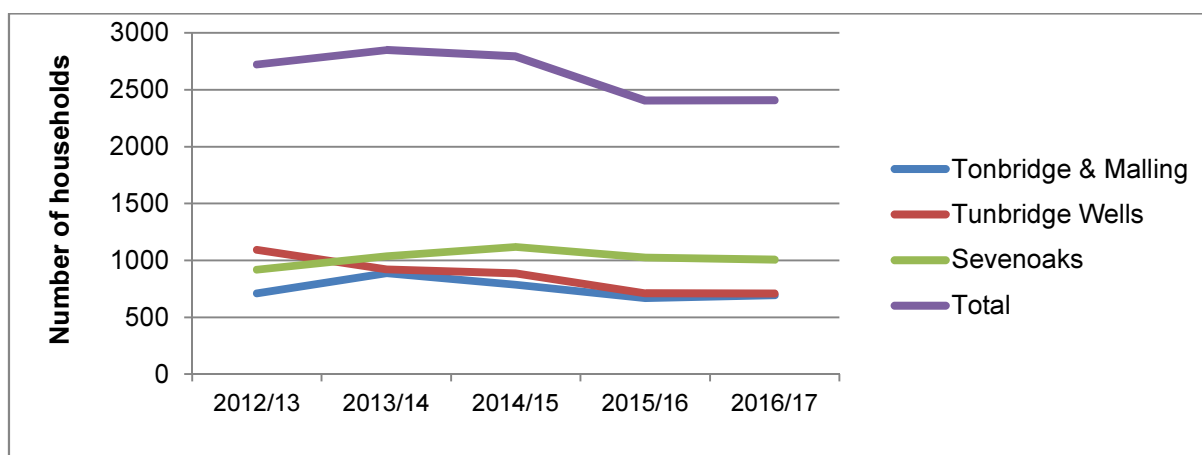
Annual household income	Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge and Malling
Below £20,000	24%	22%
£20-40,000	33%	32%

Source: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)

Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)  
SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

**17. Homelessness: Advice and support**

**17.1 Number of people approaching Council for housing advice and assistance**



Source: Local Authority data

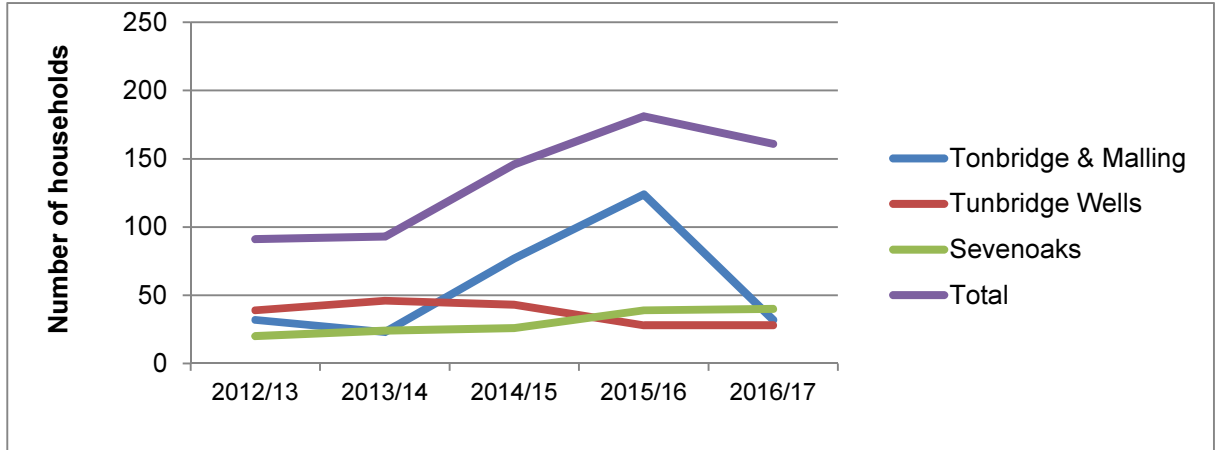
**17.2 Number of cases where homelessness was prevented**

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	202	163	209	144	120	88
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	350	313	153	168	156	241
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	244	181	334	286	220	207

<b>Total</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>536</b>
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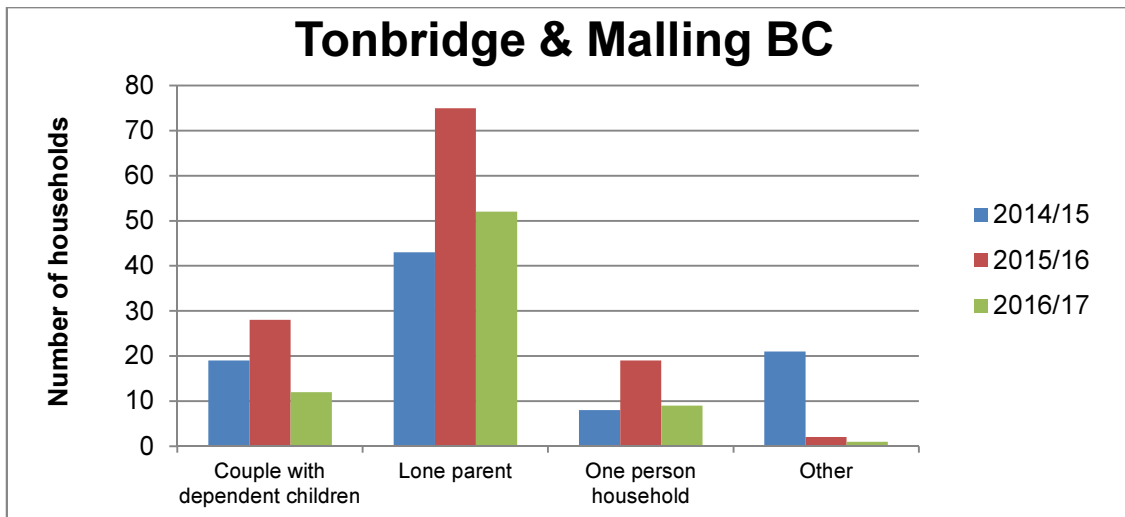
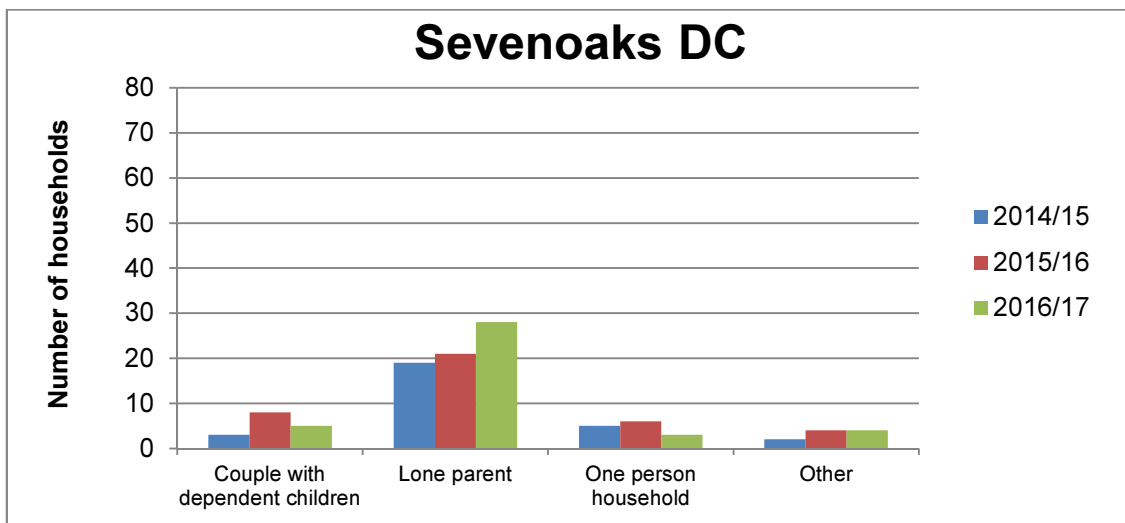
Source: Local Authority data

