

Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HG



Despatched: 13.11.17

I hereby summon you to attend the meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks commencing at 7.00 pm on 21 November 2017 to transact the under-mentioned business.

Chief Executive

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.

Apologies for absence

1. To approve as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 July 2017. (Pages 1 - 4)
2. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting
3. Chairman's Announcements
4. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.
5. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.
6. Matters considered by the Cabinet
 - a) Housing Assistance Policy (Pages 5 - 46)
 - b) West Kent Homelessness Strategy (Pages 47 - 120)
 - c) Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19 (Pages 121 - 142)

- d) Affordable Housing Company (Pages 143 - 160)
- e) Christmas Parking (Pages 161 - 166)
- 7. Matters considered by Governance Committee
 - a) Review of the Scheme for Members' Allowances (Pages 167 - 202)
- 8. To consider the following reports from the Chief Executive or other Chief Officers on matters requiring the attention of Council:
 - a) Mid-year appointments 2017/18 (Pages 203 - 206)
 - b) Draft calendar of meetings for 2018/19 (Pages 207 - 210)
- 9. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.
- 10. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.
- 11. To receive the report of the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting; and (Pages 211 - 214)
 - a) to note the amended delegations of executive functions made by the Leader (Pages 215 - 216)

EXEMPT ITEMS

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.

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you require a copy of this agenda or any of the reports listed on it in another format please do not hesitate to contact the Democratic Services Team as set out below.

For any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact:

Democratic Services (01732 227000/ democratic.servces@sevenoaks.gov.uk)

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2017 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Abraham (Chairman)

Cllr. Mrs. Bosley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Bayley, Ball, C. Barnes, Barnes, Bosley, Mrs. Bosley, Dr. Canet, Clack, Clark, Dickins, Dyball, Edwards-Winsor, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Halford, Hogarth, Hogg, Horwood, Mrs. Hunter, Kelly, Kitchener, Krogdahl, Layland, Lindsay, London, Lowe, Maskell, McArthur, McGarvey, McGregor, Mrs. Morris, Parkin, Pearsall, Pett, Purves, Raikes, Reay, Scott, Scholey, Searles, Miss. Stack, Ms. Tennessee and Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Brown, Esler, Gaywood, Grint, Lake, Parson, Piper and Williamson.

10. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 9 May 2017

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 9 May 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

11. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting

No additional declarations of interest were received.

12. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised Members of the sad passing of the former Chairman, Louise Williams who was Ward Councillor for Sevenoaks Kippington 1979 - 1995 and Chairman in 1991 - 1992. He further advised that following the sad passing of Councillor Paddy Cooke, there had been a bake sale and donation box put out resulting in £141.20 being given to Pancreatic Cancer UK in his memory. Also sadly, he advised of the passing of Claire Perry, the Licensing Partnership Officer who had also passed away in May. She had been commended at the Regulatory Delivery Awards 2017 in the Better Business for All category which had recognised her contribution from the Licensing perspective. Claire's husband Adam and Cllr Anna Firth had collected the award on her behalf on 4 July in Birmingham. The Licensing Partnership had also been shortlisted for an award at the 2017 APSE Service Awards (Association for Public Excellence) with the awards taking place in September.

He asked Members to join him in a moment's silence in their memory.

The Chairman announced that the 'Run, Walk or Push against Dementia' event in May had raised over £4500 for Dementia services in the District. The money was now funding its first project - the opening of the Forget-me-not café at Knole House, Sevenoaks which provided support and companionship to those in the community who were living with memory issues or dementia as well as their carers, family and friends. The next run would be held on 13 May 2018.

He also advised that the Summer Family Fun Days had returned for another year, with days planned all over the District for four weeks from 24 July; along with summer Cycle Rides in Knole Park and at Brandshatch, starting in July through to September; and that the Council had had its best attended Community and Voluntary Awards at the Stag Theatre on 14 June.

13. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No questions had been received.

14. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No petitions had been received.

15. Matters considered by the Cabinet

- (a) Housing Strategy

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report presented the findings of the recent public consultation on the new Draft Housing Strategy, and sought adoption of the policy.

The Leader was pleased to recommend the draft strategy before Members, it was the easiest to read so far and was the result of almost two years work.

In response to a question from Councillor Purves, the Leader responded that every site was looked at for suitability and the Council did not shy away from its responsibilities either from housing or as a planning authority on land owned now or in the future; and in response to a questions from Councillor Hogg he advised that legislative and other issues that prevented the Council being a social housing provider

Councillor Lindsay suggested that it was effectively a 'tax' and queried how providing for the welfare dependant kept the district economy alive. The Leader answered that for working people welfare boosts their income and when looking at the Pembroke Rd development as an example, it had been hoped to provide 5 shared ownership properties and had been calculated that event then people

would have had to have been earning in excess of £67,000 pa to buy a flat - and that was in excess of the national and local average. Therefore it had to be socially rented units. It was a question of affordability and there was a large gap between wages earned and houses that could be afforded and there needed to be provision of a range of properties in the right places.

Resolved: That the Draft Housing Strategy be approved as District Council policy.

16. Matters considered by other standing committees

(a) Review of the scheme for Members' allowances

Councillor Fleming moved

'That this council welcomes and thanks the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work, and is particularly pleased with their comments regarding the involvement of members and the important part they play in the success of the authority. However we resolve that;

- a) before accepting the recommendations contained within the report a working group is set up to look at the following issues:
 - i) the omission of an SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Infrastructure Levy Board and at what level any SRA should be
 - ii) the proposed level of SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee
 - iii) the budgetary implications of the report and any other proposed changes;
- b) the working group will report back to Governance Committee and a further recommendation is sent to Full Council, both meetings being in November;
- c) the Chairman of Governance be delegated authority to determine the size and composition of the working group.'

Councillor Pett seconded the motion.

Resolved: That the Council welcomed and thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work, and was particularly pleased with their comments regarding the involvement of members and the important part they played in the success of the authority. However

- a) before accepting the recommendations contained within the report a working group is set up to look at the following issues:

- i) the omission of an SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Infrastructure Levy Board and at what level any SRA should be
 - ii) the proposed level of SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee
 - iii) the budgetary implications of the report and any other proposed changes;
- b) the working group will report back to Governance Committee and a further recommendation is sent to Full Council, both meetings being in November;
 - c) the Chairman of Governance be delegated authority to determine the size and composition of the working group.'
17. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

No questions had been received.

18. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

No motions had been received.

19. To receive the report of the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting.

The Leader of the Council reported on the work that he and the Cabinet had undertaken in the period 3 April - 30 June 2017, and Members took the opportunity to ask questions.

FAREWELL

The Chairman informed Members that it was the last Council meeting attended by Helen Martin, Head of Finance, as she would be retiring in October. She had worked at the Council for over 19 years. On behalf of all Members, he thanked her for her hard work and wished her well for the future presenting her with flowers.

Members showed their appreciation.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.38 PM

CHAIRMAN

Item 6 (a) - Draft Housing Assistance Policy

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet and the relevant minute extract is below:

Cabinet (Minute 37, 12 October 2017)

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 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.

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HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of	Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services
Status	For Decision
Also considered by	Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017 Cabinet - 12 October 2017
Key Decision	No

Executive Summary: The Housing Assistance Policy sets 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 is administered; along with the Councils own discretionary assistance.

This report supports the Key Aim of the Community Plan by ensuring caring communities via providing the right support at the right time, reducing poverty and social exclusion; providing a healthy environment by reducing health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing for all

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer James Cox, Ext. 7312

Recommendation to Health and Housing Advisory Committee: To recommend to Cabinet to approve 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 up date the criteria for the Councils own discretionary financial assistance.

Recommendation to Cabinet: To recommend to Council to approve 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 up date the criteria for the Councils own discretionary financial assistance.

Reason for recommendation: To allow the Council to broaden its ability to provide financial assistance to those disabled persons who fall out of the mandatory DFG system, provide financial assistance to undertake preventive measures reducing hospital admissions and demand for social care and reduce delayed hospital discharges by working in collaboration with Health services to provide funding to remove housing related obstacles preventing discharge.

To continue to provide discretionary assistance for essential repairs although additional qualifying criteria and conditions are being applied to an application

Introduction and Background

- 1 The current Housing Assistance Policy was adopted in 2008 and since then the role of Private Sector Housing and financial assistance has substantially changed. Firstly, in 2010 all central government funding for discretionary improvements grants ceased and secondly with the introduction of the Better Care Fund in 2015 the Council's role changed from one of administering grants into one that, through collaboration, assists in reducing demands of hospital and social care services. The proposed policy is attached as an appendix
- 2 As a result of The Better Care Fund our allocation for Disabled Facility Grants has dramatically increased from 15/16 - £477,000, 16/17 - £889,477 and 17/18 - £976,757 and as a result of these increases more assistance can be rendered to those in need.
- 3 Mandatory DFG will continue to be operated in line with the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, with a maximum of £30,000 being available and means testing being undertaken on all applicants except for child application. Conditions will also be placed on all grants over £5,000 requiring repayment in certain specific circumstances. Given their mandatory status funding DFGs will take precedence over any discretionary funding, so if in the future allocations are reduced then certain discretionary funding would, as a necessity, reduce or cease.
- 4 An issue with DFGs is the bureaucratic process and the constraints placed upon its use. To overcome these issues which have arisen since 2008 and to assist in the four Better Care Fund core principles a total of 6 discretionary assistance funded via the BCF are proposed. All are briefly explained below.
- 5 **Funding adaptations over £30,000**
These grants are commonly called top up grants and provide assistance when the required works exceed the £30,000 maximum. A maximum of £30,000 or 50% of the existing equity will be available to both owner occupier and tenants, although tenants application will need the landlords agreement. Both applications will have a charge placed against the property and repayable upon sale and transfer.

For registered social landlord tenants there are circumstances when such additional assistance is required. Given it is considered good practice for a RSL to respond to a tenants needs, only £15,000 will be made available from the Council and this must be match funded by the RSL.
- 6 **Relocation Assistance**
A maximum of £10,000 available to both owner occupiers and tenants when a proposed adaptation via the mandatory route has been assessed and determined by the Council and Occupational Therapist as not being

reasonable and practicable because of either cost and/or extent of works involved. This assistance allows applicants to relocate to a more appropriate dwelling either within SDC or outside.

7 Specific situation funding

Maximum of £50,000 or 50% of the equity will be available in very specific situations where a mandatory DFG is unavailable for any reason i.e an adaptation is requested at a second property. Due to the significant amount of funding, a charge will be placed upon the property for repayment upon sale or transfer. Approval will be required from the Portfolio holder before any assistance can be approved.

All works funded will be recommended by an Occupational Therapist and determined as necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practical.

8 Accelerated Facility Grant (AFG)

With many mandatory DFGs being for small amounts, circa £5,000, the current system can delay much needed assistance. To speed up the application process the AFG will only require one estimate and have a shortened application process. Grants of less than £7,500 will go through this accelerated process and anything over this amount will still go through the mandatory process. A charge shall be applied to all grants between £5,000 and £7,500 on those terms stated by The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008.

9 Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)

Joint ventures with neighbouring local authorities has led to Health and Housing Co-ordinators being located in the integrated Discharge team at both Tunbridge Wells and Darenth Valley Hospitals. The Coordinator is there to resolve housing related issues preventing a timely discharge. To assist in this discharge process £3,000 will be made available to owners and private sector tenants to undertake repairs and other work including cleaning. Only those currently in hospital and awaiting discharge will be able to apply.

10 Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)

This is a small grant with a maximum of £1,000 to promote independence and undertake small repairs to the house and its environs. A SSG is aimed and preventing hospital admissions and available to those over 60 or with a specific ill health diagnosis. Those eligible will include individuals and carers living with Alzheimer's and Dementia. Available to owners and private sector tenants.

11 The Council still has a role to play in assisting home owners to maintain their own property to an acceptable standard. To provide assistance in circumstances when serious defects are present and assessed by Private Sector Housing a means tested House Assistance Grant (HAG) could be applied for. Prior to assistance being awarded the applicant must have taken reasonable steps to fund the works through alternative means. In addition if the applicant has any outstanding debt to the Council no assistance will be

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available unless the debt is repaid or an appropriate payment method is being adhered to.

The maximum amount will be £10,000 and a charge regarding repayment will be a condition upon sale or transfer. Prior residency criteria will also apply and this is 3 years.

- 12 It is important the requirement to repay upon sale or transfer of a property is placed as a condition on as many grants as possible. Throughout this policy, whenever reasonable, a charge will be a condition. A balance must however be struck, especially for the smaller grants whether a charge should be applicable as the aim is to provide a quick response to either prevent hospital admissions or allow hospital discharge. In view of this no charge shall be associated with the HDG or SSG.

The Council are unable to have a policy requiring automatic placing of a repayment condition or actual repayment however it is envisaged that the vast majority of the grants eligible for such a condition will have them applied and repayment requested.

Certain specific types of dwellings

13. Eligibility criteria will cover freeholders and long leaseholders and for certain grants, tenants. Other dwellings that will be considered for assistance are for qualifying house boat and park home.

With the Better Fund allowing new initiatives then such applications will be funded via the annual allocation. Any new initiatives will be required to meet one or more of the four core principles:

- a) Reducing or eliminating hospital admissions;
- b) Allowing a speedier discharge from hospital;
- c) Considering the long term needs of individuals and reductions in associated treatment and social care costs; and
- d) Undertaken works, adaptations or provision of equipment that is not provided by any other service

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

Option 1 - Do nothing, given the current policy does not reflect the current situation and solutions for the demands placed upon Private Sector Housing by the Better Care Fund this option would prevent assisting vulnerable customers.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no significant financial implications in terms of additional administration or staff costs. Amounts of financial assistance repaid can not be projected given the many factors applicable, although financial repayments will be recycled to

provide further discretionary assistance.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

In formulating this policy reference has been made to The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and Better care Fund guidance. Legal Services have also been consulting in the drafting process. Processes involved in the administration process are in place to avoid fraud and misappropriation of funds.

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.

Impacts of the proposed Housing Assistance Policy is one of providing a greater level of financial and other interventions by the Council for those with a disability, are vulnerable or have a specific health condition. The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 makes it clear assistance is primarily based on need of the individual, although the health and safety concerns of carers and other family members are also considered.

Conclusions

It is recommended that the Housing Assistance Policy [attached as an appendix] be adopted to allow improved assistance to vulnerable persons within the District and allowing assistance to residents to undertake major repairs to their property although additional eligible and repayment criteria are to be introduced.

Appendices: (Private Sector) Housing Assistance Policy 2017

Background Papers

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

Technical Guidance Annex 4: Better Care Fund Planning Requirements for 2016/17
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/technical-guidance-annex--bf0.pdf>

Richard Wilson Chief Officer

Environmental & Operational Services

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APPENDIX

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY 2017

Review date of December 2018

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Housing/Coxjames/management/Housing renewal policy

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

1.0 Context

There have been significant changes in the way housing assistance is funded and the priorities of both national government and Sevenoaks District Council, this new housing assistance policy reflects the current priorities and will also give sufficient flexibility to meet the challenges in the years to come.

1.1 Background since 2008

Since 2008 there have been two significant developments which directly influence this housing assistance policy.

Firstly, since 1969 there has been considerable funding directed to Councils for improvement grants enabling unfit or substandard domestic property's to be brought up to a reasonable standard. Unfortunately since 2010 all such money from Central Government ceased, reducing the Councils ability to promote and fund such improvement works.

Secondly, in June 2013 Central Government introduced the Better Care Fund (BCF) to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care as it was recognised that "The effects of poor housing cost the NHS over £2 billion every year (around 2% of the annual budget in England). Improving homes delivers a return on investment quickly".

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is one of the most ambitious programmes across the NHS and local government to date. It creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the NHS and local government to work more closely together around people, placing their wellbeing as the focus of health and care services. BCF also shifts resources into social care and community services for the benefit of the people, communities and health and care systems. Integral to the BCF is the inclusion within the overall budget of the annual Disabled Facility Grant allocation and the political decision to increase the DFG over several years.

Given the change in political and financial emphasis this policy must reflect this by maximising the partnership role the Council can play in particular with neighbouring local authorities but also with the NHS. Although Private Sector Housing core role, that of housing advice and financial assistance (depending on financial resources available), will not be overlooked.

2.0 Introduction

This document details the Councils Housing Assistance Policy and Conditions attached to such funding. This policy has been adopted under Article 4 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (Appendix D). The Order enables local authorities to develop a means of providing assistance to any resident so they can address local needs and priorities.

The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 states the processes by which grants are processed, so if any unusual scenarios are presented then this Act will be the primary source of information.

This Policy explains the only mandatory grant, the Disabled Facilities Grants, the funding for which is received from KCC via the BCF and administered in line with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. In addition, discretionary assistance aligned to the requirements of the BCF will also be set out.

The policy will also explain the discretionary financial assistance available to residents which is principally aimed at enabling residents to reside safely in their own home.

This Policy recognises the limitation on the Councils own capital funds and the fact it is unlikely that substantial additional support from either the Council or Central Government will be forthcoming, so ensuring when ever possible financial assistance is recovered and recycled to assist further residents is essential.

Any queries relating to this policy or grant conditions should be referred to the Private Sector Housing Team Leader, Sevenoaks District Council, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HG.

3.0 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

This Policy reflects local housing conditions and its core objectives are:

- The requirement to instigate and formulate links with Health and third sector organisations to provide opportunities to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, giving them control, placing them at the centre of their own care and support, and, in doing so, providing them with a better service and better quality of life.
- The need to ensure households resides in property's that are free from category one hazards.
- The need to provide not only financial assistance but assistance through a combination of education and encouragement and direct and indirect financial assistance.

It is neither possible nor desirable for the Council to offer financial assistance to directly fund all private sector housing repairs and maintenance. It can only directly assist a small proportion of these through targeting the limited available resources at priority areas. When it does provide assistance this funding must be repayable thus allowing the recycling of such funding to other applicants.

Although the responsibility to maintain private property rests firmly with the owner, it is recognised that the private housing stock is a major public asset and can have an important affect on the occupier's health. Most assistance is offered as an investment in this local and national asset, for long-term public benefit and economic regeneration. An important reason for providing assistance is the improvement of our resident's health along with supporting the wider National Health Services by aiding rapid transfers from hospital and reducing delayed transfers of care commonly described as bed blocking.

The use of repayable grants is the way the Council provides assistance. Grants that are repaid will be recycled into further private sector housing renewal. The Council and Central Government considers this is an appropriate way forward given the pressure on resources and because, over time, it will allow more homeowners to be assisted with a limited amount of resource.

Money repaid to the Council will be reinvested in the private sector housing assistance capital programme.

No financial assistance will be paid towards the cost of repairing tenanted dwellings, or for works to provide means of escape in case of fire or basic amenities or in HMOs (houses in multiple occupation); these needs will be remedied firstly by education and funding from the landlord and if need be recourse to the appropriate enforcement action.

4.0 GRANT ASSISTANCE

4.1 Mandatory Assistance

4.2 Disabled Facility Grant

Such grants are available to owners or tenants over the age of 18 for providing essential adaptations enabling disabled people better freedom of movement into and round their homes and giving access to essential facilities. This is a statutory grant and administrative process is contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated guidance. The maximum amount of grant is £30,000 (The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008).

To be eligible for assistance an assessment must be undertaken by a suitably qualified Occupational Therapist who recommends adaptations because of person's disability and not for any other reason such as overcrowding. An assessment by the Council must also be satisfied that the works required are "necessary and appropriate" and "reasonable and practicable" bearing in mind the layout and condition of the property. The Council are also obliged to consult with the welfare authority which in our case is Kent County Council before formal approval is given.