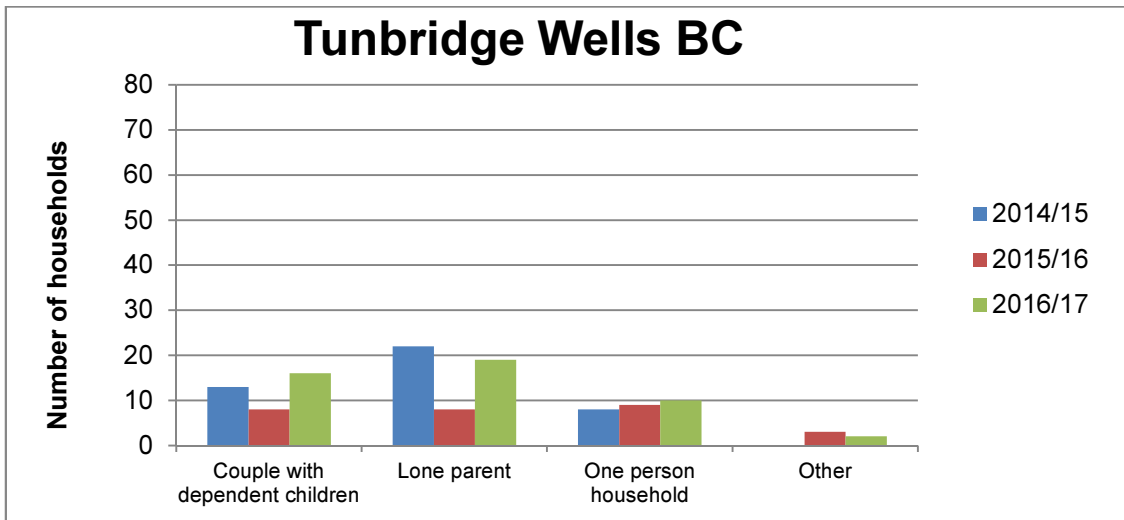
**17.3 Households accepted as homeless**



Source: Local Authority data

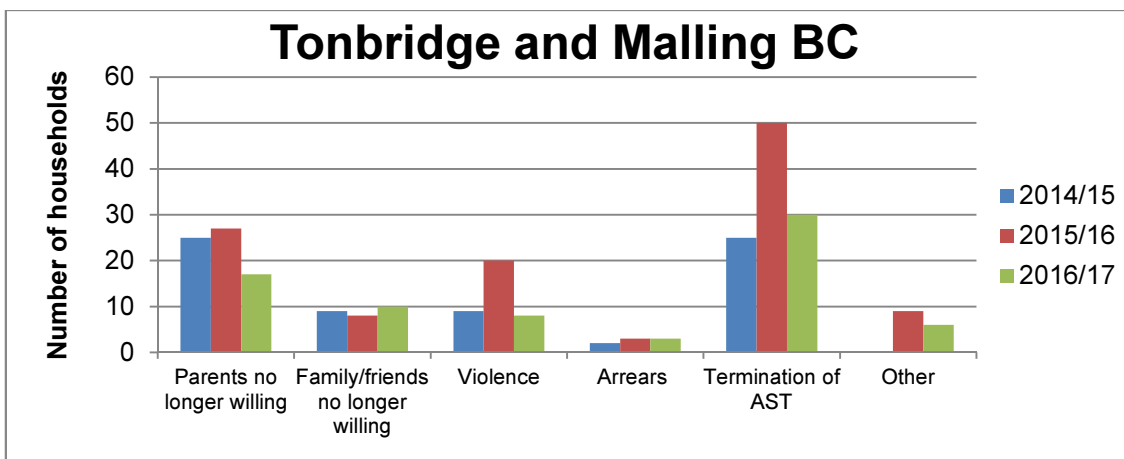
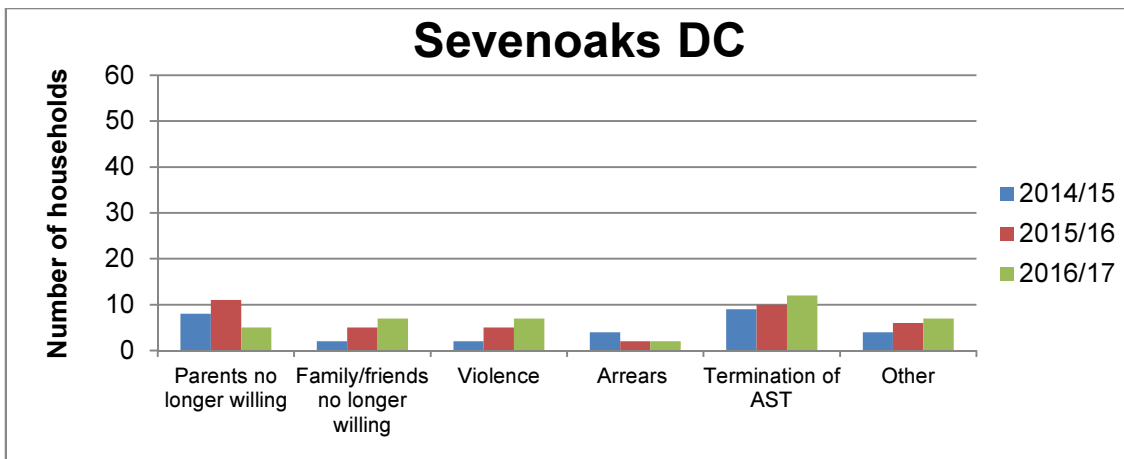
**17.4 Types of household accepted as homeless**

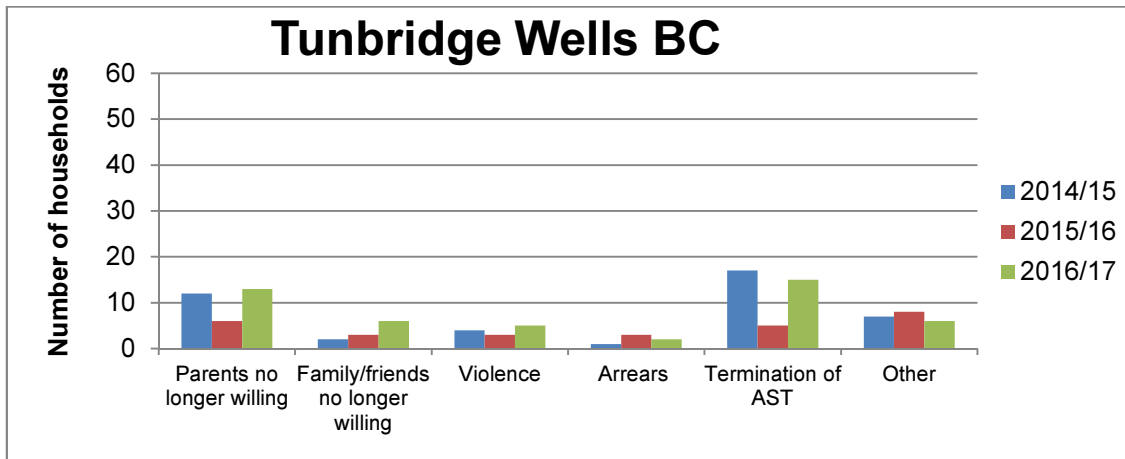




Source: Local Authority data

### 17.5 Reasons for homelessness





Source: Local Authority data

**18 Rough Sleepers**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	0	2	2	0	6	2
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	n/a	3	8	15	8	4
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	13	10	12	15	15	15
<b>Total</b>	13	15	22	30	29	21

Source: Local Authority data

**19 Housing Register**

	<b>Number on Council Housing Register on 31/03/2017</b>
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	805
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	994
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	940

Source: Local Authority data

**20 Disabled Facilities Grant**

	<b>Number of completions (2016/17)</b>	<b>Overall spend (2014/15)</b>
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	90	£629,435
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	67	£702,000
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	67	£730,000

Source: Local Authority data

**21 Excess winter deaths**

Local Authority	Number of excess winter deaths		Index of excess winter deaths	
	2012/13	2013/14	2012/13	2013/14
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	80	0	25.3	n/a
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	50	40	18.1	13.7
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	50	-10	15.6	n/a

Source: Excess winter mortality data, England and Wales, 2014/15 (provisional) and 2013/14 (final)

**22 Category 1 hazards:****Number of dwellings in private rented sector found to have 1 or more category 1 hazards after inspection (2016/17)**

<b>Sevenoaks</b>	19
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>	19
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	80

Source: Local Authority data

**23 Percentage of households in fuel poverty (2014/15)**

<b>Sevenoaks</b>	8.7%
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	7.5%
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	9.8%

Source: Local Authority data

**24 Affordability of housing products in West Kent: Assumptions used:**

- Social and affordable rent costs provided by Local Authorities (May 2016);
- Private rent costs obtained from advertised properties on Rightmove (5 May 2016);
- Shared ownership property costs from Sevenoaks District Council data and properties advertised on Help To Buy (11 May 2016);
- Market property purchase price and mortgage costs obtained from Rightmove and based on 90% repayment mortgage at 4.15% interest (5 May 2016);
- Case study household data provided by Local Authorities (May 2016).

**Further Information:**

For more detail, a comprehensive collection of the relevant data can be viewed directly within the key data sources. These include:

- 2011 Census
- Local authority data
- Mid-year Population Estimate 2014
- Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)

- Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)
- SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

It should be noted that different timescales apply to some data sets as the SHMA reports were produced for different periods, and these are indicated where applicable.



**Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy  
 Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
 Response Report**

Question 1 - Given the challenges set out in the Strategy, do you agree these are the most important areas to focus on?	Question 2 - Please provide any other comments you may have on the document.	Question 3 - name:	Question 4 - The organisation you represent (if applicable):
<p>Preventing homelessness can include Care Leavers and be highlighted a specific vulnerable group of young people;</p> <p>Local authorities have duties under the Leaving Care Act 2000 towards eligible, relevant and former relevant children and young people. All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that all such young people who meet the criteria for services as care leavers are placed in suitable accommodation when leaving care, transitioning to adulthood.</p> <p>It is recognised that there is a lack of affordable housing in the private rented sector and that social housing is also a scarce resource. In response to this, we must work with the 18+ Care Leaver Service and be committed to working in partnership as responsible District Council across Kent County to find the best solutions for Care Leavers, this may require exploring more creative options including shared accommodation where suitable and appropriate. To support this approach and raise the profile and accommodation requirements of Care leavers, the 18+ Service are working in partnership with the Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board.</p> <p>The impact of not working in partnership with care leavers will place pressure on increased youth homelessness.</p>	<p>P.25 Care Leavers and be highlighted a specific vulnerable group of young people with local demand and priority need</p>	<p>Nick Crick</p>	<p>Kent County Council;                      Specialist Children's Services</p>

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<p>Yes, particularly the availability of housing for all.</p>	<p><b>The strategy does not have any specific reference to Care Leavers which we would expect to see</b></p> <p>Local authorities have duties under the Leaving Care Act 2000 towards eligible, relevant and former relevant children and young people. All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that all such young people who meet the criteria for services as care leavers are placed in suitable accommodation when leaving care, transitioning to adulthood.</p> <p>It is recognised that there is a lack of affordable housing in the private rented sector and that social housing is also a scarce resource. In response to this, we must work with the 18+ Care Leaver Service and be committed to working in partnership as responsible District Council across Kent County to find the best solutions for Care Leavers, this may require exploring more creative options including shared accommodation where suitable and appropriate. To support this approach and raise the profile and accommodation requirements of Care leavers, the 18+ Service are working in partnership with the Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board.</p> <p>The 18+ Service is keen to support both Care leavers and housing providers to ensure that the future placements of young people is successful, to this end Care Leavers are being equipped with life skills including tenancy training, budgeting skills and understanding benefits. In addition Care leavers will not be expected to move to independent living until</p>	<p>Andrew McDonald</p>	<p>Kent County Council                      18+ Care leaver Service</p>

**Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy  
Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
Response Report**

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	<p>they are ready to so and will have their continued support of their PA up to age 21 as a minimum.</p> <p>The 18+ Service intention is to achieve successful and sustainable tenancies for Care Leavers by working jointly with the District Housing Departments.</p>		
I think the four themes are tackling the areas that will impact on homeless people and can cover the full range of activities needed.	Interesting document with good information and the use of case studies was informative and useful. Actions from the strategy appear realistic and deliverable.	Deborah White	West Kent Housing Association
Yes	<p>The proposed actions do not appear to be going to fulfil the four ambitions. There seems to be too much reliance on "managing expectations" and not enough action to provide affordable and social housing. We recognise the constraints imposed by current Government policies but the Councils need to do much more to ensure that sufficient affordable and social housing is provided. If necessary, this should include the Council itself building new Council housing. According to the SHMA, 50% of the housing need in Tunbridge Wells borough is for affordable housing and based on previous experience there is no way that relying merely on requiring a proportion of new market housing to be affordable will meet this affordable housing need. It also seems unlikely that in present conditions housing associations will be able to fill the gap through "exceptions housing".</p> <p>Over the past decade the building of affordable housing in relation to larger housing has fallen well</p>	Elizabeth Akenhead	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Kent Branch

**Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy  
Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
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	<p>short of target. We understand that the land footprint of affordable housing is at most 25% to 33% of equivalent market housing built for private sale. A substantial increase of affordable homes within the new Local Plan would therefore 'save' the land for at least twice as many houses. Within the new housing targets, raising the achievement of affordable housing would save hundreds of acres of greenfield land, thus helping to protect the countryside in a Borough where most of the countryside is in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Metropolitan Green Belt.</p>		
	<p>West Kent Homelessness and Housing Strategy 2016-21 Consultation: Response by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum</p> <p>Introduction and conclusions</p> <p>Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of 50,000 residents in the unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells. It takes an interest in the provision of housing for all sectors of the local population.</p> <p>We welcome the consultation report as an extremely well researched and clearly expressed exposition of the serious and growing problems of homelessness and affordability across the three Boroughs. We similarly welcome its proposed vision to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes for purchase and rent while reducing homelessness and</p>	M Booker	Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

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 Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
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	<p>contributing to building the West Kent economy. We also support the four ambitions identified in Section 5 of the report.</p> <p>However, the situation concerning homelessness and affordability which it so carefully describes unfortunately appears to us to flow directly from the cumulative effects of nearly 40 years of central government policies under successive administrations. The deficit of affordable housing in our town gives cause for serious concern and is liable in the medium term to lead to growing social unrest unless central government allows or adopts radically different policies towards social housing.</p> <p>It is admirable to seek to build resilience and to encourage the communities most affected by present policies to support each other. We support many aspects of the Sherwood Partnership as an example of what can be successfully achieved. However, we do not share the perhaps despairing hope expressed in the report that such initiatives will have more than a marginal impact in finding overall solutions to local affordable housing problems.. To tackle the identified affordable housing need of 341 units per annum for Tunbridge Wells Borough will require quite other solutions. We are deeply concerned that the present situation will only worsen and are sympathetic to the difficulties facing TWBC and its two neighbouring authorities in seeking to avoid this happening. We would therefore strongly encourage the three authorities to militate for political changes which</p>		

**Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy  
 Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
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	<p>might present them with more effective tools to tackle their problems, which are also our problems because the homeless and inadequately housed are all part of one local community.</p> <p>In February 2017 we published a vision statement for the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells intended to inform the then forthcoming consultation on Issues and Options under the 2013-33 Local Plan development. In it we expressed serious concerns over the present housing mix and the issue of affordability. Inter alia we stated the following:</p> <p>“While the clear need is for Affordable Housing (not least for key public sector employees) the SHMA expects the private market to cater for most future housing need. However the cost of open-market housing makes it likely that there will be an overall deficit in meeting the affordable housing need. Sharp increases in house prices in London may make Tunbridge Wells still more attractive to buyers from outside the Borough, many of whom would continue to travel daily to jobs elsewhere. Seeking to achieve a better balance between identified need and overall supply should underpin the Borough Council’s policy, within the constraints imposed at a national level.</p> <p>Currently, land values in the Borough push house prices well beyond the purchase ability of many residents. The SHMA finds gross affordable housing need is more than 50% of housing need in the</p>		

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	<p>Borough. The present definition of `affordable` housing means that the element required at present (35% on developments of more than 10 dwellings) is out of reach for many. In practice on many developments where high land prices have been paid, a lower figure for affordable housing is negotiated on grounds of what the developer can afford. There are elements of a vicious circle here, and we see ensuring an adequate supply of housing at genuinely affordable prices as a key issue, and strict application of planning policies as a way to reduce land prices.”</p> <p>We believe that the otherwise hopeless seeming situation might be attenuated by a more vigorous exploration by the three Authorities of the possibility of establishing an arm’s length development company to build and rent out affordable housing units in the area, as is being contemplated in Medway. This might first make use of any suitable surplus land already in public ownership, but might also look at judicious use of compulsory purchase powers.</p> <p>Other specific comment</p> <p>Affordability</p> <p>The present concept of “affordability” is little short of farcical in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Household incomes of some £58,000pa and a deposit of some £67,000 will not be available to the overwhelming majority of the 341 households per annum stated to</p>		

**Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy  
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	<p>be in need of affordable housing in RTW. So, home purchase of any kind, even under government schemes, will not be an option for them.</p> <p>If no two bedroom properties are available for commercial rent within the Local Housing Allowance cap of £765 per month, then a significant majority of the same demographic will never be able to rent privately in the area either.</p> <p>Even the concept of an “affordable” rent in national terms has no meaning in Royal Tunbridge Wells where a rent of 80% of a typical market rent cannot seriously be considered to be “affordable” within the normal meaning of that word.</p> <p>So far as social housing is concerned it is no solution to suggest that replacement homes might be provided outside the area: The Town Forum has previously pointed out that the crisis of traffic congestion and on street parking in our town is being exacerbated by the numbers of essential but low wage employees already being forced to come in from far away because no actually affordable housing is available to them.</p> <p>Additional measures to tackle homelessness and the housing shortage</p> <p>If the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy is locally the principal cause of homelessness, as is</p>		