Examples of common adaptations include:

- Providing ramps to allow a person to get in and out of their house
- Stair lifts and through floor lifts including a five year warranty
- Level access showers for people who cannot use a conventional bath.

4.3 Test of resources for owner occupiers and tenants

For each application a test of resources will be undertaken following the requirements of the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 and in the Housing Renewal Grants (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2008.

Calculations are based upon the regulations governing entitlement to housing benefit and council tax support. The income and capital of each relevant person (the disabled occupant and their spouse or partner) is taken into account in the assessment of financial resources.

In the case of families with a disabled child or young person there is no means test and 100% grant is awarded up to the maximum limit.

Where all relevant persons are in receipt of a pass ported benefit then a 100% grant is awarded.

At present and nor is it envisaged there will be a need to prioritise DFG enquires, but should demand for these grants significantly increase or there be a legislative change there may be times when an applicant will unfortunately be placed on a waiting list and be assisted in chronological order, although as part of any such

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waiting list a set of priorities including clinical need will be used to determine if priority should be given.

Repayment conditions are applicable to every DFG over £5,000 under The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008. Certain exemptions are applicable regarding repayment but the maximum amount of repayment the Council can require is £10,000. Appendix A provides specific details.

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5.0 Better care fund sourced discretionary funding

5.1 Discretionary funding supported through the Better Care Fund (DFG allocation)

5.1.1 Introduction

Historically, the way which DFG funding could be used was rather prescriptive. However, since the introduction of the BCF a wider more integrated view is being promoted. In a recent letter from the Department of Health they stating that the DFG funding will continue to be included within the BCF to “encourage areas to think strategically about the use of home aids/adaptations, use of technologies to support people in their own homes, and to take a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.”

Mandatory DFG applications will of course take precedence over discretionary funding, however if budgets allow discretionary funding will be used for grants and other initiatives and innovations. All such expenditure must be based on the requirement of the BCF and will achieve at least one or more of the core principles:

- a) Reducing or eliminating hospital admissions;
- b) Allowing a speedier discharge from hospital;
- c) Considering the long term needs of individuals and reductions in associated treatment and social care costs; and
- d) Undertaken works, adaptations or provision of equipment that is not provided by any other service

5.3 Collaborative Working

Funds will be used from the BCF to fund initiatives linked to the four core principles. Examples of such innovative work would include the Health and Housing Co-ordinator at Tunbridge Wells and Darenth Valley Hospital and a similar role assisting GPs. Funding will be made available to undertake minor works to facilitate hospital discharge or prevent admissions.

5.4 Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant (DDFG)

5.4.1 Introduction

This funding will be made available only as funds via the BCF allow. Mandatory DFG's will take precedent over discretionary funding.

Discretionary funding will be for three specific areas
Funding adaptations over the £30,000 maximum;
Relocation funding; and
Specific situation funding.

DDFG is principally available to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for mandatory DFG and who require additional funding in order to pay for the

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adaptations or to move to another property more suited to adaptation (or already adapted). A principle aim of this DDFG is to replace the 'top up' grants administered by KCC.

A more suitable property does not necessarily need to be within the Sevenoaks District.

Assistance may be refused in cases where an applicant is found to have an outstanding debt to the council of any kind. This does not have to be in relation to the same property that the current application for assistance is for. In particular an applicant with council tax arrears may only apply for assistance once the outstanding debt has been repaid or an appropriate payment method has been arranged and adhered to.

Appendix B details the repayment conditions associated with all Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant

5.4.2 Funding adaptations over grant maximum (Such grants are commonly referred to as 'Top up grants')

For adaptations, over the £30,000 maximum, repayable top up assistance is solely for the necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practical adaptations, if applicants wish to have adaptations over and above this level or a higher specification of fixtures and fittings this will not be covered by this assistance. If schemes become excessive in nature and it is the belief of the Council this is unnecessary then no discretionary funding in such a situation would be made available, an example of this would be if a ground floor extension was reasonable by a two storey extension was being proposed in such a situation discretionary funding would not be made available. DDFG discretionary funding will not be able to be used for the purposes of an 'offset grant'. An offset grant is one where SDC agree a scheme but instead the applicant wishes to undertake a different more extensive/expensive solution.

Owner occupiers are eligible for top up assistance, although tenants will be considered on an individual basis as factors such as impact upon rentability, length of tenancy and agreement of landlord are important.

Maximum amount of top up assistance for all owner and tenant applications will be £30,000 or 50% of the equity existing at the time of application, whichever is the lesser.

Currently registered social landlord tenants are able to apply for a mandatory DFG and can receive up to £30,000, given it would be considered good practice for a responsible social landlord to respond to the needs of its disabled tenants, discretionary assistance above the mandatory maximum will be limited to £15,000. Discretionary funding will only be available if a RSL match funds the discretionary assistance given by the Council. If adaptations exceed £60,000 (mandatory £30,000 plus discretionary from SDC match funded by RSL) then no further funding will be made available from the Council.

All applicants for top up assistance will be subject to the means test used for mandatory DFGs, those on a pass ported benefit and where the adaptations are for a child and one of the parents is in receipt of such a benefit will not go through the means testing process.

Any funding provided via this route for owner occupiers or tenants application is repayable on disposal or transfer of the property to which it relates. A charge will be placed with Land Registry and local land charges. No charge can be placed upon a property owned by a RSL.

The applicant will not normally be eligible for top up assistance where a relocation grant has previously been provided by the Council as any new property would be more appropriate for the disabled persons needs.

5.4.3 Relocation funding

Maximum amount of assistance associated with all relocation assistance applications, will be £10,000 and no repayment requirement.

Relocation funding is available when a proposed adaptation via the mandatory route has been assessed and determined by the Council and Occupational Therapist as not being reasonable and practicable because of either cost and/or extent of works involved. Funding will assist customers in providing financial assistance to cover the costs of moving to another property which can be outside of the District.

To assist moving to another property grant assistance can be obtained for:

- estate agents fees (limited to 1.5% of the property value)
- solicitors fees
- valuation fees
- Stamp Duty (limited to the amount for a property valued at 15% higher than the property being sold)
- mortgage arrangement fees
- removal costs

The applicant is responsible for obtaining from an OT a report advising that the new property is suitable to fully meet or have the potential to meet the needs of the disabled person are family and agreement from Sevenoaks District Council as to the condition of the proposed property (property is fit for human habitation)

5.4.5 Specific situation funding

Maximum grant of £50,000 with a repayment requirement once the property is sold or transferred.

Discretionary assistance will be considered in specific and unusual situations which prevent a disabled person from receiving a much needed adaption.

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For those owner occupiers and private sector tenants who for very specific reasons are ineligible for a mandatory DFG. As a result of not being able to fund essential adaptations additional social care costs, hospital admissions and poor family environment will result. Circumstances that are applicable include:

Long term prognosis, limited or no income and living off diminishing amount of savings or for applicants who need additional facilities at a second property which is not their sole or main residence.

To be eligible to make a discretionary application one must have to been assessed by an Occupational Therapist as requiring the adaptations; adaptations are necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practical, unable to make a mandatory application, have sufficient equity in the property and accept, including landlord a charge being placed upon the property.

In order to determine upon eligibility and if such assistance is reasonable for private sector tenants of an application, a summary of the case shall be produced by the Team Leader - Private Sector Housing and submitted to the Property Services Manager and Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing and only if both parties agree will discretionary assistance be considered.

A maximum amount of £50,000 will be available or 50% of the equity existing at the time of application, whichever is the lesser. However any application must demonstrate value for money, no other option is available (i.e relocation) and once completed there is no expectation of a successive mandatory DFG application being made.

This grant will have regard to the means testing criteria undertaken via the mandatory DFG process and have the same eligible criteria as a mandatory DFG.

5.5 Accelerated Facility Grant (AFG)

Maximum grant of £7,500 with a repayment being considered between £5,000 and £7,500.

AFG assistance will provide a quicker more streamlined service.

AFGs will be considered for those adaptations costing under £7,500 and recommended by an Occupational Therapist. Applicants must be owner-occupiers, private sector tenant or RSL tenants, be registered or registerable disabled. No means test will be applicable for this grant.

Such a grant is appropriate in situations for low cost or urgently needed disabled aids and adaptations (for instance, a straight stair lift or level access shower) that, if not carried out, could directly affect the occupant's health, safety and welfare, or the health, safety and welfare of the disabled person's carer. AFG is not for property repair or its maintenance, it is solely for adaptations.

The grant will only require one estimate and be limited to a maximum of £7,500. Any grant liable to exceed this amount will be required to apply for a mandatory DFG. A charge shall be applied to such grants between £5,000 and £7,500 and will those stated by The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008. See Appendix B for conditions appropriate for an AFG.

Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)

The HSG has a maximum of £3,000. No requirement for repayment shall be applied to such grants.

This grant is solely to provide support to any customer being discharged from hospital. Due to the many housing related issues which prevent a timely hospital discharge a specific list of works can not be given, however all works associated with the grant must be essential to enable the customer to once again reside in their own home. Examples of works that would be expected to be supported by a HDG include deep cleaning, decluttering, minor adaptations, boiler repairs/replacement, minor repairs, moving furniture.

Applicants for a HSG must be in hospital at the time of referral and awaiting discharge. Owner occupiers and private sector tenants are available to make an application for this grant and applicants are not required to go through the means testing process. An application form will need to be completed along with confirmation of ownership/tenancy and work is required to allow hospital discharge to occur.

Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)

The maximum grant will be £1000.00, available to owners and private sector tenants with no repayment criteria being applicable.

The Safe and Secure Grant is designed to reduce admissions to hospital and promote independence. Repairs to the house and its environs will be minor in nature and could include:

- repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps;
- safety and security repairs; and
- providing additional property modifications to promote independence for customers with a specific disability, diagnosed condition (or written evidence supporting a condition) with a Dementia to ensure they reside in their own home as long as possible.

With the new links being forged it is envisaged that many organisations can refer applicants in the Council for assessment, these organisations would include Community care agencies, charities and family carers.

This type of non-means tested grant will be available to those who are over 60 or with a specific ill health diagnosis (or written confirmation of systems by a medical

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professional or disability. This grant is primarily aimed at those individuals and carers living with Alzheimer's and Dementia.

6.0 DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE

Housing Assistance Grant (HAG)

Maximum £10,000 is available to an owner occupier and repayable upon sale or transfer. Appendix C details the repayment conditions associated with a HAG.

In principle, the Council takes the view responsibility for all repair and maintenance of a property rests with the owner. Discretionary financial assistance will normally only be available where it can be demonstrated that other funding options have been explored and eliminated, or where the use of discretionary funding assists the Council in meeting its strategic objectives.

Subject to funds being available financial assistance to qualifying residential premises will be provided as a discretionary Housing Assistance grant. Once the budget has been committed no further offers will be made. In such circumstances, the Council may draw up a waiting list of people wanting assistance which will be administered using a points system.

The Council will consider applications for a means tested, repayable HAG where it can be demonstrated that reasonable steps have been taken to fund the works through alternative means, for example through conventional loans, equity release or similar schemes. The Council accepts that commercial products may not always be appropriate and will seek to target limited funds to those in the greatest need.

Assistance may be refused in cases where an applicant is found to have an outstanding debt to the council of any kind. This does not have to be in relation to the same property that the current application for assistance is for. In particular an applicant with council tax arrears may only apply for assistance once the outstanding debt has been repaid or an appropriate payment method has been arranged and adhered to.

For these reasons, it cannot be assumed any HAG funding will be available.

Enquiries will be prioritised to take into account the applicant's circumstances, financial need, the nature of the work and its urgency. Applicants must understand the grant system is not an emergency service so anything requiring urgent action will need to be undertaken by the resident.

Applications for discretionary assistance will only be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where essential works are required to remedy Category 1 hazards (as assessed using the Housing Health and safety Rating System - HHSRS; or Multiple category 2 hazards (Band D) that pose a risk to health of the vulnerable group.

Applications for discretionary assistance will not be considered in the following circumstances:

- for non-essential repairs or for works which are considered desirable rather than essential (including kitchen and bathroom refurbishments to replace dated but otherwise serviceable fittings);
- for repairs to porches, conservatories, sheds, outbuildings, garden fences, boundary walls etc.;
- for cosmetic repairs, redecoration and cleaning works;
- for the replacement of windows and doors on grounds of energy efficiency unless considered by the Council to be in serious disrepair and beyond economical repair;
- for completing DIY projects;
- the funding of works which would normally be covered by a household insurance policy. Discretionary funding is not intended to be an alternative to insurance cover; and
- for instances where a disabled persons home is unsuitable for adaption to meet their specific needs.

Pre qualifying criteria

The Council will specify a period of time during which the applicant must have lived in the dwelling as his/her only or main residence prior to the date of the HAG application for assistance and reserves the right to specify different periods for different purposes. A period of three years will apply to all HAG discretionary applications. In exceptional circumstances (i.e when a life changing event has occurred requiring significant adaptations), the Council may consider exercising its discretion in relation to this requirement if there are particular strategic reasons to do so.

It is not the Council's intention to make discretionary financial assistance available to those who have recently purchased a property and have decided not to commission a full structural survey or Homebuyer's Report since this would have provided the opportunity to re-negotiate the purchase price to reflect any defects identified by the surveyor.

7.0 General Guidance on the operation of the Housing Assistance policy

7.1 Buildings Not Attracting Grant Assistance

The following dwellings will not qualify for grant assistance:

- Properties, which are not of a permanent nature or where the conditions are such it is not cost effective to undertake significant repairs;
- Dwellings, sheds, outhouses and extensions such as conservatories that do not have planning permission or building regulations approval.
- Non-residential buildings.
- Improving conditions within the private rented sector as this is the responsibility of the landlord.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants are freeholders and long leaseholders with at least 10 years interest left in the property. A tenant (with the landlords permission) can apply for most grants although a HAG is unavailable. The property must be the main or only residence of the applicant or a member of their family who the works are for and have the intention of residing there. A property must be within geographical area of Sevenoaks District Council.

A person who lives in the dwelling under a right of exclusive occupation for a period of more than 5 years or for life will be able to apply assistance.

Qualifying house boat means a boat or similar structure designed or adapted for use as a place of permanent habitation which -

- (a) has its only or main mooring within the area of a single local housing authority;
- (b) is moored in pursuance of a right to that mooring; and
- (c) is a dwelling for the purposes of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (council tax).

And includes any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenances belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

Qualifying Park Home means a caravan within the meaning of Part 1 of the Caravan Sites and control of development Act 1960 (disregarding the amendment made by section 13(2) of the caravan sites act 1968) which-

- (a) is stationed on land forming part of a protected site within the meaning of the Mobile Homes Act 1983;
- (b) is occupied under an agreement to which the Act applies or under a gratuitous licence; and

(c) is a dwelling for the purposes of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (council tax).

And includes any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenances belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

All funding is provided subject to funding being available. The Council reserves the right to refuse an application and when necessary have a waiting list.

Form of Application

Application for assistance must be on the forms prescribed and provided by the Council and must include:

All Grants

- Applications must be in writing and include full particulars of the proposed works including, where relevant, plans and specifications of the works for which assistance is being sought;
- For grants over £7,500 at least two itemised estimates from independent building contractors unless otherwise directed by the Council;
- For grants under £7,500 at least one itemised estimate from an independent building contractor unless otherwise directed by the Council;
- If works undertaken by Maintenance operatives employed by Sevenoaks District Council costs will be calculated on an hourly rate basis plus the cost of any materials
- Particulars of any professional fees or other charges which relate to the preparation of the scheme, the supervision of the works or the administration of the contract;
- Proof concerning the ownership or tenancy of the dwelling;
- written consent from all owners of the dwelling to the carrying out of the proposed works;
- Written confirmation from applicants agreeing to the relevant conditions.
- Where required by the Council, the consent of the mortgagees;
- Certificate required in the case of an owners/occupiers application or certificate for a tenants application accompanied by an owners certificate from the landlord.

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- Signed agreement to repay the grant under certain circumstances as stated by the Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008 (England)) or
- Undertaking that it is an applicants intention that the dwelling will be occupied by the applicant as their only or main residence for a period of 5 years from completion of the works and to repay any financial assistance in circumstances.
- Financial information regarding any outstanding debts or charges placed against the property.

Certificate of Future Occupation

Owner's application - The owner must sign an owner-occupation certificate which certifies that they have, or propose to acquire, a qualifying owner's interest in the property and that they intend that they or a member of their family (in the case of Disabled Facilities Grants this must be the disabled person) will live in the property as their, or that family member's only or main residence for 5 years.

Tenant's application

- (a) The tenant must sign a tenant's certificate which certifies that their intention is that they or a member of their family will live in the property as their, or the member's, only or main residence for 5 years.
- (b) This certificate must be accompanied by a certificate of intended letting from the landlord.

Occupiers application - An occupier must sign an occupiers certificate indicating they have acquired and occupy a qualifying house boat or park home.

Amount of Assistance

The council will specify the maximum amount for assistance. These amounts are inclusive of all costs including Value Added Tax and fees.

Eligible Works

Eligible works will be only those identified as such by an officer of the Council's Private sector housing Team with reference to the Council's Policy. Any relevant fees will also be included. Any works, which would be eligible for assistance but can be paid for via an insurance claim or third party claim, will not attract grant assistance. In exceptional cases assistance may be given on condition it is repaid out of the proceeds of any future claim.

Works outside the curtilage of the property will not normally eligible for assistance unless they relate to the provision of essential services such as water, gas or electricity.

Restriction on grants for works already begun (Section 29 HG,C&R Act 1996)

An application for assistance will not be approved where the relevant works have been completed before the assistance is approved.

Where an application has been received and works have started before the assistance has been approved, only those items yet to be carried out will be considered as part of the application. The only exception to this restriction will be where the Council are satisfied there were good reasons for doing so and prior agreement of the Council was obtained.

Fees & Other Ancillary Costs

Other charges that can be included within a grant application, where applicable, will include:

- confirmation of the owner's interest, when required by the Council;
- specialist surveys, design/preparation of drawings, plans & schedules;
- assistance in completing forms;
- applications for planning permission and building regulation approval;
- obtaining estimates
- supervision of the relevant works
- disconnection and re-connection of electricity, gas, water or drainage utilities where this is necessary for the grant-aided works
- the services and charges of an occupational therapist

Notification of Approval of Assistance (Section 34 HG,C&R Act 1996)

The Council will notify an applicant in writing whether the application for assistance is approved or refused. The notification will be provided as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a completed application but no longer than 6 months from the date of the receipt of the completed application.

A grant approval will only be approved if the applicant has agreed to the applicable conditions i.e. repayment.

The approval will specify the amount of assistance, the amount that is ineligible, the applicant's contribution if any towards the eligible costs, expiry date of the assistance and applicable conditions. Assistance is not transferable to another person on the sale of the property. Expiry date will be 12 months for DFGs, top up assistance and specific situation funding, for others 6 months expiry date shall be stated.

In the case of refusal, the Council will give a written reason for refusal. The applicant will be able to appeal against the decision made on their grant application and the process for doing this is set out under appeal procedure.

Re-determining an Approval and Unforeseen Works (Section 34 HG,C&R Act 1996)

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If after an application has been approved the Council are satisfied that owing to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant.

- a) The eligible works cannot be, or could not have been carried out for approval amount;
- b) The amount of the costs which have been or are to be incurred has decreased/increased; or
- c) The eligible works cannot be, or could not have been, carried out without carrying out additional works which could not have been reasonably foreseen at the time the application was made;

The Council may re-determine the estimated expense and the amount of grant. At no time will any re-determination exceed the grant maximum.