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 Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
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	<p>stated in the report, the three authorities should vigorously campaign for changes to the law to increase the length of such tenancies at least to the three years common in continental countries. With two thirds of homeless households stated to include children, for whom homelessness (and even the recurring threat of it) is a particularly frightening experience, such changes in the law could have a significant positive impact.</p> <p>We welcome the “No use empty” scheme to bring back into occupation or convert for occupation space which is lying empty within existing properties. While we are aware that the nearly 1000 vacant residential properties at any one time in Tunbridge Wells Borough do not, for a variety of reasons, constitute an available additional housing pool and still less an affordable housing pool, there may be some further measures available to local authorities to render it unprofitable for properties to be left unoccupied for long periods of time.</p> <p>The largest identified need of those on the housing register in Tunbridge Wells Borough (430 out of 994) is for one bedroom accommodation. A significant number of large properties currently in multiple occupation providing this kind of accommodation have recently been coming onto the market described in such terms as “would make a superb family home”. The authorities should explore how the planning system may be used to prevent changes of use in such circumstances. If the present planning system is</p>		

**Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy  
 Consultation 16 June to 28 July 2017  
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Question 1 - Given the challenges set out in the Strategy, do you agree these are the most important areas to focus on?	Question 2 - Please provide any other comments you may have on the document.	Question 3 - name:	Question 4 - The organisation you represent (if applicable):
	<p>incapable of doing so, the authorities might usefully militate for change at a national level, as conversions to single occupation will be appreciably worsening an already unacceptable situation.</p> <p>To provide new 1 or 2 bedroom accommodation, it might help if TWBC and Town and Country Housing Association were to work with companies such as Grainger and Watkin Jones on build to rent schemes. These are specialist builders of properties designed for young people, singles and couples that use space efficiently and provide facilities that young couples want and can afford. Such companies have been very successful nationwide and are able to borrow cheaply. Substantial areas for new build across the Boroughs should therefore be designated for 1/ 2 bedroom flats and not houses, which use up around 75% more space.</p> <p>Assistance with down-sizing</p> <p>There is a wide range of elderly people who need advice, and sometimes transitional financial help, to down-size into more suitable accommodation (independent or sheltered/extra care) thus releasing typically 3 bedroom homes for family occupation. This applies both to public and market housing and we believe consideration could usefully be given to creation of a publicly funded service to enable the elderly to move. This is a huge and difficult decision and needs more knowhow and energy than many have</p>		

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	at the time they move, when there may be no other family members nearby to help.		

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## EqIA – for DECISIONS

<b>Summary of decision to be made:</b>	Draft West Kent Joint Housing & Homelessness Strategy		
<b>Lead Officer (job title):</b>	Lesley Bowles, Chief Officer Communities & Business		
<b>Date the final decision is due to be made:</b>	13/07/2017	<b>Date this assessment commenced:</b>	11/05/2017
<b>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty?</b>			Yes
Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation			No
Advance equality of opportunity			Yes
Foster good relations			No
If the answer is yes to any of the above, proceed with the assessment. If the answer is no, please say why and summarise any evidence:			
For each of the following characteristics, summarise any existing data, consultation activity, interpretation of the impacts and actions that can be taken to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts:			
<b>Characteristic:</b>	<b>Data and consultation</b>	<b>Summary of impact</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Disability	West Kent Joint Housing & Homelessness Strategy	Provides assistance for vulnerable residents to remain in their homes.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Carers	As above	Provides assistance to those residents who are caring for relatives.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Race	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their race.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Gender	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their gender.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Age	As above	Provides assistance to residents, ensuring appropriate access and support for older residents and those with dementia.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Religion / Belief	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their religion/belief.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>

**EqIA – for DECISIONS**

Sexual Orientation	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their sexual orientation.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Pregnancy / Maternity	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their pregnancy/maternity status.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Marital or Civil Partnership Status	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their marital/Civil Partnership status.	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
Gender reassignment	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of gender reassignment	WKEP Aim: <a href="#">Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services</a>
<b>Summary of impacts :</b> (to be included in committee reports)	Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The decisions recommended through this paper will assist all residents at risk of homelessness.		
Please tick the outcome of this assessment:	<input type="checkbox"/> <del>No impact</del>	<input type="checkbox"/> <del>Adjust the policy</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Continue the policy</b>
Date assessment will be reviewed:	11/05/2018		

**Item 8 -Affordable Housing Company**

The attached report was considered by the Legal & Democratic Advisory Committee on 17 October 2017. The relevant Minute extract was not available prior to the printing of this agenda and will follow when available.

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**AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMPANY**

**Cabinet - 9 November 2017**

Report of	Chief Officer Corporate Services and Chief Officer Communities & Business
Status	For Decision
Also considered by	Legal and Democratic Services Committee - 17 October 2017 Council - 21 November 2017
Key Decision	No

**Executive Summary:** This report seeks authority to progress the proposal to set up an Affordable Housing Company. It sets out the need for such a company, explains the requirement for a sound business case to be developed and the likely company structure should a sound business case be proved.

**Portfolio Holders** Cllr Anna Firth and Cllr Michelle Lowe

**Contact Officers** Martin Goodman, Ext. 7245 and Lesley Bowles, Ext. 7335

**Recommendation to Legal and Democratic Services Advisory Committee:** To note and make any comments on the recommendations to Cabinet

**Recommendations to Cabinet:** That it be recommended to Council that

- (a) it is noted that expert external advice to develop a comprehensive business case to deliver Members ambition for the Council to develop its own affordable housing within the District has been commissioned;
- (b) subject to a sound business case being established, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services is authorised to incorporate a standalone Affordable Housing Company first taking detailed advice and assistance from specialist external lawyers on the delivery model and set-up process;
- (c) the broad governance and funding arrangements set out in this report are noted;
- (d) delegated authority be given to the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Housing & Health and Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services to settle the detailed arrangements for the establishment of the company; and
- (e) in the event that a sound business case to deliver affordable housing through

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an affordable housing company cannot be established Officers report back to Members setting out further options to deliver on Members ambition to develop its own affordable housing within the District.

**Recommendations to Council:** That

- (a) it is noted that expert external advice to develop a comprehensive business case to deliver Members ambition for the Council to develop its own affordable housing within the District has been commissioned;
- (b) subject to a sound business case being established, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to incorporate a standalone Affordable Housing Company first taking detailed advice and assistance from specialist external lawyers on the delivery model and set-up process;
- (c) the broad governance and funding arrangements set out in this report are approved;
- (d) delegated authority is given to the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Housing & Health and Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services to settle the detailed arrangements for the establishment of the company; and
- (e) in the event that a sound business case to deliver affordable housing through an affordable housing company cannot be established Officers report back to Members setting out further options to deliver on Members ambition to develop its own affordable housing within the District.

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**Reason for recommendations:** To authorise that Officers pursue Members' ambition for the Council to develop its own affordable housing within the District through an Affordable Housing Company.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1 Members have expressed an ambition for the Council to develop its own affordable housing. As Members will be aware the Council transferred its social housing stock to West Kent Housing Association in 1989 and since that date has not had its own housing revenue account. This means that the Council is not in a position to provide affordable housing or act as a social landlord in its own right.
- 2 As this is not an option open to the Council, Members have expressed a desire to incorporate its own company for the purpose of providing affordable housing within the District.

### Affordable housing

- 3 Affordable housing can be defined as the housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance. Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing.
- 4 Social rented housing is that provided by West Kent Housing resulting from the stock transfer from this Council. Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private Registered Providers of social housing to households who are eligible for Social Rented housing. Affordable rented housing is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- 5 Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.
- 6 The Council's recent Local Housing Needs Study (May 2017) demonstrated that there is an "annual net imbalance of 604 affordable dwellings across Sevenoaks" district. This means that when the current level of affordable housing units being provided across the District is taken into account to meet the needs of current and future residents an extra 604 affordable homes need to be provided each year to 2021.
- 7 The Local Housing Needs Study also tells us that the greatest need is for one and two bedroom homes and the areas with the greatest need in the District (measured by number of affordable homes required) are 'Sevenoaks urban area and surrounds' and North East, which covers Ash and New Ash Green, Farningham, Horton Kirby and South Darenth, Fawkham and West Kingsdown and Hartley and Hodsoll Street.
- 8 A potential funding source for the Company, and an assumption used within this report, is section 106 (S106) funding. These are financial contributions sought from developers towards the costs of providing community and social infrastructure, the need for which has arisen as a result of a new development taking place.
- 9 The Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (Policy SP3) includes a set of approved criteria for the spending of affordable housing planning gains (S106 funding) and amongst other things this includes provision of new affordable housing in the District normally via a Registered Provider of social housing. This would include including adding to provision on development sites, new stand-alone schemes and existing property purchase.
- 10 Whilst the building costs of new affordable homes would be an appropriate and lawful use of the S106 funds the ongoing management costs of the affordable housing company and its set-up costs would be required to be found from elsewhere.

## Agenda Item 8

- 11 As at 30 August 2017 the District Council had £3.6m of unallocated S106 contributions. It is noted that there will be alternative proposed uses for that money and the opportunity cost of choosing to grant money to the affordable housing company over progressing other opportunities would need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Appendix A provides an overview of the current position of S106 funding and examples of projects previously funded.
- 12 Members should also be aware that there is some risk that a right to buy could apply to any affordable housing provided through the Company. This would be dependent on the type of housing provided and other factors that will be explored by seeking further specialist advice. This will be incorporated in the determination of governance structures for the Company and the implications considered further through the business planning process.

### **Affordable Housing Company**

- 13 Officers' work to date has been focussed on the feasibility of incorporating an affordable housing company, how that could be structured and therefore whether it would be a route the Council could pursue. Professional, expert advice has been sought to assist this process.
- 14 It is concluded that the Council can incorporate its own affordable housing company and that this could be a subsidiary of the Council's existing trading company, through a holding company (to sit between the Council and the Affordable Housing Company) or as a 'standalone' company separate to Quercus 7.
- 15 The Council has been advised that the most suitable model would be to set up a 'standalone' company. This could be most cost-effectively set up following the model of Quercus 7, including the appointment of the same Trading Board, Board of Directors and Secretary and follow the structures, policies and systems Quercus 7 has established.
- 16 There is no legal reason why the same people could not be directors of both Quercus 7 and the Affordable Housing Company, or why they could not be entirely different. As with Quercus 7 Council staff will cost the newly-incorporated company a recharge based upon officer time. Non-executive Directors, even if the Affordable Housing Company uses the same as those paid by Quercus 7, would be paid a further fee.
- 17 The Affordable Housing Company would be established as a company limited by guarantee and is likely to be classified as a 'body governed by public law' and therefore subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Members should be aware that other options exist and it could be established in a different corporate form such as a company limited by shares or a community benefit society if considered preferable. The wider governance of the company is an issue upon which guidance is required from experts, given the sensitivities surrounding the use of public funds and regulations surrounding State Aid.

- 18 The Council would be the sole shareholder of the Affordable Housing Company as it is with Quercus 7. The shareholding in the Affordable Housing Company would be entirely separate to the shareholding in Quercus 7.

### **Shareholder agreement**

- 19 The Affordable Housing Company would require a Shareholder Agreement with the Council, a grant agreement (in respect of section 106 funding to be used as working capital) and Articles of Association which would be different in character to those for Quercus 7.
- 20 As the grant of section 106 funding is likely to amount to State Aid it is necessary for the grant arrangements between the Council and the Company to be correctly structured so that a relevant exemption from the requirement to notify the European Commission of the existence of State Aid is met.
- 21 Making the section 106 funding available for the provision of affordable housing is likely to render it in accordance with the State Aid exemption of Services in the General Economic Interest. This exemption applies where an economic activity delivers ‘outcomes in the overall public good’ that would not be supplied by the market without public intervention, or would be supplied under different conditions as to affordability. The scope of this exemption includes social housing.
- 22 As with Quercus 7, the primary purpose of the necessary shareholder agreement would be to regulate the relationship between the Council and its Company. Ordinarily, other than where reserved to the shareholder, a company’s Board of Directors is free to act as it thinks is in the best interests of that company. The shareholder agreement would include instructions on those actions.
- 23 The proposal in this report is that the broad governance and funding arrangements set out above be approved and officers in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders be given delegated authority to settle the detailed arrangements. This would extend to the naming of the company and to the exact constitution of the Board of Directors.

### **Business Case**

- 24 It has been established that the creation of an Affordable Housing Company is feasible and there is a broad understanding of the sound reasons for seeking to develop affordable housing in the District to contribute to meeting local housing need as established through the Councils Local Housing Needs Study.
- 25 However, as with Quercus 7, it is essential that a full business case is developed to ensure that the company can deliver on its main objective in an effective and sustainable manner without detriment to the Council and its unique, self-sufficient, financial position.

## Agenda Item 8

- 26 Officers have undertaken a risk assessment of the proposals within this report which is documented within the Key Implications below.
- 27 Delivering affordable housing units would yield significant social benefits. However through the business case process it is essential that it is understood how those affordable units could be managed successfully with no access to revenue funding from S106 contributions. Accurate financial modelling and scenario testing is required to understand in detail likely rental incomes, potential default rates, maintenance and management costs and how these could be met from the ongoing activity of the affordable housing company.
- 28 It is for these reasons that detailed consideration of the business case is a pre-requisite for the incorporation of the Company. Members are reminded that Quercus 7 was set up pursuant to a business case as set out in reports.
- 29 It is Officers' view that specialist external advice will be required to enable the business case to be developed. The Council does not hold its own expertise in the provision and management of affordable housing. A bid has been made to the Local Government Association for funding and the provision of an appropriately skilled and experienced adviser. If this bid is unsuccessful the required budget to develop the business case will be met from existing budgets.
- 30 It is intended that the business case will be completed by 30 November 2017, and if found to be sound, an affordable housing company would be set up by 31 December 2017.

### **Other Options Considered and/or Rejected**

- 31 Retaining the S106 funding and seeking to secure affordable housing through an existing provider. This has been rejected as current experience shows market failure in the provision of sufficient affordable housing units across the District.
- 32 Seeking to provide housing within the General Fund without using a corporate vehicle or establishing a separate charitable vehicle wholly owned by the Council. These have been rejected as less effective models to achieve the Council's ambition.
- 33 Endeavouring to provide affordable and market rate housing using Quercus 7 while seeking to retain the benefits of an organisation with a commercial character. This adversely affects the Quercus 7 business model and is unlikely to be met with approval by the Trading Board.

## Key Implications

### Financial

Financial implications are set out throughout this report. Specialist external advice and the costs to set up the company will be met from within existing budgets. For the avoidance of doubt this includes the creation and analysis of a business case.

Once in operation it will be necessary for the new Affordable Housing Company to pay the Council for the use of its resources (including officers) and to pay the non-executive directors. These costs would need to be met through the trading activities of the Company.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Legal implications are set out throughout this report.

Risk Assessment Statement. The following risks have been assessed with the knowledge and detail available to the Council at the time of writing this report. The risk assessment will be reviewed and reassessed through the business planning process.

Risks are scored from 1 (a low impact / likelihood) to 5 (a high impact / likelihood)

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likeli- hood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Comments and controls</b>
Failure to set up a company in strict compliance with legislation	1	4	4 Low	Extensive consultation with other authorities and appropriate external advice on governance arrangements
Acting ultra vires	1	2	2 Low	Every new activity via the company to consider statutory obligations
Failure to comply with taxation laws - corporation tax & VAT	2	3	6 Medium	External advice sought in relation to taxation
Possibility of challenge to state aid	1	2	2 Low	Obtain full cost recovery and any loan given to the Company to be set at commercial lending rates, subject to expert advice

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<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Comments and controls</b>
Available funding to incorporate an affordable housing company	2	3	6 Medium	Report to Members requests approval of a budget to enable the company to be incorporated
Available expertise to incorporate an affordable housing company	3	4	12 Medium	Plans in place to procure the expert advice required to incorporate the company
Availability of land to enable the construction of affordable housing	4	4	16 High	The Council has limited land in its ownership for the delivery of affordable housing. Business case proposed to evaluate maximising potential of existing sites.
Availability of finance to invest in the construction of affordable housing	4	4	16 High	Current assumptions are limited to the use of S106 contributions to enable affordable housing development. Business case proposed to assess financial sources and implications.
Inability to meet revenue costs of managing affordable housing from trading activity	4	4	16 High	Providing affordable housing is not a profit making activity and the Council does not have in-house expertise to manage housing stock. Business case proposed to assess and evaluate costs and models of management.
Failure to deliver community benefit from the trading activities	2	2	4 Low	The provision of affordable housing in the District will address a proven need and benefit low income families seeking to live in the District.
Adverse impact on the local housing market	2	2	4 Low	Current projections of housing delivery not expected to have a detrimental impact on the local housing market



### Equality Assessment

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.

### **Conclusions**

Members have expressed an ambition for the Council to develop its own affordable housing through a Company, which is wholly owned by this Council.

Initial work by Officers concluded that the Council can incorporate its own affordable housing company and this would most suitably structured as a 'standalone' organisation, unrelated to the activities of Quercus 7.

The Local Housing Needs Study tell us that there is a need for more affordable homes in the District and the incorporation of a Company would provide an opportunity to access S106 contributions in order to deliver affordable housing in the District.

It is proposed that business case will be developed and completed by 30 November 2017, and if found to be sound, an affordable housing company would be set up by 31 December 2017.