Additional works identified once works have been commenced must be seen and agreed prior to them being carried out. An instruction will be given authorising any unforeseen works.

Extension of time (Section 37 HG,C&R Act 1996)

An offer of assistance will expire after 6 or 12 months depending upon the type of grant, by which time all works must have been completed. If an extension of time is required an application must be made to the Council, an extension will only be given if delays have occurred outside of the control of the applicant and in which case an extension of no more than 3 months will be given. A second extension will not be considered. If there is no evidence of the applicant arranging for the works to be completed during the 6 months at the end of this time the grant will be closed and any costs incurred in the application process will not be reimbursed by the Council.

Supervision of Works

Applicants are advised to use a suitably qualified person to supervise and arrange the works. This can be, the Home Improvement Agency or any other approved surveyor to assist with their applications.

Relevant fees to the Improvement Agency or other approved managing agent will be included as eligible works, currently 12.5% of eligible costs.

If no specific contract in place, the building contract will be between the applicant and the chosen contractor and will not include the Council. An officer from the Council's Private sector housing Team will check the works to ensure they are carried out according to the specification of work and in accordance with good building practice. However, the Council and its officers are **not** liable for any poor workmanship and do not provide any guarantee. Any faults with the works will be a matter between the applicant and their contractor.

Where eligible works are not of an acceptable standard, the Council will withhold monies.

Conditions of Payment (Section 37 HG,C&R Act 1996)

Assistance will only be paid if:

- (a) The work is completed within the time stated in the approval or such further period the council may allow. This must be confirmed in writing. This period is normally 12 months from approval, although this can be shorter especially when works need to be completed in a short period of time.
- (b) The work is carried out in accordance with the conditions of approval,
- (c) The work is carried out by one of the contractors whose estimate accompanied the application. The Council will normally assess the assistance on the lowest estimate,
- (d) The applicant completes a request for payment form or verbally confirms acceptance and satisfaction of the completed works and that the builders are not members of the applicant's family.
- (e) The Council is provided with an acceptable invoice or receipt for payment for the works or fees. The invoice must include full details of the builder/surveyor employed including VAT registration details. The applicant or a member of his family cannot submit an invoice,
- (f) The Council has been notified in advance that the works have begun.
- (g) That the works have been completed to a satisfactory standard and in accordance with the grant offer and estimates,
- (h) Any copies of specified guarantees and test certificates are submitted. Trades having a competent person regime must either use a competent person or make a building regulations application.
- (i) Payments are either made to the applicant or preferably direct to the contractor or agents. In the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant, payment of the grant can be delayed by up to six months where existing budgets have already been committed.

Interim Payments (Section 35, HG,C&R Act 1996)

Interim payments will normally be paid, but these are at the discretion of the Council. The applicant's contribution (if any) will be taken into account in any payment. Normally the applicant will have to pay any contribution they may have towards the cost of the work first, before any grant payments are made. Payments will only be paid for work satisfactory completed and not for materials not yet used or installed. Eligible works must be carried out to the satisfaction of the council and an acceptable invoice supplied.

Grant and repayment Conditions

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Are explained in more detail in grant specific appendices as conditions vary between mandatory and discretionary assistance, however it is the Councils belief that a charge either with land registry or with local land charge are appropriate in most situations.

Before imposing any such repayment or other conditions or taking steps to enforce it, the Council shall have regard to the ability of the applicant to make that repayment or contribution. It would therefore be possible that assistance be provided without the repayment condition i.e restrictions on additional charges or no equity within the property.

Repayment upon Breach of Conditions (Sections 40-43 HG,C&R Act 1996)

In the case of a breach of grant conditions applicable to a specific grant the monies becomes repayable to the Council.

In the case where an applicant ceases to be the owner, or it appears to the Council that the applicant was not at the time of the application being approved entitled to the grant, no payment shall be made and the grant cancelled. In the case where interim payments have been paid, no further payments will be made and the Council will decide whether recovery of any or all previous payments is necessary.

Successive Assistance

There is no restriction upon applicants receiving a second for mandatory disabled facility grants or AFG.

It is not envisaged that successive Specific Situation Grants, relocation funding nor top up funding would be available.

For the HDG and SSG a maximum of 2 grants in a three year period will be allowed and only for different works (i.e. because of a worsening of a medical condition).

For the HDG successive grants are appropriate, however if we return to a property and once again undertaking similar works (i.e. cleaning property) then a charge for repayment will be considered.

Given it is the view of the Council that it is for the home owner to maintain a property the council will not generally consider giving assistance on more than one occasion in relation to a specific property.

For HAG discretionary assistance a condition will be placed upon the customer to keep the property free from Category 1 hazards, in a good state of repair for 5 years and the level of maintenance carried out will be taken into account when considering any new application.

Appeal Procedure

Representations can be made in the following cases:

- In the event of disagreement with a decision,
- In the case that one of the conditions of one of the aforementioned grants should be waived or changed,
- That there is an exceptional case for providing assistance which is not within the Councils existing policy,
- There has been some error or excessive delay in the processing of a grant.

In such cases the person should write in the first instance to:

Private Sector Housing - Team Leader
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road Sevenoaks TN13 1HG
psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk

DRAFT

Appendix A

Repayment Conditions - Disabled Facility Grant

Disposal of the dwelling: The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008

Where a grant is for a sum exceeding £5000, the council may demand repayment of such part of the grant that exceeds £5000 (but may not demand an amount in excess of £10,000) if:

- (a) The recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date; and
- (b) the council, having considered:
 - (i) the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he required to repay all or any of the grant;
 - (ii) whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment;
 - (iii) whether the disposal is made for reason connected with the physical or mental health or well being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
 - (iv) whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity,

is satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment.

NOTES:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force,

4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

Definitions

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:-
 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7: General Guidance on the operation of the housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Appendix B

Repayment Conditions - Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant

1. Funding adaptations over £30,000 (top up assistance)

All approvals shall have the condition for repayment upon the sale or transfer of the property. Upon completion a charge will be registered with local land charges or Land registry.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7: General Guidance on the operation of the Housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

NOTES:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.

2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.

3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force.

4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

Definitions

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:-
 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

2. Relocation Funding

No repayment conditions are applicable.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

3. Specific situation funding

Repayment

All approvals shall have the condition for repayment upon the sale or transfer of the property. Upon completion a charge will be registered with local land charges or Land registry.

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Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7 General Guidance on the operation of the Housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

NOTES:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force
4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

Definitions

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.

3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:-
- i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

4. Accelerated Facility Grant

Where a grant is for a sum exceeding £5000, the council may demand repayment of such part of the grant that exceeds £5000 (but may not demand an amount in excess of £10,000) if:

- (b) The recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date; and
- (b) the council, having considered:
 - (v) the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he required to repay all or any of the grant;
 - (vi) whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment;
 - (vii) whether the disposal is made for reason connected with the physical or mental health or well being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
 - (viii) whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity,

is satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment.

NOTES:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.

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 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7 General Guidance on the operation of the Housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Appendix C:

Housing Assistance Grant

Repayment

All approvals shall have the condition for repayment upon the sale or transfer of the property. Upon completion a charge will be registered with local land charges or Land registry.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7 General Guidance on the operation of the housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996.

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to then eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

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1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
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 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Appendix D DFG Specific operation Guidance

Change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant:

If a grant has been approved but, before the certified date of completion:

- (a) the works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, or
- (b) the disabled occupant ceases to occupy the property or it ceases to be the intention that they should occupy it, or
- (c) the disabled occupant dies,

the Council may decide:

- (a) not to pay the grant or not to pay any further instalments, or
- (b) that part or all of the works should be completed and paid, or
- (c) the application should be re-determined.

The Council may demand repayment of any instalment plus interest from the date it was paid until repayment.

Carrying out and completion of works:

In approving an application for a grant the Council will require as a condition of payment of the grant that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with such specifications as they determine.

The eligible works must be carried out within 12 months from the date of approval of the application. The Council in extenuating circumstances may extend this period.

The eligible works must be completed to the satisfaction of the council and acceptable invoices, demands or receipts for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or charges must be provided. An invoice, demand or receipt is not acceptable if given by the applicant or a member of his family. Unless the Council directs otherwise, the eligible works must be carried out by the contractor whose estimate accompanied the application.

Repayment where applicant not entitled to grant Section 43 HG,C&R Act 1996

Where an application for a grant is approved but it subsequently appears to the Council that the applicant was not entitled to that grant the Council will not pay the grant or any further instalments.

The Council will demand repayment of the grant plus interest from the date it was paid until repayment.

Applicant ceases to be entitled before payment of the grant 40 HG,C&R Act 1996

This section applies where an application for a grant is approved but before the certified date the applicant ceases to be a person entitled to a grant. In the case

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of a joint application this section does not apply unless all the applicants cease to be so entitled.

Where this section applies—

- (a) no grant shall be paid or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid, and
- (b) the authority may demand that any instalment of the grant which has been paid be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine.

For the purposes of this section an applicant ceases to be a person entitled to a grant:

- (a) in the case of an owner's application—
 - (i) if he ceases to have a qualifying owner's interest, or
 - (ii) if he ceases to have the intention specified in the owner's certificate which accompanied the application;
- (b) in the case of a tenant's application—
 - (i) if he ceases to be a qualifying tenant of the dwelling, or
 - (ii) if the application was accompanied by an owner's certificate and the landlord ceases to have the intention specified in the certificate.

If the case falls within section 41 (change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant), the authority shall act under that section.

Change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant Section 41 HG,C&R Act1996

This applies where an application for a grant has been approved and before the certified date—

- (a) the works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, or
- (b) the disabled occupant ceases to occupy the dwelling qualifying houseboat, qualifying park home or flat concerned or it ceases to be the intention that he should occupy it, or
- (c) the disabled occupant dies.

Where the application related to more than one disabled occupant, this section applies if any of paragraphs (a) to (c) applies in relation to any of them.

- (2) This section applies whether or not the disabled occupant (or any of them) is the applicant (or one of them).
- (3) Where this section applies the local housing authority may take such action as appears to them appropriate and may decide—

- (a) that no grant shall be paid or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid,
 - (b) that the relevant works or some of them should be completed and the grant or an appropriate proportion of it paid, or
 - (c) that the application should be re determined in the light of the new circumstances.
- (4) In making their decision the authority shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case.
- (5) If the authority decide that no grant shall be paid or that no further instalments shall be paid, they may demand that any instalment of the grant which has been paid be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine.

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Item 6 (b) - West Kent Homelessness Strategy

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 9 November 2017 and the relevant minute extract was not available before the printing of these papers, and will follow when available.

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WEST KENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of	Chief Officer, Communities & Business
Status	For Consideration
Also considered by	Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017 Cabinet - 9 November 2017
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.

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- 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

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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"> • Affordability of housing • Decline in one bed housing stock 	<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.

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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?

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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

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- 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

- **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	
Better Homes, Greater Choice	Kent’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Sustainable Lettings Protocol	Kent Social Care Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care
Growth & Infrastructure Framework	This document’s purpose is to ensure that future housing developments within Kent meet the objective of creating long lasting sustainable communities 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	Ccommittee 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"> • Vision 2026 • Our Five Year Plan 2014 • Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 • Sustainable Community Strategy • Local Plan • Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Development Plan 2010 • Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Review • Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2004-09 • Empty Homes Policy 2012-17 • Tenancy Strategy • Health Inequalities Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Strategy: Local Development Framework • Tenancy Strategy • Housing Assistance Policy • Empty Homes Protocol • Think Housing First: Mind the Gap • Affordable Housing SPD • Sustainable Communities Strategy • Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 • Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy Strategy • Empty Homes Action Plan 2015-17 • Allocation and Development Management Plan 2015 • Under-Occupation Strategy • Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy • Community Plan • Core Strategy 2011 • Allocations Policy • Health Inequalities Action Plan • Housing Strategy & Action Plan • Housing Needs Assessment 2016 • Affordable Housing SPD 2011 • Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 • Private Sector Stock Condition Survey

WEST KENT: POPULATION AND HOUSING MARKET PROFILE

	Sevenoaks	Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge & Malling
Population	117,035	116,100	120,800
Projected population growth 2013-2033	+17%	+17%	+19%
Projected household growth 2013-2033	21%	25%	25%
Land within Green Belt	93%	70%	75%
Projected increase in households 65+ to 2033	49%	61%	n/a
Level of owner occupation	73%	66%	71%
Average house price¹	£423,000	£381,000	£350,000
Median income	£36,300	£34,600	£36,800
Ratio of income to house price (national average 6.5)²	11	9.7	9.3
Average entry level private sector rent p.m. (2-bed)	£1100	£824	£850
Number on council Housing Register	805	940	994
Number of new social lettings 2015/16	211	363	291
Average length of wait before offer (2-bedroom flat Band B)	18 months	16 months	15 months
Net need for additional affordable homes (per year)	422	341	277

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

¹ Median house price (June 2017)

² Lowest quartile (entry level) house price

³ As at 31.3.17

⁴ During 2016/17

⁵ 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.

Tunbridge Wells:

- Modernised sheltered housing;
- Additional homes for disabled residents;
- Regeneration of Sherwood and Ramsie 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.

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.

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 2033³ 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.

³ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015; Tonbridge 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 Malling⁴. 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.

⁴ 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 income⁵. The problem is even more severe in rural areas, where the average house costs 17 times the average income.

⁵ 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.

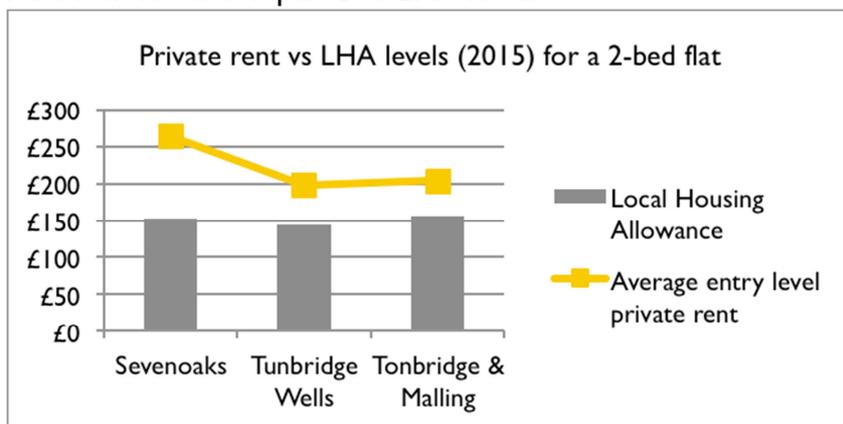
Starter Homes have been introduced by the Government to assist first time buyers under 40 to purchase a home. However, it has been estimated that in order to buy a home costing £250,000 (after the 20% discount has been applied) a household would have to earn £58,000/year plus put down a £47,000 deposit. 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.⁶ 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, analysis⁷ 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

⁶ figures based on Shelter, October 2015

⁷ 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.

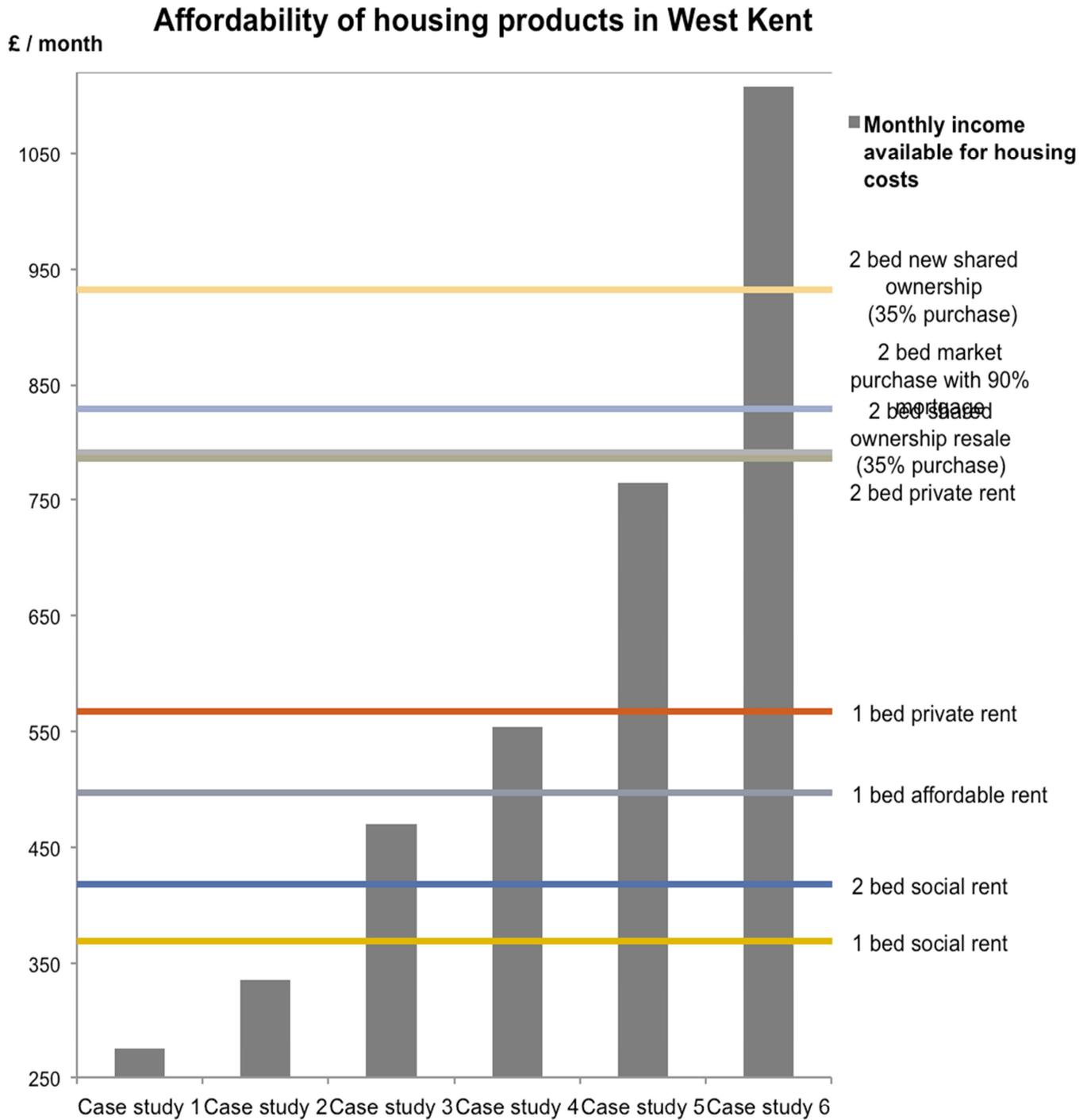
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In summary, residents continue to face increased pressure on the affordability and accessibility of housing, with fewer housing options available. We anticipate that there will be a marginal group of low to middle income households who are unable to 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>Case study 2</p> <p>Household: An unemployed young person (aged 29) living in Tonbridge and Malling without savings</p> <p>Employment/Income: 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>Outcome: 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>Case study 3</p> <p>Household: A single person, aged 40, living in Tunbridge Wells</p> <p>Employment/Income: 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>Outcome: 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>Case study 4</p> <p>Household: A couple with 1 child living and working in Sevenoaks.</p> <p>Employment/Income: Annual household income of £22,177. Applying affordability criteria, up to £554 / month could be available for housing costs (30% of income).</p> <p>Outcome: 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>Case study 5</p> <p>Household: A lone parent with 2 children seeking a 2 bedroom property in Tunbridge Wells.</p> <p>Employment/Income: The family receive £1,667 each month in wages and partial benefits, including payment for housing costs.</p> <p>Outcome: 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>Case study 6</p> <p>Household: A working couple with 1 child living and working in Sevenoaks</p> <p>Employment/Income: 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>Outcome: 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 effective⁸. 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.