**Appendices**                      Appendix A - Information on S106 funding

**Background Papers**        Local Housing Needs Study

[www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/945/local\\_housing\\_needs\\_study\\_may\\_2017](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/945/local_housing_needs_study_may_2017)

**Jim Carrington-West**  
**Chief Officer Corporate Services**

**Lesley Bowles**  
**Chief Officer Communities & Business**

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## APPENDIX A

This appendix sets out the District Council's policy and procedures relating to the funding of housing projects via Section 106 affordable housing planning gains.

The appendix also provides Members with a list of example projects which have been funded in recent years and sets out the District Council's planned review of future funding priorities in light of recent changes to national Planning Practice Guidance.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 Adopted back in 2011, the District Council's Policy SP3 (Provision of Affordable Housing) of the Core Strategy requires that financial contributions must be paid on residential developments with fewer than five dwellings and that involve a net gain in the number of units on site.
- 2 A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Affordable Housing was subsequently produced and this sets out how Policy SP3 should be implemented. Included in the Affordable Housing SPD is an agreed formula (equivalent of 10% affordable housing provision off-site) to be used when determining the level of funding to be paid on qualifying developments.
- 3 The Affordable Housing SPD also includes a set of approved criteria for the spending of affordable housing planning gains and these are, as follows:
  - Provision of new affordable housing in the District via a Registered Provider of social housing (including adding to provision on development sites, new stand-alone schemes and existing property purchase);
  - Initiatives to make better use of the existing stock (including tackling under-occupation and fuel poverty where it enables better use to be made of the housing stock);
  - Managing future needs for affordable housing, including homelessness prevention and benefit advisory services;
  - Assisting those in housing need to access low-cost home ownership; and
  - Supporting the development of rural exception sites to meet rural housing needs.
- 4 In 2016, Government amended its Planning Practice Guidance to include a standard threshold of ten units before any affordable housing contributions could be sought (excluding developments exceeding 1,000sqm gross floor space or if situated in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- 5 This change in policy was originally challenged by a number of local authorities but upheld at the Court of Appeal. As a result, Government has once again adopted the affordable housing threshold within its Planning Practice Guidance and this is now a material consideration that the District

## Agenda Item 8

Council must have regard to when determining future planning applications in the District.

- 6 As a consequence, the District Council will no longer be able to require financial developer contributions on housing developments of ten units or under and future Section 106 affordable housing financial contributions on smaller sites will be greatly reduced.

### Investment to date

- 7 In the three completed financial years since 2014/15 and the monies received to 30 August this year, the District Council has received a total of £4.802m and spent a total of £1.594m. In addition, a further £0.135m has been allocated for projects already agreed but not yet implemented. As at 30/08/17, the District Council had £3.6m which remains unallocated.

Year	Money received (£000)	Year	Actual spend (£000)
2014/15	724	2014/15	1,197
2015/16	654	2015/16	107
2016/17	2,561	2016/17	282
2017/18 (as at 30/08/17)	863	2017/18 (as at 30/08/17)	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,802</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,594</b>

Note: The District Council must spend affordable housing planning contributions within 10-years of being received.

- 8 The projects set out on the following pages were funded through S106 affordable housing contributions and have, in the main, required no new development.

Initiative	Outcome
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Initiative	Outcome
<p>‘A Home of Your Own’ - a bespoke shared-ownership housing scheme which enabled qualifying households to buy a share in a property on the open market</p>	<p>Through an investment of £927k, the District Council secured a further £1.39m external funding for the District and this enabled 19 households to purchase a share in an existing open market property. Priority was given to those in social housing and, in doing so, the District Council was able to free-up other affordable housing for households in need. As and when households staircase up, the District Council will also receive its share of the original investment along with any uplift to be reinvested in other projects.</p>
<p>Part-funding of ‘Small is Beautiful’ scheme and a dedicated under-occupation officer</p>	<p>As per nationally, there is a high level of under-occupation in the District’s social housing stock and also a high level of overcrowding. This initiative is aimed at better matching households to housing through financial incentives and a wide-range of support services. In doing so, there is less pressure on the local housing register, fewer DFG requirements and a wide-range of other positive health outcomes which particularly relate to older people. In addition, the initiative has helped those affected by the national Spare Room Subsidy (commonly referred to in the media as the ‘Bedroom Tax’).</p>
<p>Improvement works to Sevenoaks Almshouse Charity housing stock and the creation of an additional dwelling for older people</p>	<p>Essential improvement works were funded by the District Council and this prevented the charity from having to sell some of its stock to fund the works. Additional funding also enabled the charity to create an additional apartment in the Sevenoaks Town for local older people. This project has helped to preserve much-needed affordable housing for older people in Sevenoaks.</p>
<p>Improvement works to Margaret Hyde Almshouses Charity housing stock</p>	<p>Again, essential improvement works were required to bring units up to the Decent Homes Standard and to also install a more effective sewage treatment plant to help bring operating costs down. In doing so, the charity is now in a much better position to become self-sufficient and there is no risk of loss of this valuable affordable housing stock for local older people. The District Council has also, as a direct result, explored additional affordable housing development with the charity.</p>

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Initiative	Outcome
Private sector housing initiatives	These were funded with three key aims in mind - they being to improve standards in the private rented housing stock; to encourage private landlords to accept low-income and welfare-reliant households; and to support private tenants into the sector and to sustain tenancies. In doing so, there has been less consequent pressure on the District's limited social housing stock and new development.
Energy efficiency and fuel poverty measures	These were funded in order to provide more affordable private sector housing through reduced outgoings and to enable tenants to maintain tenancies with less consequent pressure on social housing. There are also wide-ranging benefits related to health and welfare with these initiatives and particularly for older people (excess winter mortality amongst older people being a key local issue, for instance).
Local housing needs study to evidence need across the District	In recent years, the District Council has had to make use of secondary data which has been often less than reliable. In order to properly strategise and prioritise future S106 funding, the study provides the evidence required. It will also enable the District Council to negotiate maximum affordable housing contributions on private developments and achieve additional housing and/or housing which better matches need into the future. This study is also a key evidence base for the District Council's new Housing Strategy and its Local Plan review.
Part-rebuild part-refurb of a supported housing facility for adults with learning disabilities at Cedar Court, Edenbridge	With project costs totalling just over £1m, the housing association was £100k short of its target. With a risk of the facility being lost to the open market, the District Council contributed £100k towards project costs and this has enabled a new scheme to be completed and with nine self-contained units. The District Council also secured additional external funding as a result and this has been used to purchase a wide-range of equipment to improve life skills for new tenants of the scheme. The scheme has also been designed to allow for a change of client groups in the future, should it be required - so this is a good long-term investment.

Initiative	Outcome
Part-funding an independent rural housing enabler	The District Council part-funds this county-wide post in order to secure independent rural housing needs surveys across the District’s rural areas. In doing so, the District Council can work with parish councils and local communities to develop affordable housing specifically for those with a local connection to the respective village. This not-for-profit organisation is a key partner of the District Council and significantly valuable in its work to deliver rural housing strategy.

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**Item 9 - Annual Review of Parking Charges for 2018-19**

The attached report was considered by the Direct & Trading Advisory Committee on 2 November 2017. The relevant Minute extract was not available prior to the printing of this agenda and will follow when available.

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**ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES FOR 2018-19**

**Cabinet - 9 November 2017**

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For recommendation to Cabinet

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 2 November 2017

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:**

This report is the annual review of parking charges for 2018-19.

It proposes for consultation a simpler tariff in the Council's car parks and a reduction in the hours during which fees are payable.

Helping manage and regulate parking supports the economic vibrancy and viability of Sevenoaks and improves the lives of residents.

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**This report supports the Key Aims of:**

Providing value for money, and supporting and developing the local economy.

**Portfolio Holder** Councillor Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer** John Strachan x7310

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**Recommendation to Direct & Trading Advisory Committee:** That the revised car park management proposals for 2018-19 be considered by the Committee, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet, prior to consultation.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:** That the revised car park management proposals for 2018-19 along with any proposals submitted by the Direct & Trading Advisory be considered and approved for consultation.

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**Reason for recommendation:** To help regulate and manage the use of on and off street parking facilities in the District; to ensure car parking charges are set to support a sustainable local economy; and, to support services for residents as set out in the approved 10 year budget.

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### Introduction

- 1 This report considers the setting of parking charges in the Council's car parks and the fees for on-street parking between April 2018 and March 2019 inclusive. It proposes scrapping the evening charge currently in place in Sevenoaks town centre and reducing the hours during which charges apply.
- 2 This proposal follows a package of successful parking measures implemented over the past few years which have seen Members:
  - freezing the majority of charges in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham;
  - freezing Season Tickets, Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits;
  - protecting the three hours free parking at Darent;
  - improving Sunday enforcement;
  - introducing warning notices to national acclaim;
  - introducing dropped kerb enforcement;
  - introducing Safer School Parking Zones;
  - introducing a simple pound per hour structure;
  - extending and maintaining free all day weekend parking in the SDC staff car park in Gordon Road;
  - allowing customers to stay longer at Buckhurst 1, South Park and Suffolk Way;
  - allowing greater choice in Blighs;
  - increasing capacity; and,
  - maintaining over a thousand complimentary spaces on Sundays.