⁸ 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 homelessness⁹, 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.

⁹ 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
Total	1307	959	349	124	2739

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 places¹⁰.

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.

¹⁰ 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

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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.

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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

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

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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

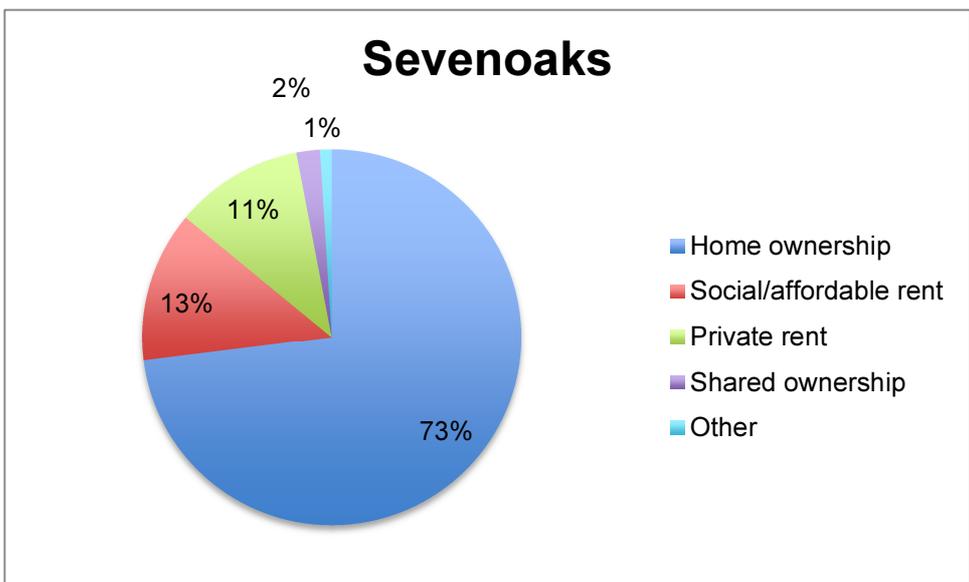
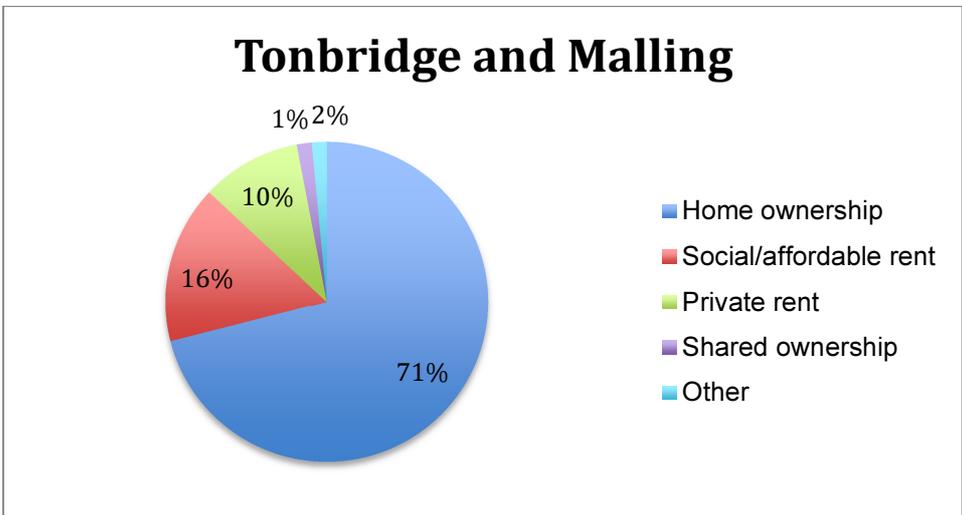
Housing which is in some way unsuitable for the needs of a household, whether because of its size, type, design, location, condition or cost.

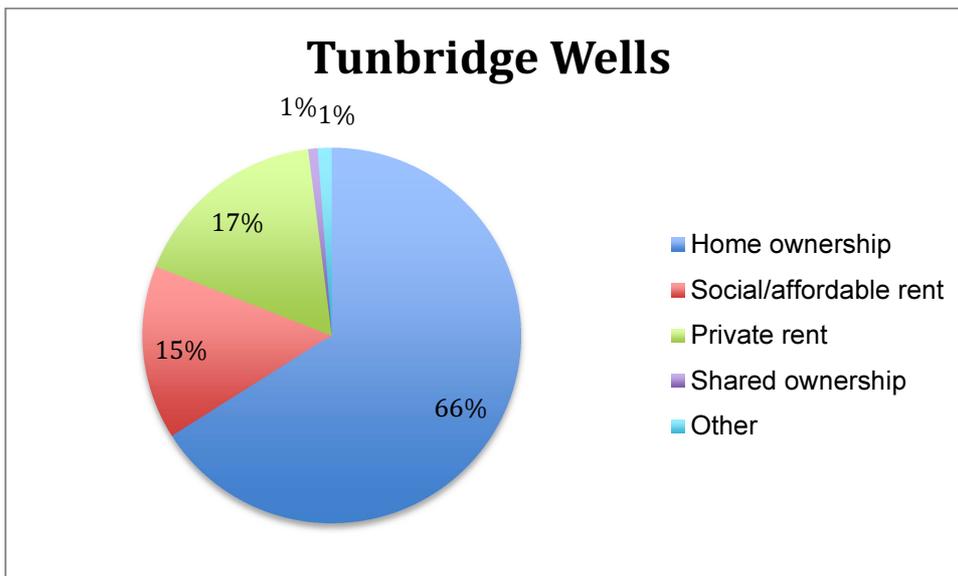
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West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy - Evidence Base
(Strategy - Appendix 2)

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

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

Source: Local Authority data

3. Population

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

*Figures for 2011-2031

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

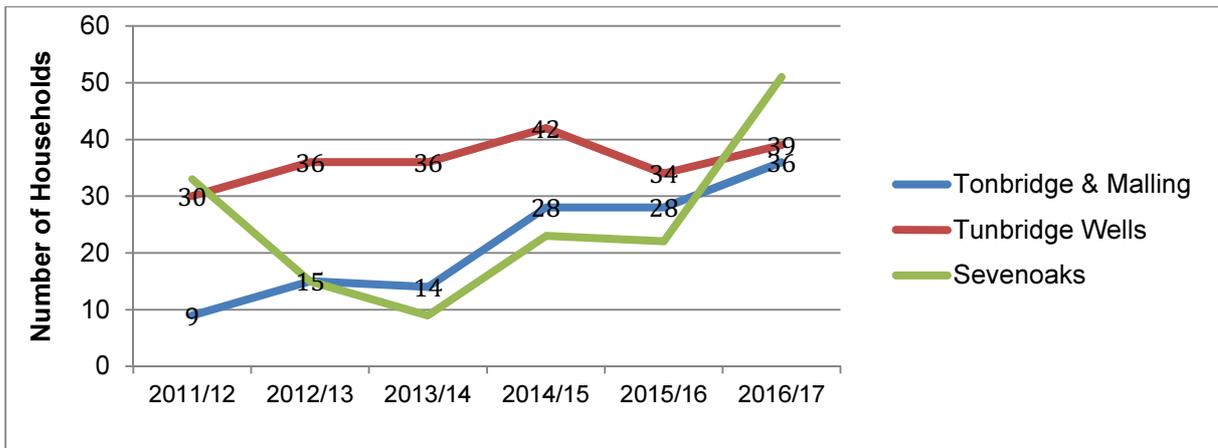
SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

4. Black and minority ethnic (BME) population

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

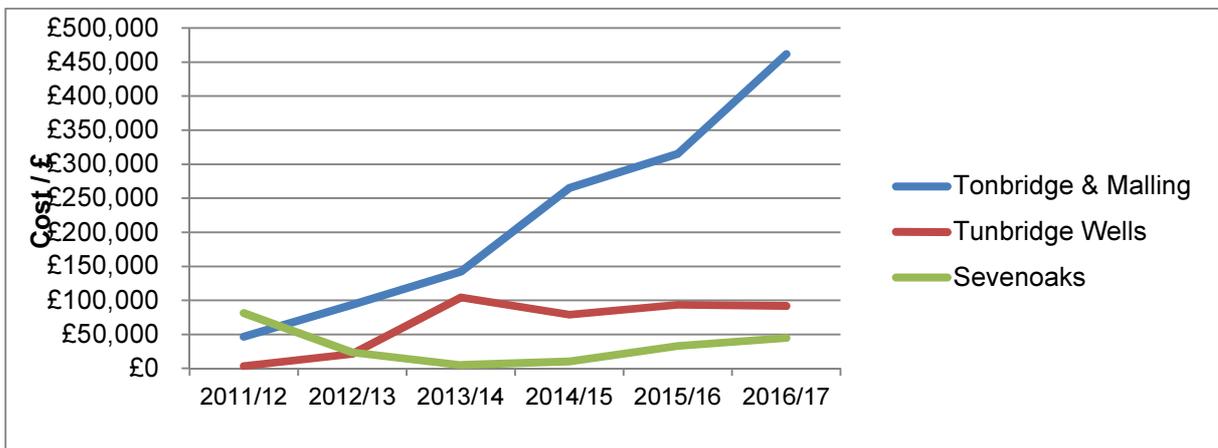
Source: ONS (2011 Census)

5. Use of temporary accommodation



Source: Local Authority data

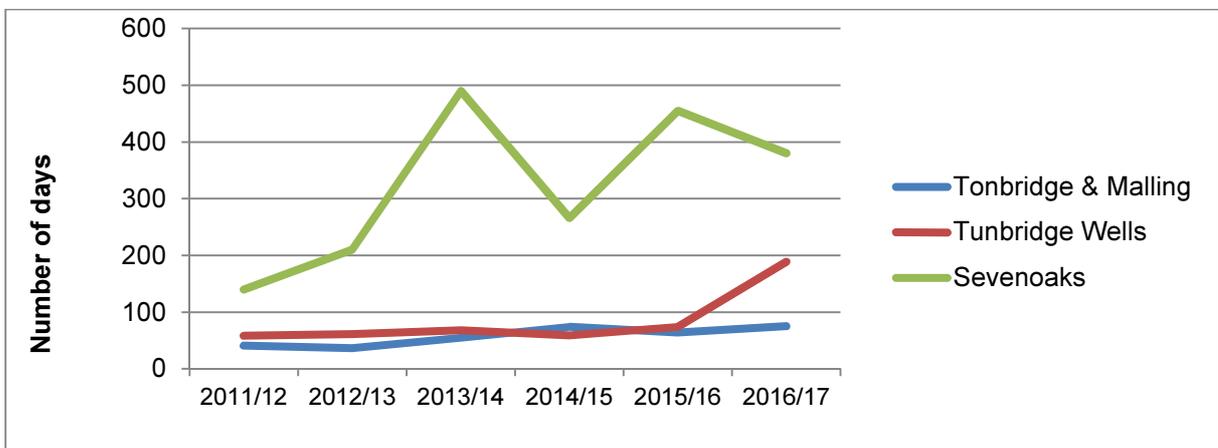
6. Cost of temporary accommodation



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

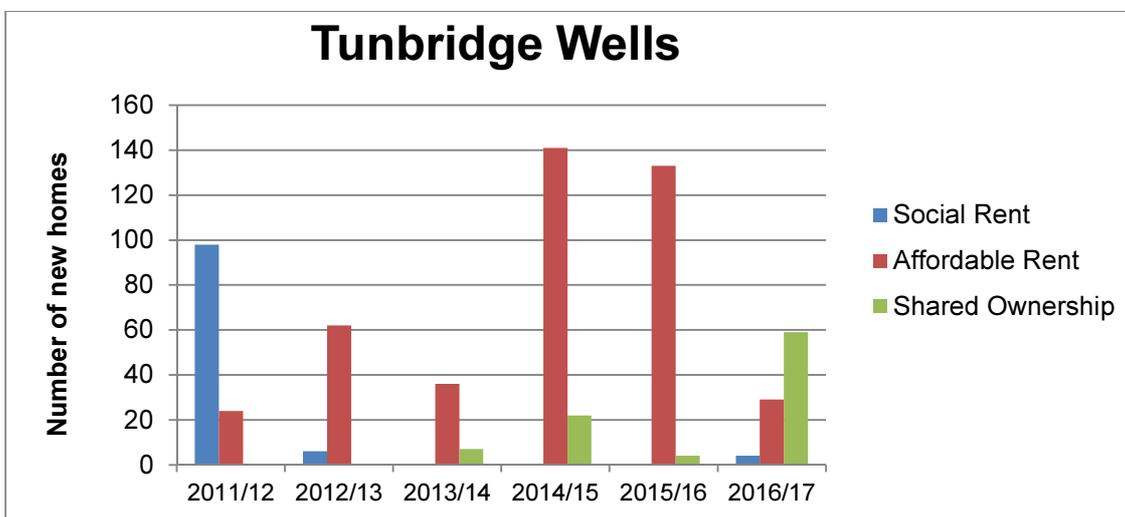
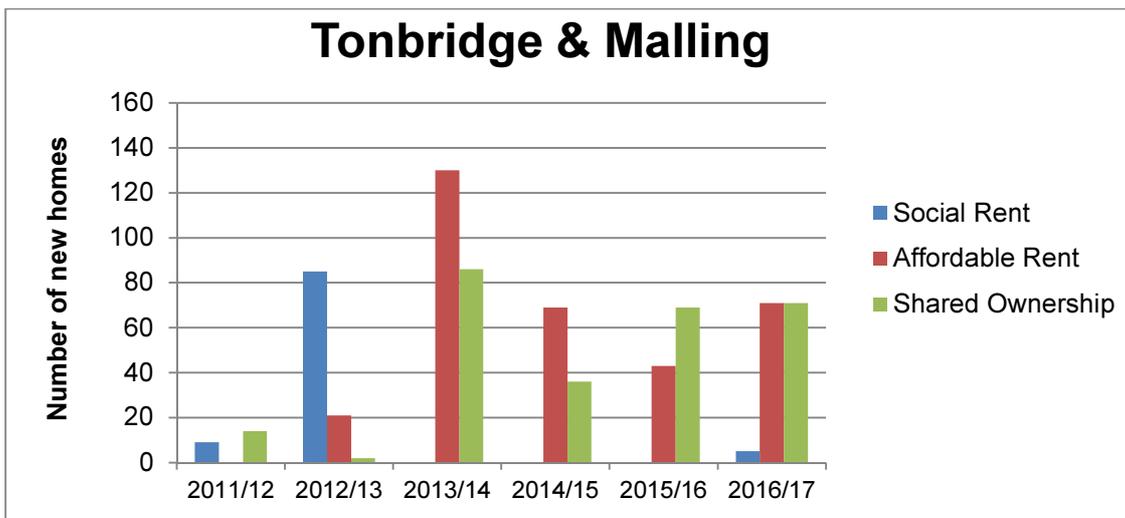
8.1 Estimate of affordable housing need

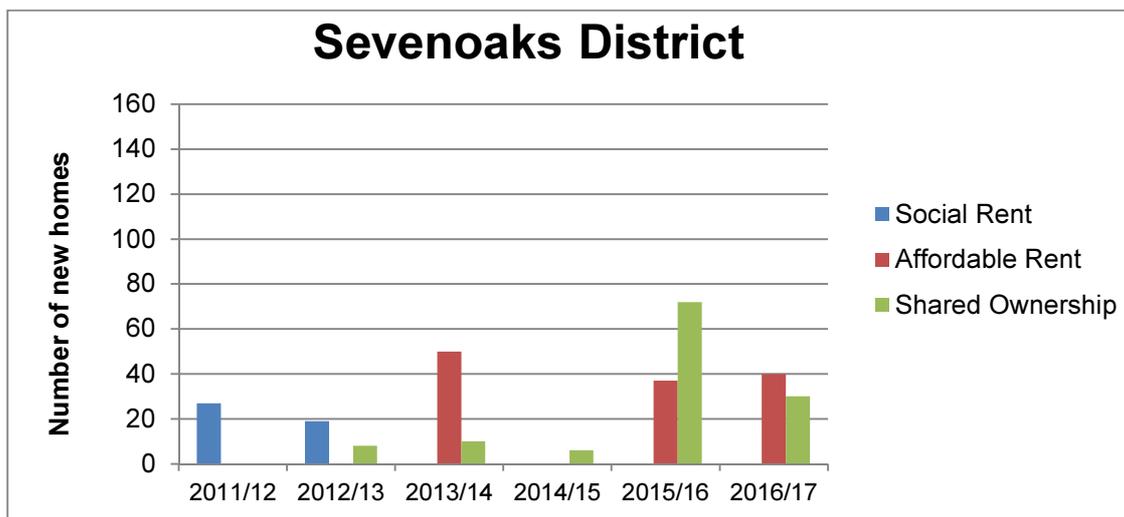
	Number of homes / year
Sevenoaks	422
Tunbridge Wells	341
Tonbridge and Malling	277

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
Sevenoaks	321	430
Tonbridge and Malling	438	419
Tunbridge Wells	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%*

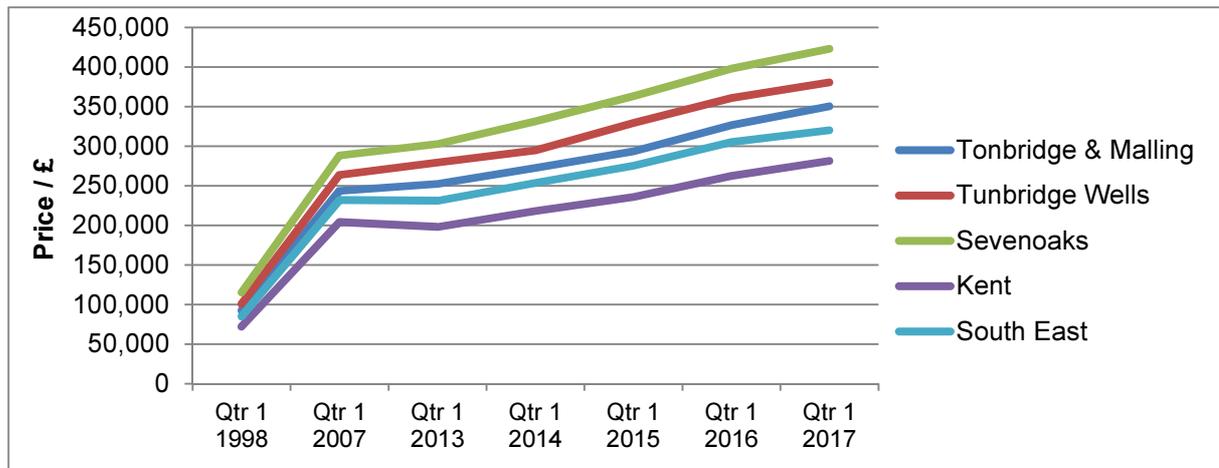
*Average for age 16-64 (2012)
 Source: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)
 Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)
 SHMA Update – Implications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

11. House prices

	Median House Price
Sevenoaks	£302,000
Tonbridge and Malling	£275,000
Tunbridge Wells	£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

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

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

	NW Kent	Ashford	Maidstone	Medway/ Swale	High Weald
Shared rate	£70.84	£67.10	£68.28	£65.66	£77.39
1 bed	£124.69	£119.09	£123.58	£110.67	£135.36
2 bed	£153.02	£145.43	£157.56	£138.08	£176.56
3 bed	£174.43	£168.00	£180.45	£153.02	£223.19
4 bed	£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
Increase in median private sector rent prices	16%	10%	10%
Inflation	6%		
National growth	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

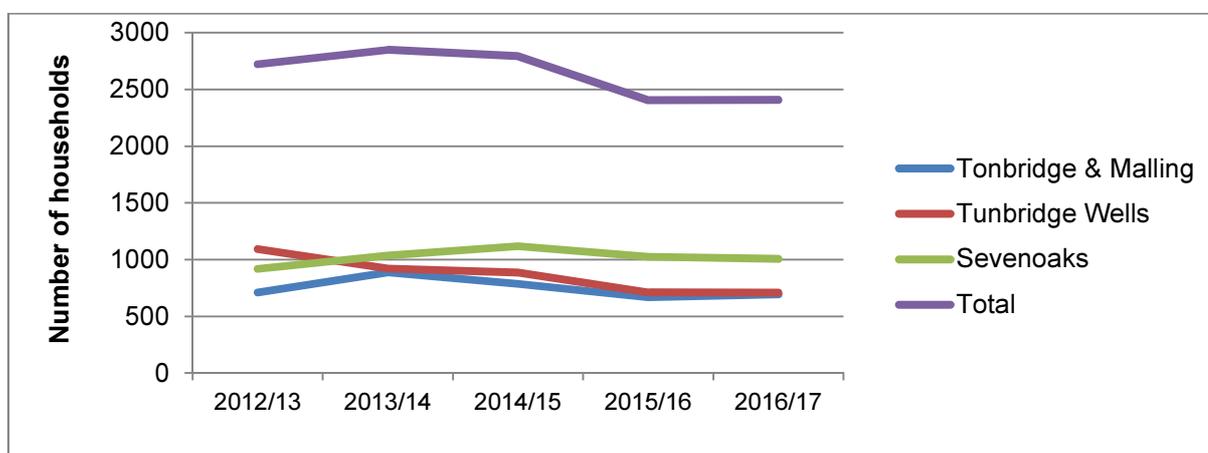
Annual household income	Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge and Malling
Below £20,000	24%	22%
£20-40,000	33%	32%

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

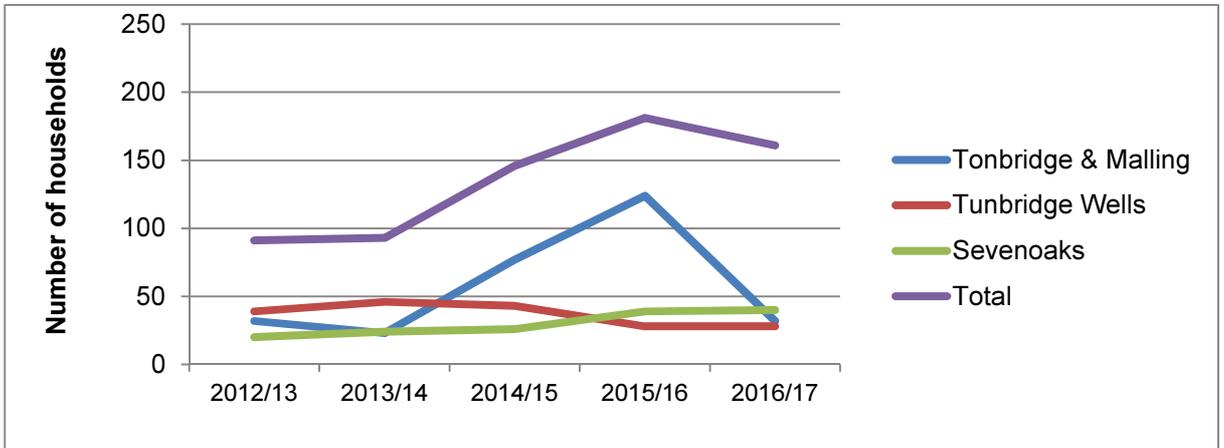
17.2 Number of cases where homelessness was prevented

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

Total	796	657	696	598	496	536
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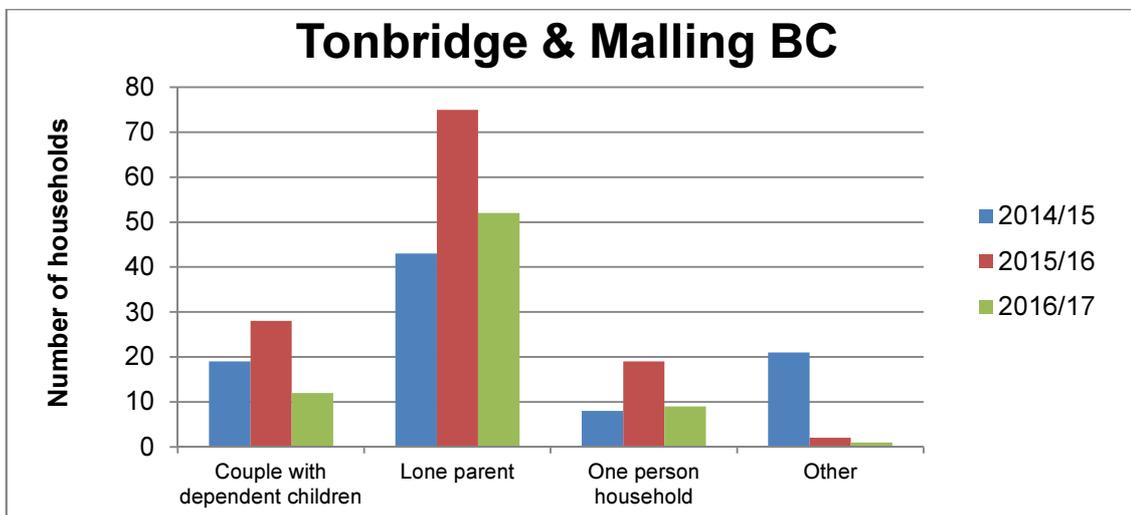
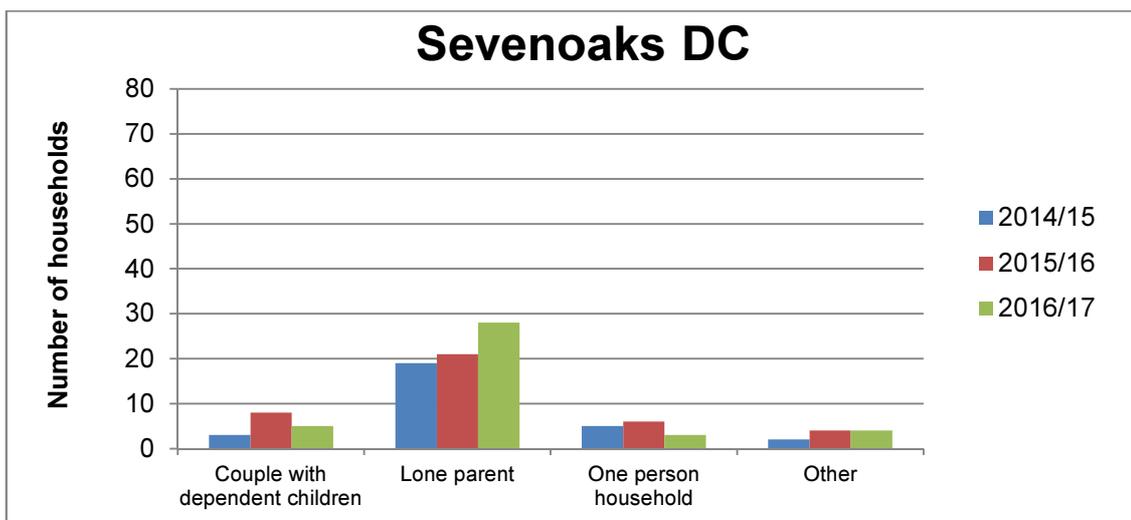
Source: Local Authority data

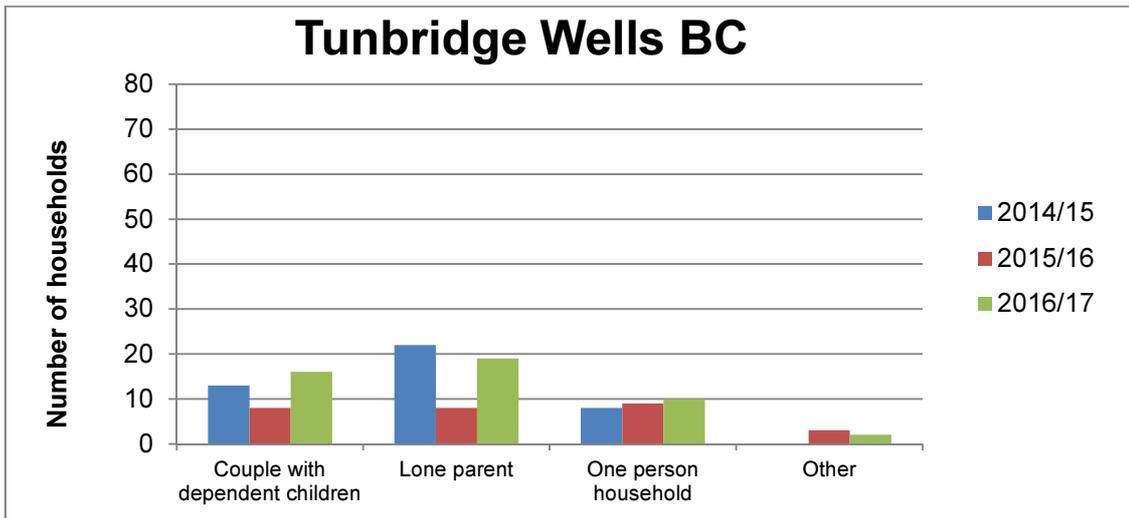
17.3 Households accepted as homeless



Source: Local Authority data

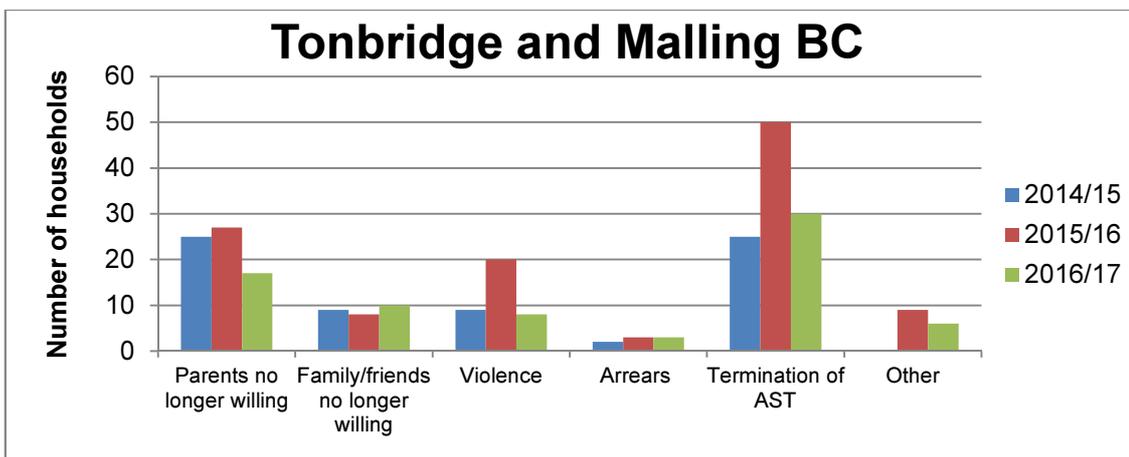
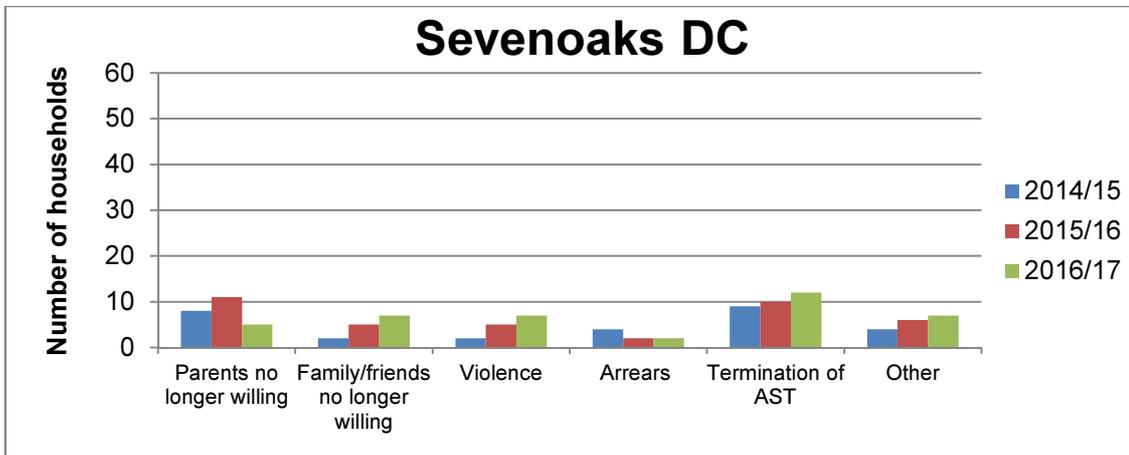
17.4 Types of household accepted as homeless

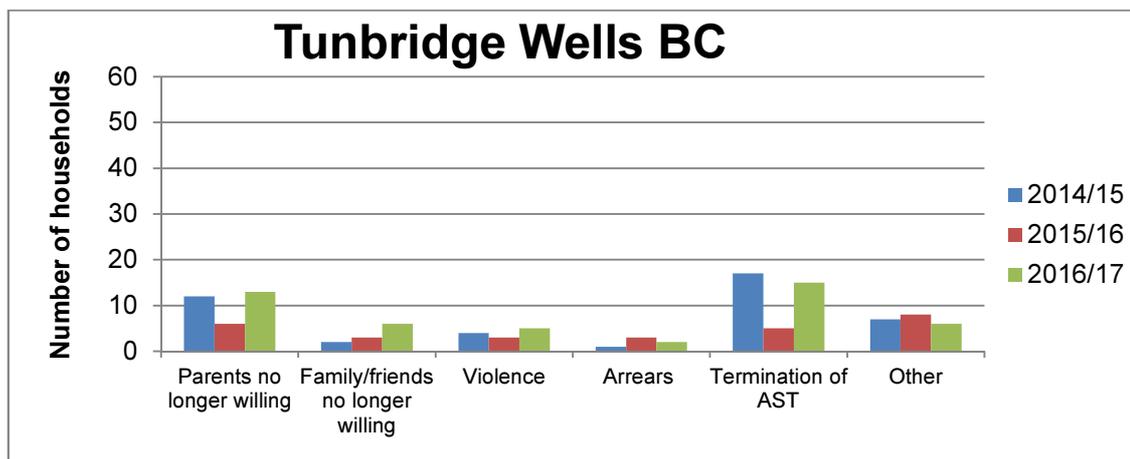




Source: Local Authority data

17.5 Reasons for homelessness





Source: Local Authority data

18 Rough Sleepers

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

Source: Local Authority data

19 Housing Register

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

Source: Local Authority data

20 Disabled Facilities Grant

	Number of completions (2016/17)	Overall spend (2014/15)
Sevenoaks	90	£629,435
Tonbridge & Malling	67	£702,000
Tunbridge Wells	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
Sevenoaks	80	0	25.3	n/a
Tonbridge and Malling	50	40	18.1	13.7
Tunbridge Wells	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)**

Sevenoaks	19
Tonbridge and Malling	19
Tunbridge Wells	80

Source: Local Authority data

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

Sevenoaks	8.7%
Tonbridge & Malling	7.5%
Tunbridge Wells	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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Yes, particularly the availability of housing for all.	<p>The strategy does not have any specific reference to Care Leavers which we would expect to see</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>	Andrew McDonald	Kent County Council 18+ Care leaver Service

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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

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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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	<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>		

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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>		

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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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	<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>		

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	<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

Summary of decision to be made:	Draft West Kent Joint Housing & Homelessness Strategy		
Lead Officer (job title):	Lesley Bowles, Chief Officer Communities & Business		
Date the final decision is due to be made:	13/07/2017	Date this assessment commenced:	11/05/2017
Is the decision relevant to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty?			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:			
Characteristic:	Data and consultation	Summary of impact	Actions
Disability	West Kent Joint Housing & Homelessness Strategy	Provides assistance for vulnerable residents to remain in their homes.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Carers	As above	Provides assistance to those residents who are caring for relatives.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Race	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their race.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Gender	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their gender.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Age	As above	Provides assistance to residents, ensuring appropriate access and support for older residents and those with dementia.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Religion / Belief	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their religion/belief.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services

EqIA – for DECISIONS

Sexual Orientation	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their sexual orientation.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Pregnancy / Maternity	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their pregnancy/maternity status.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Marital or Civil Partnership Status	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of their marital/Civil Partnership status.	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Gender reassignment	As above	Provides assistance for residents, regardless of gender reassignment	WKEP Aim: Identify and deal with physical barriers to our services
Summary of impacts : (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"/> No impact	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue the policy
Date assessment will be reviewed:	11/05/2018		

Item 6 (c) - Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 9 November 2017 and the relevant minute extract was not available before the printing of these papers, and will follow when available.

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COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/19

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of: Chief Finance Officer
Status: For Decision
Also considered by: Cabinet - 9 November 2017
Key Decision: Yes

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.

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

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
-

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

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.

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.

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

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

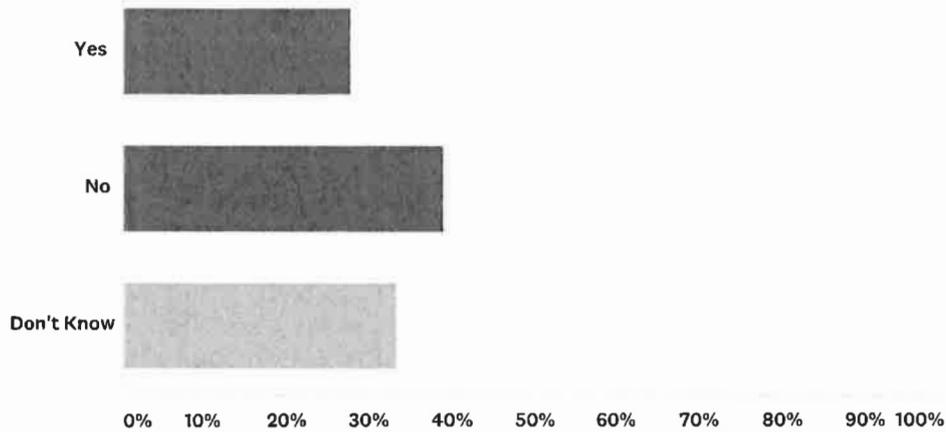
Section 13A Policy for 2018/19 (background doc online)

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/b7107/Background%20documents%206c%2021st-Nov-2017%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=9&J=1>

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
TOTAL		18

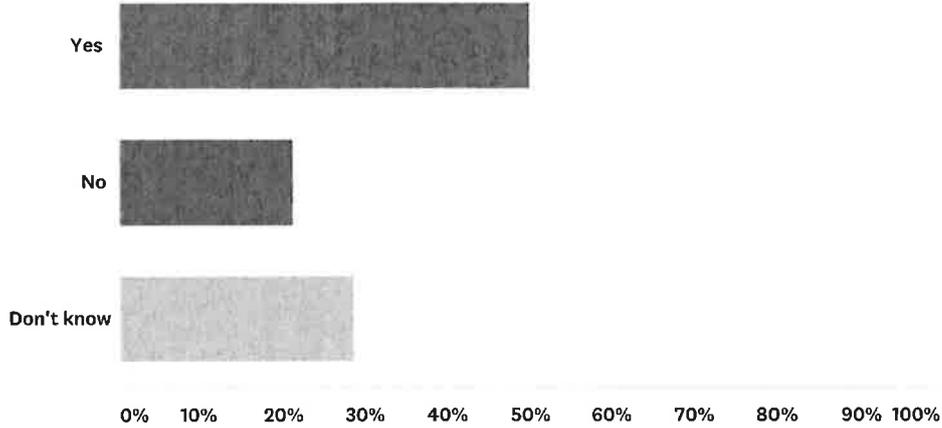
#	IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS TO MAKE ON YOUR ANSWER, PLEASE GIVE THEM BELOW.	DATE
1	Haven't got time to read 164 pages	10/10/2017 3:46 PM
2	There should be greater support for those affected by the disastrous rollout of Universal Credit, the destruction of disability benefits etc.	9/29/2017 5:56 PM

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.