### Background

- 3 The Council operates a number of public car parks and on street pay and display facilities in towns and villages in the District. It is important to regulate these finite resources in order to balance the needs of parking users, including: commuters, local businesses, residents, shoppers and other visitors including tourists.
- 4 The Council's approach has been to ensure our parking charges are set to encourage people to visit our towns while at the same time promoting a good turnover of parking spaces for the benefit of businesses and visitors. Parking charges are one aspect of effective parking management however others - such as hours of operation and maximum stay periods - are also kept under review.
- 5 This has resulted in high use of the Council's car parks and on-street parking spaces, benefitting retailers. Past studies by the Local Data Company concluded that Sevenoaks town has one of the healthiest high streets in the country with the fewest number of empty shops for a town of its size. Indeed the Sevenoaks Economic Needs Study (ENS), conducted by Turley Economics and noted as part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan by the Planning Advisory Committee on 22 September 2016, stated that Sevenoaks enjoys a vacancy rate of 6.72% which is believed to comprise

those properties which are empty through natural turnover in tenants. This compared favourably with the national average of 11.2%. The Council's approach to parking management - focusing on turnover, efficient management of a limited resource, affordability and customer satisfaction - has undoubtedly contributed to this success.

- 6 In addition to operational costs such as non-domestic rates, insurance, general maintenance, utilities, enforcement and security, it is important to re-invest in the Council's car parks to ensure these assets remain welcoming, safe and fit for purpose. Recent improvements have included installing new safety barriers, increasing capacity, resurfacing, renewing drainage, and upgrading lighting. The Council will also be developing a much needed multi decked car park on the Buckhurst 2 car park in 2018.

### **Supporting Documents**

- 7 Appendix A provides information on the current parking charges in neighbouring towns and Southeastern car parks. In considering Appendix A, it is helpful to note that the aforementioned ENS concluded 20% of the market conducted its main comparison shop in Tunbridge Wells, which lies 11 miles to the south of Sevenoaks. Tunbridge Wells had a town-centre vacancy rate of 13% and higher average parking charges than Sevenoaks. At 12% Bluewater was assessed as receiving considerably less business from residents of the Sevenoaks District than Tunbridge Wells, despite being the second most popular shopping centre in the UK, offering a wider mix of retailers and choice of comparison goods, and having free parking.
- 8 Appendix B presents existing parking charges alongside the proposed charges.

### **Sevenoaks Car Parks**

- 9 Sevenoaks town remains a thriving shopping centre, containing many popular high street shops, eateries, boutiques and speciality stores, as well as the popular Stag Theatre. The town has a busy daytime, evening and weekend economy, supported by the car parks and on-street parking amenities.
- 10 There is daily pressure on parking spaces, both on and off-street, particularly in Blighs car park which frequently reaches capacity.

### **Blighs, Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park and Suffolk Way**

- 11 There is currently a £1 charge associated with parking in these car parks from 18.30 to 21.30. This was introduced in 2004 to help improve the management of the car parks through the evening and support the provision of the service. Demand has increased since its introduction but the price has remained the same, meaning the increasing costs of parking provision have been disproportionately borne by those who park during the day. There is no evidence to suggest the charge has dissuaded visitors from visiting the town centre, although feedback has indicated some of those who are unfamiliar

## Agenda Item 9

with the setup are occasionally confused by the switch from a linear to fixed charge.

- 12 It is proposed that the tariffs currently in place in these car parks be simplified by scrapping the evening charge and reducing the hours during which charges apply, from 21.30 to 20.30.
- 13 The Portfolio Holder is working with officers to explore how best to further improve the parking experience by allowing more flexible ways to pay for parking and hopes to bring forward proposals at a later date.
- 14 As mentioned in paragraph six, the Council is shortly to embark upon the development of a new multi decked car park at Buckhurst 2. Construction is envisaged to begin in early 2018 for completion by spring 2019. Once complete, the car park will help:
  - provide spaces for the significant number of people currently on the waiting lists for parking permits;
  - ease congestion, reducing the number of motorists driving around in search of spaces;
  - free up parking in short stay car parks and in residential streets; and,
  - support the continued economic success of the town.

### **St Johns and St James**

- 15 For the fourth year running, there are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

### **Bradbourne and Sennocke**

- 16 The new Bradbourne Car Park reopened to the public in April 2017, following its temporary closure in August 2016 and redevelopment as a multi decked car park in a multi-million pound improvement which was completed both on time and on budget. Customers now benefit from:
  - comprehensive CCTV coverage;
  - innovative Premium Bays;
  - more flexible payment options;
  - short-stay parking to help local businesses, notably the shops around the station on London Road;
  - low energy LED smart lighting which reduces disturbance for neighbours whilst improving the safety and comfort of customers and their vehicles;
  - electric vehicle charging points;
  - year round protection from the elements for the majority of vehicles;
  - regular patrols; and,
  - the coveted Safer Parking Scheme's Park Mark<sup>®</sup> status.

- 17 The aforementioned Premium Bays offer a number of benefits besides being on the ground floor, close to the entrance. They are over a metre wider than the national standard used in the rest of the car park and they are numbered and reserved for the exclusive use of the Premium Bay Season Ticket Holder at all times each and every day of the year.
- 18 Sennocke car park has now closed for regeneration as a much-needed new hotel for Sevenoaks. Sennocke customers have been accommodated in the new Bradbourne car park. The Portfolio Holder and officers will be closely monitoring any effect the hotel has on parking demand.
- 19 It is proposed the annual Season Ticket price be frozen for the third consecutive year and in so doing continue to provide an increasingly substantial saving on the price charged by the other station car park operator.

#### **Other Car Parks**

##### **Bevan Place, Park Road and Station Road (Swanley)**

- 20 For the third year running, there are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

##### **Darent, Quebec Avenue and Vicarage Hill (Westerham)**

- 21 For the second year running, there are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.
- 22 To continue to ease pressure on the limited number of on-street spaces, it is proposed that three hours free parking is preserved in the Darent car park.

#### **On-Street Parking**

- 23 On street fees apply on some roads across the District, covering eight tariffs divided into thirty-three charges.
- 24 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs on any roads in Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham, Edenbridge, Knockholt or elsewhere.

#### **Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits**

- 25 For the sixth year running, there are no proposed changes to Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers or Non-Resident Permits charges.

#### **Key Implications**

##### Financial

As stated earlier, there are a number of cost pressures associated with the operation of both on and off-street parking, these are over and above inflation and investment in infrastructure. For instance, the Government's business rates revaluation necessitated the inclusion of a growth item in last year's budget of

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some £30,000 for our car parks, this was net of savings made on other Council assets.

The Council's 10 year budget assumes a 2.5% increase in the levels of income, including from parking, to enable the delivery of a balanced budget and continued provision of valued services to residents. Members reduced this figure from 3.5% to reflect the authority's continuing focus on introducing further efficiencies, increasing investment income and to reflect the uncertain national economic climate of recent years. The proposed changes in charges would satisfy this requirement.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Changes to the car park charges will require amending the on-street Traffic Regulation Order and the off-street Parking Order.

### Equality Impacts

There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act.

Sevenoaks District Council supports the Blue Badge Scheme allowing free parking in its off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display parking bays.

### Community Impact and Outcomes

Measured and reasonable parking charges can encourage the use of more sustainable transport options and healthier lifestyles for journeys to school, work, and visits to shops and other amenities in towns and villages.

### Human Rights

There are no human rights issues or implications.

### **Conclusions**

Proposals to review the car parking charges for 2018-19 are detailed in the appendices to this report.