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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
TOTAL		14

#	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 6c

Consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

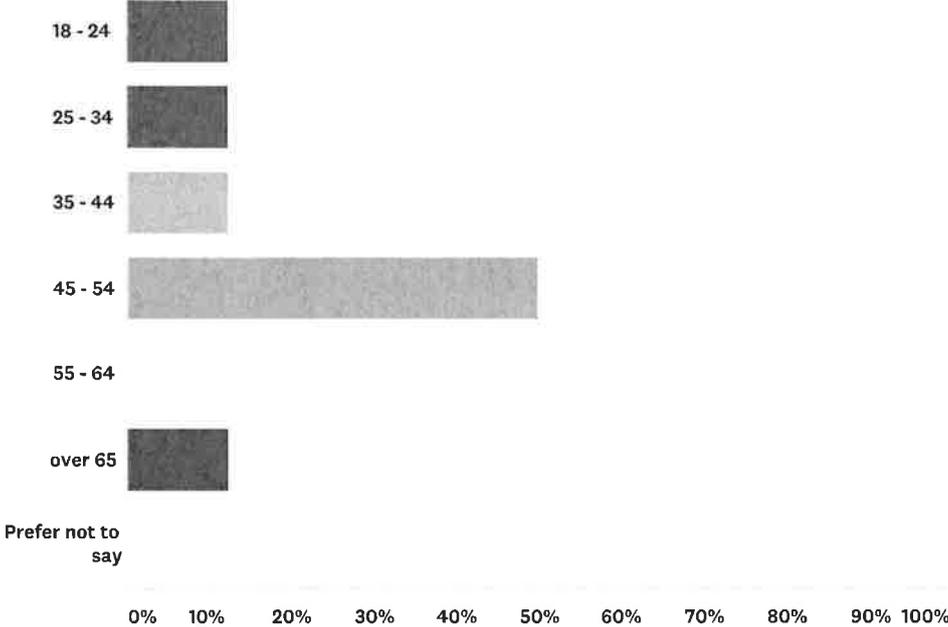
Q4 If you have any further comments regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme that you haven't had the opportunity to raise elsewhere, please give them below.

Answered: 1 Skipped: 17

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

Q5 Age

Answered: 8 Skipped: 10



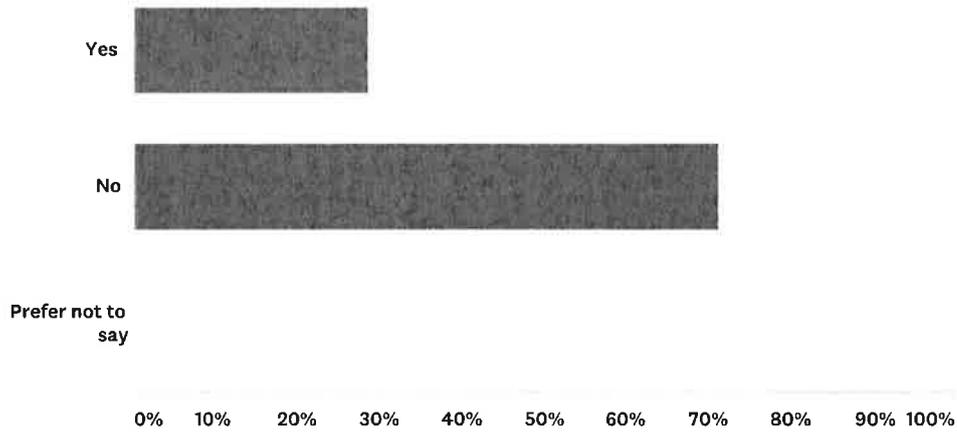
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18 - 24	12.50%	1
25 - 34	12.50%	1
35 - 44	12.50%	1
45 - 54	50.00%	4
55 - 64	0.00%	0
over 65	12.50%	1
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		8

Agenda Item 6c

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



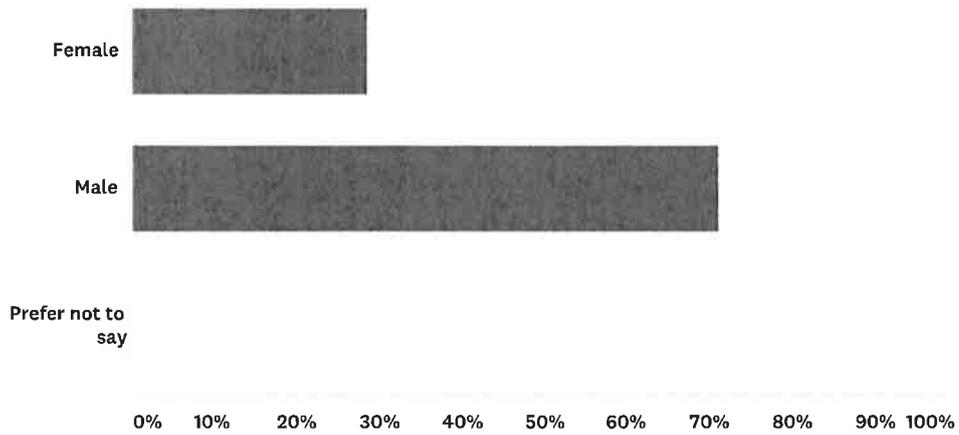
ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

Yes	28.57%	2
No	71.43%	5
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

Q7 Gender

Answered: 7 Skipped: 11



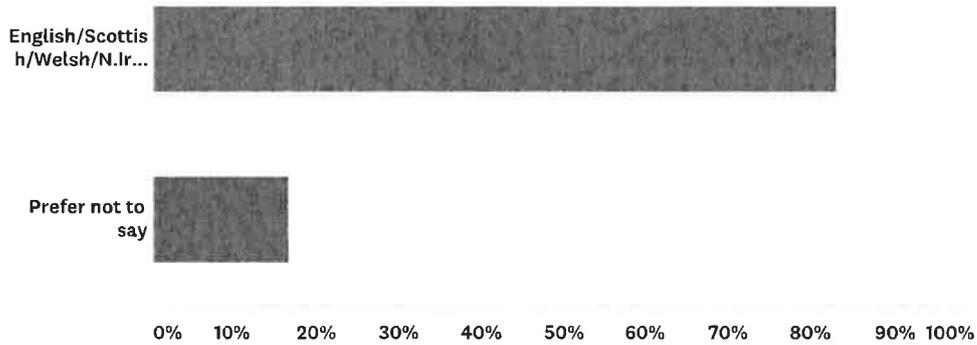
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	28.57%	2
Male	71.43%	5
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

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Consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

Q8 Race

Answered: 6 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
English/Scottish/Welsh/N.Irish/British	83.33%	5
Prefer not to say	16.67%	1
TOTAL		6

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	white other	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

Contents	
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. 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 1st 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
Exemption from the Minimum Income Floor												
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.

Item 6 (d) - Affordable Housing Company

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 9 November 2017 and the relevant minute extract was not available before the printing of these papers, and will follow when available.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMPANY

Council - 21 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 Cabinet - 9 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
-

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.

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.

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.

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- 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.

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- 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)

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Comments and controls
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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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Comments and controls
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

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

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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
Total	4,802	Total	1,594

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
------------	---------

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>

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	<p>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.</p>

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Item 6 (e) - Christmas Parking

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 9 November 2017 and the relevant minute extract was not available before the printing of these papers, and will follow when available.

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CHRISTMAS PARKING 2017

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 2 November 2017
Cabinet - 9 November 2017

Key Decision: No

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

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

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.

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

Agenda Item 6e

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.

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Item 7 (a) - Review of the Scheme for Members' Allowances

The attached report was considered by the Governance Committee on 7 November 2017, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Governance Committee (7 November 2017, Minute 12)

The JIRP Report had been presented to Committee on 27 June 2017 and recommended to Council on 18 July 2017, where before accepting the recommendations it had requested the Chairman of Governance to set up a working group to look at a number of issues which included the omission of an SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Infrastructure Levy Board and at what level any SRA should be; the proposed level of SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee; and the budgetary implications of the report and any other proposed changes. It gave the Chairman delegated authority to set up a suitable working party.

However, the Chairman of the Governance Committee was of the view that such a working group represented a limited range of views, because of its limited membership, and the outcome was likely to be unchanged. Accordingly, after sounding out a wide range of members for their views, he concluded that the recommendations in Appendix A to the report be put forward to the Governance Committee for consideration.

The recommendation included some changes starting immediately and some coming in from 2019/20. The financial effects of these changes were detailed in Appendix B to the report. The effect of the changes starting immediately could be seen in the 'Working Group Scheme 2018/19' scenario and the effect of the changes coming in from 2019/20 could be seen in the 'Working Group Scheme 2019/20' scenario.

Members discussed the timings of the changes and the pros and cons of the implementation dates, other than those being proposed to be implemented immediately. There was some concern that the electorate would see a newly formed Council receiving a pay increase when the decision had in fact been taken by the previous leadership.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- a) that the Chairman of the CIL board be remunerated at the same rate as the Chairs of other committees, namely £2,144 p.a. with immediate effect;
- b) that the Vice Chair of the CIL board be remunerated at the same rate as other Vice Chairs of committees, namely £534 p.a. with immediate effect;
- c) that the allowance for the Vice Chair of Development Control committee be increased to £1,000 p.a. with immediate effect; and

Agenda Item 7a

d) that otherwise the recommendations of the JIRP be instituted with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2019/20, namely:

(a) The basic allowance shall remain unchanged.

(b) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) should be:

a. Council Leader p.a.	£20,000
b. Deputy Leader p.a.	£12,000
c. Opposition Group Leaders group member	£270 p.a. per
d. Cabinet Members p.a.	£7,000
e. Deputy Cabinet Members p.a.	£1,600
f. Committee Chairs £5,000 p.a.	£1,500 -
g. Advisory Committee Chairs p.a.	£2,500
h. Development Control Ctte Vice Chair p.a.	£1,000
i. Vice Chairs of other committees shall not receive a SRA.	
j. Development Control Ctte Members	£500 p.a.
k. Licensing Ctte Members	£135 p.a.
l. Standards Co-optees	£480 p.a.

(c) Child Care Allowance be payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum rate of £7.20 per child per hour.

(d) Dependent Carer's Allowance be payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum of £16.00 per hour.

(e) Allowances be updated in line with any annual increases in

pay awards to Council staff.

- (f) Travel expenses continue to be based upon the HMRC approved rate.
- (g) The existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances continue.
- (h) The existing IT allowance be stopped.

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REVIEW OF THE SCHEME FOR MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of	Chief Finance Officer
Status	For Consideration and Decision
Also considered by	Governance Committee - 7 November 2017
Key Decision	No

Executive Summary: A Joint Independent Remuneration Panel carried out a review on Members Allowances. The review made a number of recommendations that were presented to the Governance Committee and Council. Council recommended that a working group look at several issues and report back to the Governance Committee.

This report supports the Key Aim of Effective Use of Council Resources

Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Anna Firth
Contact Officers	Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153 Veronica Wilson, Ext. 7436

Recommendation to Governance Committee:

- (a) That it be recommended to Council that either
 - i) no action is taken;
 - ii) the recommendations in the Members' Allowances Working Group report (Appendix A) be agreed; or that
 - iii) a different recommendation is agreed

Recommendation to Council:

- (a) That either
 - i) no action is taken;
 - ii) the recommendations in the Members' Allowances Working Group report (Appendix A) be agreed; or that
-

iii) a different recommendation is agreed

Reason for recommendation: Section 19 of The Local Authorities (Members Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 state that before an authority makes or amends a Members' Allowance scheme, the authority shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Background

- 1 The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) was established jointly by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council in 2001 to make separate recommendations for each Council on their Scheme of Members' Allowances. The JIRP operates under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The function of the Panel is to make recommendations to Council in accordance with Statutory Instruments (Primarily 2003 No.1020 and No.1692).
- 2 One of the roles of the Governance Committee is to receive the recommendations of the JIRP and make recommendations for changes to the Members' Allowance Scheme to the Council and, if required, to the JIRP.

Introduction

- 3 The JIRP provides an objective view of the remuneration that should be provided for Members and makes a recommendation to this Council. Legislation requires that before an Authority amends a scheme, the authority shall have regard to the recommendations made to it by the JIRP.
- 4 The Council's current Members' Allowance Scheme is set out in Appendix G of the Constitution.
- 5 The purpose of the JIRP review is to carry out the quadrennial update of Members' allowances required by legislation, taking into account Members' workload, responsibilities and required time commitment and then to recommend a fair level of recompense for those commitments.
- 6 Historically Members have modified the JIRP recommendations to ensure that the final scheme remained within budget.
- 7 If the Governance Committee do recommend an increase above the current budget to Council, if approved, a growth item will be required in the 2018/19 budget process.

JIRP's Recommendations

- 8 The JIRP Report, attached at Appendix C, sets out the details of their work and their recommendations.
- 9 The financial effect of the JIRP's recommendations can be found in Appendix B in the 'JIRP Proposed Scheme 2017/18' scenario.

Council - 18 July 2017

- 10 The JIRP Report was presented to the Governance Committee on 27 June 2017 and then on to Council on 18 July 2017.
- 11 It was resolved that the Council welcomed and thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work, and was particularly pleased with their comments regarding the involvement of members and the important part they played in the success of the authority. However
- a) before accepting the recommendations contained within the report a working group is set up to look at the following issues:
 - i) the omission of an SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Infrastructure Levy Board and at what level any SRA should be;
 - ii) the proposed level of SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee;
 - iii) the budgetary implications of the report and any other proposed changes;
 - b) the working group will report back to Governance Committee and a further recommendation is sent to Full Council, both meetings being in November;
 - c) the Chairman of Governance be delegated authority to determine the size and composition of the working group.

Working Group

- 12 Whilst a working group might normally be constituted of some or all of the relevant committee, the Chairman of the Governance Committee was of the view that such a working group represented a limited range of views, because of its limited membership, and the outcome was likely to be unchanged. Accordingly, after sounding out a wide range of members for their views, the Chair of Governance concluded that the recommendation in Appendix A should be put forward to the Governance Committee and, if thought fit, to Council.
- 13 The recommendation includes some changes starting immediately and some coming in from 2019/20. The financial effects of these changes can be found in Appendix B. The effect of the changes starting immediately can be seen in the 'Working Group Scheme 2018/19' scenario and the effect of the changes coming in from 2019/20 can be seen in the 'Working Group Scheme 2019/20' scenario.

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Key Implications

Financial

In 2017/18, the Council's budget for Members' Allowances is £385,998. Based on current assumptions in the 10-year Budget, this will increase to £389,858 in 2018/19 and £393,757 in 2019/20.

The financial effects of the different scenarios can be found in Appendix B including how much more they could cost compared to the current scheme.

The actual costs will depend on which Member is in each role and the amount unclaimed.

If an increase above the cost of the current scheme is approved, a growth item may be required in the 2018/19 budget process.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council is required under the Local authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and subsequent amendments to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to review and make recommendations to the Council on the range and levels of remuneration for elected Members.

Under the regulations, the Council is required to undertake a full review every four years. A full review was considered by the Council on 20 November 2012, but the Panel was requested to carry out a further review as the Council had adopted revised Governance arrangements in May 2013. The further review was considered by the Council on 1 October 2013.

Remuneration for Members is intended to ensure that there are no avoidable obstacles preventing people from taking part in the work of the Council. The level of remuneration needs to be at an appropriate level. Any deviation from the recommendations should be justified with a written record being made.

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

The basis of the current level of Members' Allowances for Sevenoaks District Council was established by the Panel in December 2001 following guidance issued by central government. Allowances have been revised following later Panel's recommendations to reflect the changing roles of Members. Members are requested to consider the contents of this report and appendices before making a recommendation to Council.

Appendices Appendix A - Members' Allowances Working Group report

Appendix B - Financial Effects of Scenarios

Appendix C - A Review of Council Members' Allowances for Sevenoaks District Council (JIRP May 2017)

Background Papers [Local Authorities \(Members Allowances\)\(England\) Regulations 2003](#)

[Members' Allowances Scheme set out at Appendix G in the Council's Constitution](#)

Report to Governance Committee on 27 June 2017:

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=289&MId=2194&J=1>

Adrian Rowbotham

Chief Finance Officer

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**Members' Allowances Working Group Report
in response to JIRP 2017 report**

Full Council at its meeting on 18 July 2017 responded to the report by the JIRP and recommendations of the Governance Committee of 27 June flowing from that by authorising the Chairman of Governance to set up a working party to further consider the JIRP recommendations, having regard to the current economic climate, as follows:

Resolved: That the Council welcomed and thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work, and was particularly pleased with their comments regarding the involvement of members and the important part they played in the success of the authority. However

- a) before accepting the recommendations contained within the report a working group is set up to look at the following issues:
 - i) the omission of an SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Infrastructure Levy Board and at what level any SRA should be;
 - ii) the proposed level of SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee;
 - iii) the budgetary implications of the report and any other proposed changes;
- b) the working group will report back to Governance Committee and a further recommendation is sent to Full Council, both meetings being in November;
- c) the Chairman of Governance be delegated authority to determine the size and composition of the working group.

Whilst a working group might normally be constituted of some or all of the relevant committee, the Chairman of the Governance Committee was of the view that such a working group represented a limited range of views, because of its limited membership, and the outcome was likely to be unchanged. Accordingly, after sounding out a wide range of members for their views, the Chair of Governance concluded that the following should be put forward as the recommendation to the Governance Committee and, if thought fit, to Council.

Recommendation to Governance Committee:

a) that the Chairman of the CIL board be remunerated at the same rate as the Chairs of other committees, namely £2,144 p.a. with immediate effect,

b) that the Vice Chair of the CIL board be remunerated at the same rate as other Vice Chairs of committees, namely £534 p.a. with immediate effect,

c) that the allowance for the Vice Chair of Development Control committee be increased to £1,000 p.a. with immediate effect,

d) that otherwise the recommendations of the JIRP be instituted with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2019/20, namely:

- i) The basic allowance shall remain unchanged.
- ii) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) should be:
 - a. Council Leader £20,000 p.a.
 - b. Deputy Leader £12,000 p.a.
 - c. Opposition Group Leaders £270 p.a. per group member
 - d. Cabinet Members £7,000 p.a.
 - e. Deputy Cabinet Members £1,600 p.a.
 - f. Committee Chairs £1,500 - £5,000 p.a.
 - g. Advisory Committee Chairs £2,500 p.a.
 - h. Development Control Ctte Vice Chair £1,000 p.a.
 - i. Vice Chairs of other committees shall not receive a SRA.
 - j. Development Control Ctte Members £500 p.a.
 - k. Licensing Ctte Members £135 p.a.
 - l. Standards Co-optees £480 p.a.
- iii) Child Care Allowance should be payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum rate of £7.20 per child per hour.
- iv) Dependent Carer's Allowance should be payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum of £16.00 per hour.