**Appendices**                      Appendix A - Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities and Southeastern Rail car parks

Appendix B - Proposals for On and Off-Street Parking Charges

**Background documents**    None

**Richard Wilson**  
**Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**



Indicative Car Park Charges in Neighbouring Towns and Southeastern Car Parks 2017						
	Southeastern Car Parks 1 <sup>1</sup> and 4 <sup>2</sup> , Sevenoaks	Tonbridge & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	Sevenoaks		
				Town Centre	Blighs	Bradbourne
Up to 30 minutes		60p			70p	
Up to 1 hour		£1.20	£1.60	£1	£1.50	
Up to 2 hours		£2.10	£2.80	£2	£3	
Up to 3 hours		£2.80	£3.80	£3	£5	
Up to 4 hours		£3.40	£4.80	£4	£10	
Up to 5 hours			£5.60	£4.50		
Evenings			£1.50	£1	£1	
All day	£7	£5.50	£4.70 - £10.00	£4.60		£7
Quarterly Season Ticket	£446 <sup>1</sup> and £354 <sup>2</sup>					£287.50
Annual Season Ticket	£1546 <sup>1</sup> and £1227 <sup>2</sup>					£1110

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Areas for consideration: Review of Fees and Charges 2018-19					
Off Street					
		Current	Revised		
1A	Blighs	Up to 30 mins	70p	No Change	
		Up to 1 hr	£1.50		
		Up to 2 hours	£3		
		Up to 3 hours	£5		
		Up to 4 hours	£10		
		Evening (18.30 - 21.30)	£1		Revoke
		Charging Period	08.30 - 21.30 (Mon - Sat)		08.30 - 20.30 (Mon - Sun)
1B	Buckhurst 1 South Park Suffolk Way	Up to 1 hr	£1	No Change	
		Up to 2 hours	£2		
		Up to 3 hours	£3		
		Up to 4 hours	£4		
		Up to 5 hours	£4.50		
		Evening (18.30 - 21.30)	£1		Revoke
		Charging Period	08.30 - 21.30 (Mon - Sat)		08.30 - 20.30 (Mon - Sat)
1C	Buckhurst 2 Weekdays	All day	£4.60	No Change	
		Evening	£1		
	Buckhurst 2 Saturdays	Up to 1 hr	£1		
		Up to 2 hours	£2		
		Up to 3 hours	£3		
		Up to 4 hours	£4		
		Over 4 hours and all day	£4.60		
		Evening (18.30 - 21.30)	£1		Revoke
		Charging Period	08.30 - 21.30 (Mon - Sat)		08.30 - 20.30 (Mon - Sat)
	Buckhurst 2 Season Tickets	Annual Season Ticket	£859		
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£224.75		
		Resident Permit	£35		
	1D	Council Offices	Saturdays & Sundays		Free
2A	St Johns St James	Up to 30 mins	20p	No Change	
		Up to 1 hr	40p		
		Up to 2 hours	60p		
		Up to 4 hours	£1		
		Over 3 hours and all day	£3.10		
		Annual Season Ticket	£429		
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£117.25		
		Resident Permit	£35		
2B	Bradbourne	Up to 1 hr	£1	No Change	
		Up to 2 hours	£2		
		Up to 3 hours	£3		
		Up to 4 hours	£4		
		Up to 5 hours (weekdays)	£5		
		All day (weekdays)	£7		
		All day (weekends)	£5		
	Bradbourne Season	Weekly	£35		
		Monthly	£130		
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£287.50		
		Annual Season Ticket	£1,110		
		Premium Bay	£2,500		

Areas for consideration: Review of Fees and Charges 2016-17			
Off Street (continued)			
2D	Bevan Place Park Road Station Road	Up to 30 mins	30p
		Up to 1 hour	50p
		Up to 2 hours	70p
		Up to 4 hours	£1.10
		Over 4 hours and all day	£4
2E	Bevan Place Season Tickets	Annual Season Ticket	£396
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£109
2F	Darent	Up to 30 mins	Free
		Up to 1 hr	
		Up to 2 hours	
		Up to 3 hours	
		Up to 4 hours	£1.50
		Over 4 hours and all day	£3.50
2G	Quebec Avenue	Up to 15 mins	10p
		Up to 30 mins	20p
		Up to 1 hr	50p
		Up to 2 hours	70p
		Up to 4 hours	£1.20
		Over 4 hours and all day	£3.10
2H	Vicarage Hill	Up to 15 mins	10p
		Up to 30 mins	20p
		Up to 1 hr	60p
		Up to 2 hours	£1.50

No Change

Areas for consideration: Review of Fees and Charges 2016-17			
On Street			
		Current	Revised
3A	High Street London Road South Park	Up to 30 mins	40p
		Up to 1 hour	80p
		Up to 2 hours	£1.40
		Sunday	2 hours max stay
3B	Sevenoaks Town Holly Bush Lane Plymouth Drive	Up to 30 mins	20p
		Up to 1 hour	60p
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30
		Over 2 hours and all day	£3
3C	Sevenoaks Station Moorwood Close (West)	Up to 30 mins	20p
		Up to 1 hour	60p
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30
		Up to 4 hours	£2.40
3D	Sevenoaks Station St Botolphs Ashley Close Moorwood Close (East)	Up to 30 mins	20p
		Up to 1 hour	60p
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30
		Up to 4 hours	£2.40
		Over 4 hours and all day	£5.50
3E	Sevenoaks District Resident Parking Permits	First	£35
		Second	£70
		Third	£125
		Fourth	£250
3F	Resident Visitors	Book of 5	£6
3G	Non-Resident Parking	Town Annual	£270
		Town Half Yearly	£135
		Town Quarterly	£67.50
		Station (West) Annual	£765
		Station (West) Half Yearly	£382.50
		Station (West) Quarterly	£191.25
		Station (East) Annual	£650
		Station (East) Half Yearly	£325
Station (East) Quarterly	£162.50		
4A	Knockholt	All Day	£3.50
		After 2pm up to 6pm	£2.40
4B	Swanley Station Azalea Road Godsel Road	Up to 30 mins	20p
		Up to 1 hour	60p
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30
		Up to 4 hours	£2.40
		Over 4 hours and all day	£3.50
4C	Westerham On Street The Green The Grange Market Square	15 minutes	10p
		30 minutes	20p
		1 hour	60p
		2 hours	£1.50
4D	Westerham On Street Fullers Hill Croydon Road	15 minutes	10p
		30 minutes	20p
		1 hour	60p
		2 hours	£1.50
		3 hours	£2.50

No Change

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**Item 10 - Christmas Parking 2017**

The attached report was considered by the Direct & Trading Advisory Committee on 2 November 2017. The relevant Minute extract was not available prior to the printing of this agenda and will follow when available.

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## CHRISTMAS PARKING 2017

Cabinet - 9 November 2017

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 2 November 2017  
Council - 21 November 2017

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report requests that the Committee considers free concessionary parking on select dates at Christmas 2017.

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**This report supports the key aims of:**

The effective management of Council resources and supporting and developing the local economy.

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer** John Strachan, Ext.7310

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**Recommendation to Direct & Trading Advisory Committee:** That the recommendation to Cabinet below be considered.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:** That

- a) Subject to consideration of any views of the Advisory committee, free parking be provided for two weekends leading up to Christmas, on Saturdays and Sundays, 9 & 10 and 16 & 17 December 2017; and
- b) Subject to recommendation (a) above, it be recommended to Council that the cost in terms of lost of income for free Christmas parking be funded from supplementary Estimates.

**Recommendation to Council:** That the cost in terms of lost income for any free Christmas Parking agreed above, be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

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**Reason for recommendation:** To help encourage shoppers and other visitors to Sevenoaks and Westerham, in the busy shopping period leading up to Christmas 2017.

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## **Introduction and Background**

- 1 In previous years the Council has helped encourage shoppers and visitors to Sevenoaks and Westerham by giving free parking in car parks and on street parking bays on two Saturdays on the run up to Christmas.
- 2 This year the Council is proposing to extend the arrangement in Sevenoaks town to include the Sunday of each weekend, encouraging shoppers in to the town and giving further support to the local economy in the busy lead up to Christmas.
- 3 This is regarded as being of particular importance in light of similar initiatives operated in other towns in neighbouring Districts.
- 4 Relaxing parking charges on weekends has no impact on Swanley or at Knockholt Station, where charges only apply Monday to Friday.
- 5 Vehicles parking for free are still required to observe maximum periods of stay in car parks and on street.
- 6 Regular monitoring will endeavour to ensure compliance with the maximum stay periods in car parks and on-street, to ensure that space is not monopolised by all-day parking by shop workers.
- 7 Weekend free parking will be promoted for shop workers in the Council Offices staff car park accessed from Gordon Road.
- 8 As in previous years Senico Community Leisure whose parking areas form a part of the Suffolk Way car park have participated in these events, they will be invited to participate again.

## **Background Information**

- 9 The estimated shortfall in income over the two days is estimated at £18,000.

## **Other Information**

- 10 Members are advised that, as in previous years, the Council's Portfolio Holder for Direct and Trading has allowed free evening parking for Christmas Lights and shopping events in Sevenoaks on Friday 24 November 2017 and in Westerham on Friday 1 December 2017.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

Shortfall in parking income of £18,500 to be met from Supplementary Estimates.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Management of "overstay" parking is difficult when there is no requirement for a ticket to be purchased and displayed.

## Agenda Item 10

### Equality Impacts

There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act.

### Community Impact and Outcomes

Free Christmas parking is a local initiative popular with residents, visitors to the district, businesses and traders, and supportive of local economic vibrancy.

### Human Rights

There are no human rights issues or implications.

<b>Appendices</b>	None
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<b>Background Papers</b>	None
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**Richard Wilson**  
**Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**