- v) Allowances should be updated in line with any annual increases in pay awards to Council staff.
- vi) Travel expenses should continue to be based upon the HMRC approved rate.
- vii) The existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances should continue.
- viii) The existing IT allowance should be stopped.

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Scenarios:		Current Scheme 2017/18			JIRP Proposed Scheme 2017/18			Working Group Scheme 2018/19			Working Group Scheme 2019/20		
Allowance	No. Max	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)
Basic Allowance	54	5,359	54	289,386	5,359	54	289,386	5,413	54	292,302	5,467	54	295,218
Cabinet Chair / Leader	1	16,078	1	16,078	20,000	1	20,000	16,239	1	16,239	20,000	1	20,000
Deputy Leader	1	0	0	0	12,000	1	12,000	0	0	0	12,000	1	12,000
Cabinet	7	6,699	6	40,194	7,000	5	35,000	6,766	6	40,596	7,000	5	35,000
Deputy Cabinet	10	671	7	4,697	1,600	7	11,200	678	7	4,746	1,600	7	11,200
Group Leaders - Labour	1	1,331	0	0	270	0	0	1,344	0	0	270	0	0
Group Leaders - Lib Dem	1	1,331	1	1,331	540	1	540	1,344	1	1,344	540	1	540
Group Leaders - UKIP	1	1,331	1	1,331	540	1	540	1,344	1	1,344	540	1	540
Chair - Development Ctl	1	3,217	1	3,217	5,000	1	5,000	3,249	1	3,249	5,000	1	5,000
Chair - Advisory Cttes	7	2,144	2	4,288	2,500	2	5,000	2,165	2	4,330	2,500	2	5,000
Chair - Audit	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Scrutiny	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Governance	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Licensing	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Health Liaison	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Transportation	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,000	1	2,000	2,165	1	2,165	2,000	1	2,000
Chair - CIL								2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Standards	1	1,074	1	1,074	1,600	1	1,600	1,085	1	1,085	1,600	1	1,600
Vice Chairs - Advisory Cttes	7	535	0	0	0	0	0	540	0	0	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Audit	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Sctny	1	535	0	0	0	0	0	540	0	0	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Gov.	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Development Ctl	1	804	1	804	1,000	1	1,000	1,000	1	1,000	1,000	1	1,000
Vice Chair - Licensing	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Health Liaison	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Transportation	1	535	0	0	0	0	0	540	0	0	0	0	0
Vice Chair - CIL								540	0	0	0	0	0
Vice Chair Standards	1	269	1	269	0	0	0	272	1	272	0	0	0
Development Ctl - Members	17	269	9	2,421	500	11	5,500	272	8	2,176	500	11	5,500
Licensing - Members	11	134	4	536	135	4	540	135	4	540	135	4	540
Standards Co-optees					480	0	0	0	0	0	480	0	0
I.T Allowance**	54	125	54	6,750	125	54	6,750	126	54	6,804	0	0	0
Childcare (p/h p/child)		6.19	0	0	7.20	0	0	6.25	0	0	7.20	0	0
Dependent Carers (p/h)		16.00	0	0	16.00	0	0	16.16	0	0	16.00	0	0
Sub Total	188		153	387,380		150	408,556		153	393,342		97	410,138
NI est	1.5%			5,811			6,128			5,900			6,152
TOTAL				393,191			414,684			399,242			416,290
Budget				385,998			385,998			389,858			393,757
Over/(under) budget				7,193			28,686			9,384			22,533
Increase/(Decrease) compared to current scheme							21,494			2,191			15,340

Notes:

Each Member can only receive one Special Responsibility Allowance.

Assumed that 1 Cabinet Member is Leader and 1 Cabinet Member is Deputy Leader.

Assumed that 5 Cabinet Members are an Advisory Ctte Chair.

Assumed that 1 Deputy Cabinet Member is an Advisory Ctte Chair.

Assumed that 6 Deputy Cabinet Members are an Advisory Ctte Vice Chair.

Inflation assumptions in 10-year Budget: 2018/19 1% 2019/20 1%

2016/17: Budget £382,176 Actual Spend £376,498 = £5,678 under budget.

Some Members do not claim their full allowance (e.g. only 40 Members currently claim the I.T. Allowance).

The actual cost each year will vary dependent on which Member is in each role and the amount unclaimed.

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Scenarios:		Current Scheme 2017/18			JIRP Proposed Scheme 2017/18			Working Group Scheme 2018/19			Working Group Scheme 2019/20		
Allowance	No. Max	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)	Rate (£)	No.	Total (£)
Basic Allowance	54	5,359	54	289,386	5,359	54	289,386	5,413	54	292,302	5,467	54	295,218
Cabinet Chair / Leader	1	16,078	1	16,078	20,000	1	20,000	16,239	1	16,239	20,000	1	20,000
Deputy Leader	1	0	0	0	12,000	1	12,000	0	0	0	12,000	1	12,000
Cabinet	7	6,699	6	40,194	7,000	5	35,000	6,766	6	40,596	7,000	5	35,000
Deputy Cabinet	10	671	7	4,697	1,600	7	11,200	678	7	4,746	1,600	7	11,200
Group Leaders - Labour	1	1,331	0	0	270	0	0	1,344	0	0	270	0	0
Group Leaders - Lib Dem	1	1,331	1	1,331	540	1	540	1,344	1	1,344	540	1	540
Group Leaders - UKIP	1	1,331	1	1,331	540	1	540	1,344	1	1,344	540	1	540
Chair - Development Ctl	1	3,217	1	3,217	5,000	1	5,000	3,249	1	3,249	5,000	1	5,000
Chair - Advisory Cttes	7	2,144	2	4,288	2,500	2	5,000	2,165	2	4,330	2,500	2	5,000
Chair - Audit	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Scrutiny	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Governance	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Licensing	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Health Liaison	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,500	1	2,500	2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
Chair - Transportation	1	2,144	1	2,144	2,000	1	2,000	2,165	1	2,165	2,000	1	2,000
Chair - CIL								2,165	1	2,165	2,500	1	2,500
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Vice Chair - Audit	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Sctny	1	535	0	0	0	0	0	540	0	0	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Gov.	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
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Vice Chair - Health Liaison	1	535	1	535	0	0	0	540	1	540	0	0	0
Vice Chair - Transportation	1	535	0	0	0	0	0	540	0	0	0	0	0
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**A REVIEW OF
COUNCIL MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES
FOR
SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL
May 2017**

**Joint Independent Remuneration Panel [The Panel]
for
Sevenoaks District Council
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Council is required under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and subsequent amendments to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel [The Panel] to review and make recommendations to the Council on the range and levels of remuneration for elected Members (see Terms of Reference Appendix 2).

1.2 Under the Regulations the Council is required to undertake a full review every four years. A full review was considered by the Council on 27 November 2012, but the Panel was requested to carry out a further review as the Council had adopted revised Governance arrangements in May 2013. The further review was considered by the Council on 1 October 2013. This report is the result of the latest review conducted in Winter 2016/Spring 2017.

1.3 The purpose of this review is to carry out the quadrennial update of local councillors' allowances required by legislation, taking into account Members' workload, responsibilities and required time commitment and then to recommend a fair level of recompense for those commitments.

1.4 The Panel is mindful always of its remit to assist in broadening the diversity of councillor representation by minimising financial barriers to participation in local government.

1.5 While affordability of the Panel's recommendations is ultimately an issue for the Council to decide, the Panel fully appreciates the sensitivity of making any increase in allowances in the current financial climate and has tried to propose a scheme which is fair, simple to administer and properly reflects the significant time commitments given by individuals in this important tier of government. However, the Panel appreciates that time commitment alone is not necessarily an accurate indicator of efficiency, output and results.

1.6 The Panel also has the responsibility of reviewing allowances for both Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils. The Panel's recommendations were rejected by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council who determined that the status quo should continue and the main principles were accepted by the General Purposes Committee at Tonbridge and Malling Council, with some of the proposals being recommended for introduction at the next election. The Panel has noted the differences in the role of the Cabinet, the Cabinet Advisory System and the Management Structure in Sevenoaks compared with the two neighbouring councils of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling and it is for these reasons that some allowances are not the same as the neighbouring councils, even though the Panel is of the view that the economics, cost of living and diversity issues are broadly similar between the three councils.

2 Summary of Recommendations

2.1 Basic Allowance

The existing Basic Allowance of £5,359 p.a. should continue at the current rate. This takes account of the additional formal workload of the Council's 'fully inclusive'

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Governance arrangements, in comparison to the other two Councils which have been reviewed by the Panel. The gross value of the allowance is £8,932 p.a., reduced by £3,573 p.a. for this voluntary element. This allowance is higher than the Panel's recommendation of £5,000 for both Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils for the reasons set out in the report.

2.2 Special Responsibility Allowances

In this review the Panel has considerably simplified the structure of SRAs by using an approach which sets the level of each SRA as a percentage of the Leader's allowance. The Panel has also re-considered the allowances for Vice-Chairs. The Panel continues to support the 2007 guidance on Members Remuneration from the Councillors Commission which recommends that members should not receive more than one SRA.

The Panel's recommendations for Special Responsibility Allowances for each role (after reduction for the voluntary/public service element) are:-

- Council Leader - £20,000 p.a.
- Deputy Leader - £12,000 p.a.
- Opposition Group Leaders - £270 p.a. per group member
- Cabinet Members - £7,500 p.a.
- Deputy Cabinet Members - £1,600 p.a.

- Committee Chairs

Audit	£2,500
Development Control	£5,000
Governance	£2,500
Health Liaison Board	£2,500
Licensing	£2,500
Scrutiny	£2,500
Joint Transportation Board	£2,000
Standards	£1,600

- Advisory Committee Chairs

Policy & Performance	£2,500
Economic & Community Dev	£2,500
Finance	£2,500
Housing	£2,500
Planning	£2,500
Direct & Trading Servs	£2,500
Legal & Democratic	£2,500

- Committee Vice-Chair

Development Control	£1,000
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- Committee Members

Development Control	£500
Licensing	£135
Standards Co-optees	£480

2.3 Carer Allowances

The Panel's recommendations are that the Child Care Allowance should be equivalent to the forthcoming National Living Wage payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum rate of £7.20 per hour per child or and that the Dependant Carer's Allowance should be payable at the actual amount charged subject to maximum of £16.00 per hour. The Panel is aware that councillors rarely claim for these allowances but it is available to ensure that those entitled to such allowances can serve as councillors.

2.4 Updating

In future the allowances should be updated in line with any annual increases in pay awards to Council staff.

2.5 Travel Expenses

The Panel recommends that the current scheme for Members, based upon the HMRC approved rate should continue. It is noted that many members chose not to claim mileage allowances.

2.6 Meal Allowances

The Panel recommends that the existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances, which excludes tea allowance, should continue.

2.7 IT Allowance

The Panel recommends that the IT allowance be stopped at the next Election. Such allowances are no longer appropriate in that access to IT Equipment in the home is now so widespread.

3 Background

3.1 The basis of the current level of members' allowances for Sevenoaks District Council was established by the Panel in December 2001 following guidelines issued by central government [see Appendix 1]. These allowances replaced the previous system of attendance-based payments and have been revised in subsequent years to reflect cost of living increases and changes in council structure and responsibilities.

3.2 The process is that the Panel recommends a structure of allowances, after consultation with members and officers but that the final decision is the responsibility of the Council. The Panel has followed broadly the same methodology since 2008.

3.3 The 2007 Councillors Commission paper on Members Remuneration suggested a set of basic principles to govern allowance schemes:

- The basic allowance should encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of skills to serve as local councillors
- Those who participate in and contribute to the democratic process should not suffer unreasonable financial disadvantage
- Councillors should be compensated for their work and the compensation should have regard to the full range of commitment and complexity of their roles
- The system should be transparent, simple to operate and understand
- The system should not encourage the proliferation of meetings or provoke councillors into spending more time on council business than is necessary
- The level of remuneration should relate to a commonly accepted benchmark, such as the median male non-manual salary

These principles underpin the recommendations made in this report and are reflected in our Terms of Reference [Appendix 2]

4 Approach and Methodology

4.1 In line with the previous reviews, and reflecting the approach taken by many other Independent Review Panels elsewhere in the country, the Panel established a set of core principles to guide this review as follows:-

- To remove, where possible, the immediate financial barriers to becoming a councillor to assist in the diversity of the cohort of councillors, regardless of political background
- To reflect the current time commitment required to perform the role of ward councillor and the potential loss of earnings opportunities for councillors in doing so
- To recognise the increasing levels of responsibility and accountability being devolved from central government to local government and its impact on the nature of leadership and scrutiny roles within the Council
- To retain a significant element of public service, *pro bono* contribution from elected councillors
- To benchmark the comparative position of council members with those in similar roles in Kent and other South East councils
- To recommend allowances based on objective data with a simple and logical structure that can easily be updated in future

In conducting the review at the Council, the Panel held meetings with the Chief Finance Officer and two party leaders, and offered the opportunity to elected members to meet individually with the Panel, a number of whom took up this offer. The Panel considered meetings were a more effective way of eliciting information than a questionnaire. One member provided written information.

5 Allowance Calculations

5.1 There are some important principles and constraints on the calculation of allowances which are detailed in our Terms of Reference [Appendix 2].

Determining the Basic Allowance

5.2 The statutory guidance for Local Authority Allowances says that the *“basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meeting with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes.”* [ODPM 2003. Para 10].

5.3 There are three core elements which determine the Basic Allowance: time spent on councillor duties, a standard financial hourly rate and the public service discount element.

Time Commitment

5.4 *“Having established what local councillors do, and the hours which are devoted to these tasks the local authorities will need to take a view on the number of hours for which, councillors ought to be remunerated”* [ODPM 2003. Para 67].

5.5 The number of hours committed by individual councillors to their elected and representative duties varies widely between individuals and over time. It is recognised that, for many councillors, the role is far more than just attendance at council meetings and will include, for example, constituency duties, committee meetings, meetings with officers and training courses.

5.6 The Panel determined in 2008 that the average time taken to satisfactorily perform a ward councillor role was an average of 15 hour per week, following a survey of members and soundings at all levels of the Council. This figure was used for the 2012 review. The Council changed its Governance arrangements in May 2013 by introducing additional Advisory Committees, introducing Deputy Cabinet Members and changing the Committee Structure.

5.7 One aim of the changes was to increase Member involvement in decision making and the interviews with Councillors indicated to the Panel, that this had been achieved. The changes were expected to result in an increase in the number of formal meetings, which has been the case. The Panel noted the difference in governance from that in the neighbouring councils and the increased involvement of councillors in decision making and in advising cabinet members.

5.8 During the discussions with members their estimates of the time spent on Council business varied greatly and it was not possible to draw a conclusion of the average productive hours spent.

Hourly rate

5.9 Previously, including for the last review in 2012, the Panel used the median hourly pay for all employees who live within the Sevenoaks local authority area as published by the Office of National Statistics in their Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings (ASHE). In 2012 this was £13.98 per hour [Source: ASHE 2012. ONS] and this was the base hourly-rate for the Panel’s recommended allowances. This resulted in a Basic Allowance of £6,039, which the Council considered to be too high, with a figure of £5,140 being adopted by the Council in October 2013. The Panel noted the huge variation in remuneration that exists in the Sevenoaks area and considers that average remuneration in Sevenoaks is not especially helpful in determining recommendations.

5.10 The Panel has carried out benchmarking, which showed that the Basic Allowance for Sevenoaks is high in relation to other local authorities in Kent. See Table 1 below. The position was the same for the other two Councils that the Panel covered, which suggested that the previous methodology was not applicable. The Panel considers that the previously used hourly rate bears little relation to the actual hourly rates paid in Sevenoaks, because it is distorted by the fact that many residents actually work in London.

Table 1 - KENT BASIC ALLOWANCE COST COMPARISON – 2016

Authority	Basic	No of Cllrs	Total
Sevenoaks	£5,253	54	£283,662
Tonbridge & Malling	£5,283 *	54	£285,282
Tunbridge Wells	£5,500 *	48	£264,000
Other Kent Councils			
Ashford	£4,466	43	£192,038
Canterbury	£5,303	39	£206,817
Dartford	£5,000	44	£220,000
Dover	£3,980	45	£179,100
Gravesham	£3,447	44	£151,668
Maidstone	£4,666	55	£256,630
Shepway	£3,867	30	£116,010
Swale	£4,880	47	£229,360
Thanet	£4,570	56	£255,920

* The Panel recommended £5,000 in the latest review for both Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils

5.11 The Panel had felt that the three councils within its purview were similar and that it should really be recommending one rate for all three. One way of doing this would be to calculate an average figure based on the latest hourly ASHE rates for all three councils. The results for the latest available ASHE survey (2015), Table 8.6(a) give the following hourly rates for the three councils:

- Sevenoaks - £14.49
- Tonbridge and Malling - £14.08
- Tunbridge Wells - £13.10

These figures give an arithmetic mean of £13.89 per hour.

The Public Service/Voluntary Principle

5.12 Central government guidance to Independent Remuneration Panels for setting the basic allowance states that *“it is important that some element of the work of members continues to be voluntary – that some hours are not remunerated. This must be balanced against the need to ensure that financial loss is not suffered by elected members, and further to ensure that, despite the input required, people are encouraged to come forward as elected members and that their service to the community is retained”* [ODPM 2003. Para 68].

5.13 This idea that some work of members should remain voluntary is called the ‘public service principle’ and this is incorporated into the financial calculations as a percentage discount factor, agreed locally. The Councillors Commission report indicated that considerable variations of between 20-50% apply. The Panel’s meetings with members and Council leaders confirmed that this principle is understood and supported by elected councillors.

5.14 In the 2012 review the Panel recommended a public service discount factor of 40% based on benchmarking with allowance schemes elsewhere and consistent with the recommendations of our predecessors on this Panel since its inception in 2001. The Panel recommends that this level of discount be retained.

Calculating the Basic Allowance – the formula

5.15 To bring together the separate elements of the time-based model the following formula is commonly used by other Independent Remuneration Panels:

- 1) Expected hours input x hourly rate x 48 weeks = Gross Basic Allowance p.a.
- 2) **minus** discount for voluntary public service = recommended Basic Allowance p.a.

Using the above data and formula the Panel considered an annual Basic Allowance derived as follows:-

- 1) 15 hours per week x £13.89 per hour x 48 weeks = £10,000.80 p.a.
- 2) **minus** 40% public service discount = £6,000 p.a. (rounded)

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This calculation results in a Basic Allowance that is too high in relation the 'Kent Family' of district councils. The Panel carried out benchmarking of district councils in Sussex to establish if the Kent figures were low, but as shown in Appendix 3, this was not the case. The Panel concludes that the use of the hourly rate is no longer appropriate and the Basic Allowance calculated above cannot be recommended, as it is too high when compared to the level for the 'Kent Family' of district councils.

Basic Allowance – recommendation

5.16 The Council unlike some councils appears to have little difficulty attracting prospective Councillors and the Panel noted that there are several younger members. This suggests that the Basic Allowance is not a barrier for attracting Councillors. When assessing the Basic Allowances for Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, the Panel had turned to benchmarking and recommended that the Basic Allowance be reduced to £5,000. With the 40% public service discount, this equated to a Gross Basic Allowance of £8,333 p.a. The Panel had initially anticipated making the same recommendation for this review, but the evidence collected during the review did not support this approach.

5.17 The Council decided in 2013, that the Basic Allowance should be higher than initially recommended, to take account of the additional work arising from the new 'fully inclusive' decision making process. The Council decided that the Leader and Cabinet Members would be allocated lower SRAs as part of that review, to remain within budgetary provision. The Council has put itself into a strong financial position and whereas many councils were concentrating on making savings in their forward budget, Sevenoaks was looking at new initiatives – this process involved members putting forward proposals through the Committee structure, which fed into the final deliberations.

5.18 The Panel concluded that the 'inclusive' Governance arrangements resulted in a higher effective 'formal meeting workload', than in the other two councils it had reviewed and justified the current sum of £5,359. The Basic Allowance has been increased annually and the Panel concludes that this allowance should remain at that level. With the 40% public service discount, this equates to a Gross Basic Allowance of £8,932 p.a.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Basic Allowance should remain at £5,359 p.a.

6 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

6.1 In reviewing the current system of SRAs, the Panel took into account the evolution of the governance structures within the Council and the frequency of committee meetings, including the time to research and prepare. The Panel is of the view that allowances should be kept as simple as possible and favour an approach adopted by many councils which relates allowances to that paid to the Council Leader. This approach which calculates the top figure and then bases others on percentages of that figure is in common use in the public sector for determining senior level salaries, so the principle is well-established.

Council Leader

6.2 The previous approach was to recommend that the Leader's allowance should be three times the Basic Allowance. However, the Panel's perception is that this role is so

critical to the successful running of the Council, and that both the expertise needed to undertake the role and the time required are so high that a higher amount is appropriate. The Panel recommended that the Leader's SRA for the other two councils it reviewed should be £20,000 p.a. (a multiple of four times the £5,000) Basic Allowance. That equated to a gross allowance of £33,332 p.a., but after the voluntary discount was a net £20,000 p.a. The Panel recommends that the Leader's SRA should be the same as the other two Councils - £20,000 p.a. The Panel noted that the Council previously decided to reduce the allowance for the Leader but the Panel felt that it was necessary for the Leader to have a gross allowance of £33,332 so that a School Teacher or similar could afford to take on this arduous role.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Special Responsibility Allowance for Council Leader should be £20,000 p.a.

Deputy Leader

6.3 The Panel is aware that the Deputy Leader often has to stand in for the Leader so needs to have read all relevant papers and be prepared to represent him at those meetings. For this reason the Panel believes this role merits an individual Special Responsibility Allowance. As there are Deputy Cabinet Members to assist with Portfolio work, the Panel consider that the allowance should be set at 60% of the Leader's Allowance ie £12,000 p.a.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Special Responsibility Allowance for Deputy Council Leader should be £12,000 p.a.

Opposition Group Leader

6.4 The Panel established the principle in the previous reviews that Council Leader's Allowance reflects the full role, including those duties associated with political leadership of the majority party. However, there is an additional time commitment required of leadership of an opposition group which is not reflected in the Basic Allowance.

6.5 The Council has two opposition groups, which is unusual. Each group has two members, so the additional work is not high. In line with the approach to simplify the structure of allowances the Panel recommends that the allowance for opposition group Leaders should be on a variable sliding scale determined by the number of elected councillors in the opposition party, at a rate of 5% of the Basic Allowance per member, being £270. (rounded). Should a larger Opposition Group develop with greater responsibility for its Leader then this allowance can be revisited.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Special Responsibility Allowance for Opposition Group Leader should be £270 per member in the group.

Cabinet Members

6.6 Whilst acknowledging the broad portfolio responsibilities and time commitments of Cabinet Members, the Panel recognises that under the Council's Constitution, they do not have full individual decision making responsibility and also have Deputy Cabinet Members to assist with the Portfolio. The role and responsibility of cabinet members is different from that in the neighbouring councils. The Panel therefore recommends an

Agenda Item 7a

SRA of 35% of the Council Leader's allowance. This equates to an allowance after discount for the public service element of £7,500 p.a.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Special Responsibility Allowance for Cabinet Members should be 35% of the Council Leader's Allowance = £7,000 p.a.

Deputy Cabinet Members

6.7 This role has developed significantly since 2013, with holders carrying out specific projects and commissioning reports. The Panel considers that the allowance for the role should be increased to 8% of the Council Leader's allowance. This equates to an allowance after discount for the public service element of £1,600 p.a.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Special Responsibility Allowance for Deputy Cabinet Members should be 8% of the Council Leader's Allowance = £1,600 p.a.

Chairs of Committees

6.8 The Panel has reviewed the Committee allowances using a simplified factor model which aligns Committees into groups of similar dimensions which broadly reflect the frequency of meetings and their position in the governance process.

6.9 The Panel recognises the importance that the Council puts on Scrutiny function and work of the Advisory Boards. This has to be balanced against the work of the other committees and based on the current scheme and operational arrangements, the Panel makes the following recommendations for Committee Chair allowances:-

Committee	% of Leader's Allowance	Recommended Allowance
Audit	12.5%	£2,500
Development Control	25%	£5,000
Governance	12.5%	£2,500
Health Liaison Board	12.5%	£2,500
Licensing	12.5%	£2,500
Scrutiny	12.5%	£2,500
Joint Transportation Board	10%	£2,000
Standards	8%	£1,600

Advisory Committee	% of Leader's Allowance	Recommended Allowance
Policy & Performance	12.5%	£2,500
Economic & Community Dev	12.5%	£2,500
Finance	12.5%	£2,500
Housing	12.5%	£2,500
Planning	12.5%	£2,500
Direct & Trading Servs	12.5%	£2,500
Legal & Democratic	12.5%	£2,500

Vice-Chairs

6.10 There has been much discussion about the role of Vice-Chairs and there seems little doubt that these vary considerably often depending on the personality of the Chair. In line with the last review, the Panel's view is that it is only for the Development Control

Committee, that this role should be recognised. The Panel takes the view that this should be reflected in an appropriate SRA and would consider that the rate for Development Control should be to 5% of the Council Leader's Allowance, being £1,000 p.a.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Development Control Committee Vice-Chair should be at the rate of £1000 p.a.

Committee Members

6.11 The Council has adopted the practice of making payments for members of both the Development Control and Licensing Committees to address the workload and timing of meetings which are frequently held in the daytime. The work load for Development Control is rising and becoming more complex, whilst that for Licensing has reduced. The Panel makes the recommendations below

Development Control	£500
Licensing	£135
Standards Co-optees	£480

Updating

6.12 The Council currently updates allowances and the Panel recommends that this is in line with any increases in the remuneration of Council staff.

RECOMMENDATION: that in future the allowances are updated in line with any increases in the remuneration of Council staff.

7 Carers' Allowances

7.1 In earlier reviews two separate allowances were established to distinguish between the costs of standard childcare and that of professional care for dependants with special requirements. These allowances are proposed as follows:-

Childcare Allowance: for child-minding of the Member's dependent children. Payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum rate of **£7.20** per hour per child.

Dependant Carer's Allowance: for professional care for elderly or disabled dependants, or other dependants with special requirements. Payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum rate of **£16.00** per hour. The Panel also recommends that booking fees from professional agencies should be claimable.

7.2 In practice, these allowances have rarely been claimed by Sevenoaks' councillors but the Panel continues to support the need for them.

8 Travel Expenses

8.1 The Council currently operates a scheme based upon the HMRC approved rate and the Panel recommends that this continues.

RECOMMENDATION: that the current travel expenses scheme based upon the HMRC approved rate, continues.

9 Meal Allowances

9.1 The Council currently adopts a scheme for subsistence allowances, which excludes tea allowance because of the nature and timings of the work of councillors and the Panel recommends that the existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances, continue.

RECOMMENDATION: that the existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances, which excludes tea allowance, should continue.

10 IT Allowance

10.1 The Council currently pays an IT allowance. The Panel considers that in this day and age, when access to IT Equipment in the home is now so widespread, an allowance is not necessary and recommends that this allowance be stopped at the next election.

RECOMMENDATION: that the IT allowance is not paid to Councillors after the next election. .

11 Number of Councillors

11.1 The Panel's report in 2012 highlighted that the number of councillors in Sevenoaks was high in comparison to other Councils in the 'Kent Family' of district councils and recommended that the Council considers this. The Council carried out a review which concluded in November 2016 and resolved that the matter should be reviewed after the next election. The Panel has noted in its report on the neighbouring councils that whilst services and officers have been reduced in recent years the number of councillors and their cost has not.

12 Conclusions

12.1 The Panel has attempted in this review to propose levels of allowances which would remove financial barriers that deter potential candidates from standing for election and to properly recognise the time commitments that individual members offer in support of their local community.

12.2 The Panel has also sought to propose a system that is easy to understand and update and which may be perceived as fair by all. The Panel has also tried to re-balance the allowances to reflect the fact that the degree of commitment involved for those with additional responsibilities is proportionately greater than may have been the case in the past.

13 Acknowledgements

13.1 The Panel's thanks go to the officers and members who gave us their time and opinions which have helped to shape the Panel's thinking.

Appendix 1

Regulations and Guidance for Independent Remuneration Panels

- *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003*. Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1021
- *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003*. Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1692
- *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2004*. Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 2596
- *New Council Constitutions: Consolidated Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances - 2003*
- *The Local Government Pension Scheme and Discretionary Compensation (Local Authority Members in England) Regulations 2003*. Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1022
- *New Council Constitutions. Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Inland Revenue. July 2003
- *Members Remuneration – models, issues, incentives and barriers*. - Councillors Commission. Dept. of Communities and Local Government. December 2007
- *Representing the Future – Report of the Councillors Commission*. December 2007
- *Members' Allowances Survey 2008*. Report by the Local Government Association Research Department

Joint Independent Review Panel
for
Sevenoaks District Council
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Sevenoaks District Council

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council was originally established in 2001 and now operates under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The function of the panel is to make recommendations to Council in accordance with Statutory Instruments (primarily 2003 No.1021 and No.1692).

The JIRP was established jointly by the three Councils but it considers each Council individually and makes separate recommendations for each according to the particular structures and requirements of the organisation.

Members of the Panel are appointed by the Councils but are independent members of the community with relevant professional backgrounds in remuneration and benefits.

Membership – Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

The members of the panel are:

- Gary Allen, a resident of Lamberhurst
- Max Lewis, a resident of Tunbridge Wells
- Chris Oliver, a former resident of Tonbridge & Malling Borough

JIRP meetings will normally involve all Panel members. A quorum will be three members. One of the members will act as Chair of the Panel by agreement between the Panel members.

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 determine that none of the Panel members may be a member of the local authority in question, or of its committees, or an employee of the council, but that this does not preclude participation by parish councillors.

Panel Recommendations

The 2003 Regulations require that councils must have regard to their Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations, which must be publicised on the authority's website and in the authority's newspaper, if it has one. The Panel must be required to make recommendations whenever the council decides to revoke or amend its members' allowances scheme. However, Panel recommendations are not binding on authorities. After considering its panel's recommendations, a council can decide for up to four years on automatic indexation of members' allowances without the need for a review by the Panel.

Principles for Allowances Schemes

There is currently little central prescription of members' allowance. However, there are some important constraints:-

- Attendance allowances are prohibited
- The basic allowance must be paid equally to all members
- Where one or more groups on a council form an administration, a special responsibility allowance must be paid to a member of the opposition. This is usually paid either to the leader of the opposition, if this post exists, or to a chair of a scrutiny committee

The report of the Councillors' Commission in December 2007 highlighted a 'universal principle' that members should not suffer financial loss as a direct result of their council activities and service. They went on to suggest a more detailed set of principles to govern allowance schemes:-

- The basic allowance should encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of skills to serve as local councillors
- Those who participate in and contribute to the democratic process should not suffer unreasonable financial disadvantage
- Councillors should be compensated for their work and the compensation should have regard to the full range of commitment and complexity of their roles
- The system should be transparent, simple to operate and understand
- The system should not encourage the proliferation of meetings or provoke councillors into spending more time on council business than is necessary
- The level of remuneration should relate to commonly accepted benchmark, (for example, the median male non-manual salary)

The Panel will operate within the scope of these principles. Should any departure from these be considered necessary, the reasons for the variation will be made clear in the relevant report.

The core objective of the Panel is to present informed comprehensive recommendations that are fair and equitable.

Comparative data from Kent & Sussex Borough/District Councils

Authority	Basic	Leader	Cabinet Member	Chair Planning Cttee	Chair Overview/ Scrutiny	Chair Licensing	Last Review Date
Ashford	£4,378	£18,000	£7,200	£6,000	£5,400	£1,440	01.04.2014
Dartford	£5,000	£31,339	£8,357	£5,014	£2,090	£2,090	01.04.2016
Gravesham	£3,447	£20,260	£3,447	£3,447	£3,447	£3,447	Summer 2015
Maidstone	£4,666	£18,661	£7,464	£7,464		£3,732	2016
Sevenoaks	£5,253	£15,761	£6,567	£3,153	£525	£2,102	2014
Tonbridge & Malling	£5,283	£18,384	£8,400	£5,283	£5,283	£2,643	01.04.16
Tunbridge Wells	£5,500	£19,250	£11,000	£5,500	£1,375	£1,375	25.02.2015
Medway (U)	£8,836	£20,391	£11,123	£7,415	£9,269		01.04.2016
Bexley (U)	£9,418	£26,391	£13,197	£8,802	£4,260	£8,802	21.05.2015
Bromley (U)	£10,870	£30,600	£20,400	£8,670		£8,670	01.04.2016
Tandridge	£4,068	£2,885		£2,885	£2,885		01.04.2016
Mid Sussex	£4,501	£20,596	£8,238	£4,620	£3,862	£475	01.04.2013
Rother	£4,280	£12,500	£2,719	£2,719	£2,719	£1,989	01.04.2016
Wealden	£4,300	£4,460	£5,200	£3,925	£3,515	£1,275	01.04.2014

(U) – Unitary Authorities

[Source: Council websites July 2016; South East Employers Survey 2016]

N.B. The Joint Independent Review Panel works on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council but considers each Council individually and makes separate recommendations for each according to the particular structures and requirements of the organisation. It should be noted that members' allowances are currently under review at all three councils but the figures quoted above are those in force at time of writing this report and do not reflect any changes to be proposed by the JIRP as part of this review process.

Appendix 4

Revised Schedule of Recommended Members' Allowances**Sevenoaks District Council**

	<u>2013 JIRP Recommendation</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>2017 JIRP Recommendation</u>
<u>Basic Allowance</u>	£6,039	£5,359	£5,359
<u>Special Responsibility Allowances:-</u>			
<u>Opposition Group Leaders:</u>			
	£302 per member	£1,331	£270 per member
<u>Cabinet</u>			
Leader	£18,118	£16,078	£20,000
Deputy Leader	n/a	n/a	£12,000
Cabinet Member	£7,549	£6,699	£7,000
Deputy Cabinet Member	£755	£671	£1,600
<u>Committee Chairs</u>			
Audit	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Development Control	£4,530	£3,217	£5,000
Governance	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Health Liaison Board		£2,144	£2,500
Licensing		£2,144	£2,500
Scrutiny	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Joint Transportation Board	£3,020	£2,144	£2,000
Standards		£1,074	£1,600
<u>Advisory Committee Chairs</u>			
Policy & Performance	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Economic & Community Dev.	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Finance	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Housing	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Planning	£3,020	£2,144	£2,500
Direct & Trading Servs	N/A	£2,144	£2,500
Legal & Democratic	N/A	£2,144	£2,500
<u>Committee Vice-Chairs</u>			
Audit	£0	£535	£0
Development Control	£0	£804	£1,000
Governance	£0	£535	£0
Health Liaison Board	£0	£535	£0
Licensing	£0	£535	£0
Scrutiny	£0	£535	£0
Joint Transportation Board	£0	£535	£0
Standards	£0	£269	£0

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Advisory Committee Vice-Chairs

Policy & Performance	£0	£535	£0
Economic & Community Dev.	£0	£535	£0
Finance	£0	£535	£0
Housing	£0	£535	£0
Planning	£0	£535	£0
Direct & Trading Servs	N/A	£535	£0
Legal & Democratic	N/A	£535	£0

Committee Members

Development Control	£302	£269	£500
Licensing	£302	£134	£135
Standards Co-optees	£479	£-	£480

N.B. All figures are per annum except where stated

MID-YEAR APPOINTMENTS 2017/18

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Anna Firth (Legal & Democratic Services)

Contact Officer Vanessa Etheridge Ext.7199

Recommendation: That the committee and outside organisation vacancies be appointed to as set out on Appendix A.

Introduction

- 1 At the Annual meeting of Council on 9 May 2017, Members were asked to agree the Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and membership of Committees in line with the Council's Constitution and decision making structure.
- 2 Since then some vacancies have arisen on committees and outside organisations and there has been a by election.
- 3 As well as vacancies arising, the Council has also since that date, been asked if it would like to appoint two representatives to the Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust Stakeholder Council.
- 4 Political proportionality has not changed and these are conservative group vacancies.

Key Implications

Financial

Attendance at meetings 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 Outside Bodies, there is a risk that the Council's designated representation will not be fulfilled.

Agenda Item 8a

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.

Conclusions

Members are requested to consider and approve the appointments.

Appendices

Appendix A

Background Papers

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

Jim Carrington-West

**Chief Officer Corporate
Services**

APPOINTMENTS

Development Control Committee (1)

Cllr. Coleman

Health Liaison Board (1)

Cllr. Miss Stack

Licensing Committee (1)

Cllr. Clack

Bough Beech Reservoir Recreation Consultative and Management Advisory Committee (1)

TBA

Citizens Advice Bureau: Edenbridge & Westerham (1)

Cllr. Coleman

Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust Stakeholder Council (2)

Cllr. Searles

TBA

Sevenoaks District Access Group (1)

TBA

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DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018/19

Council - 21 November 2017

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Anna Firth (Legal & Democratic Services)

Contact Officer Vanessa Etheridge Ext.7199

Recommendation: That the Calendar of Meetings for 2018/19 be approved subject to formal adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 15 May 2018.

Introduction

- 1 The draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2018/19 is attached for consideration. All Members and Senior Officers have been consulted on the draft dates.
- 2 The draft calendar tries to avoid meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays and school holidays, as much as possible. Whilst best endeavours will be maintained to avoid evening meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays it may be necessary to look at these dates if additional meetings are called. All additional meeting dates are set up in consultation with the relevant Chairman.
- 3 It is the responsibility of the Annual Meeting of the Council to confirm the Council's calendar of meetings for the oncoming year. However, it is considered prudent to put it before this meeting of the Council to allow more time for forward planning by Officers and Members and booking of meeting rooms etc.

Key Implications

Financial

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council is under a legal duty to hold an Annual Meeting during a particular period and to set a Council Tax by a specific date. The calendar proposed here meets those requirements.

Agenda Item 8b

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.

Conclusion

Members are requested to consider the attached draft Calendar of Meetings and recommend it to the meeting of Annual Council for formal adoption.

Appendices

Draft Calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2018/19

Background papers

None

Jim Carrington-West
Chief Officer Corporate Services

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL - DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2018/19

As at 10 OCTOBER 2017

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	APRIL 2018			MAY 2018				JUNE 2018				JULY 2018			
MONDAY	16	23	30	7 Public Holiday	14	21	28 Public Holiday	4	11	18	25	2	9 Licensing Committee (6pm)	16	23
TUESDAY	17 Audit Committee	24 Scrutiny Committee	1 Council	8	15 Annual Council SP.Cabinet SP. Licensing	22	29	5 Finance Advisory Committee	12 Housing & Health Advisory Committee	19 Planning Advisory Cttee	26 Economic & Community Development Advisory Cttee	3 Direct & Trading Advisory Cttee	11 Governance Committee	17 Scrutiny Committee	24 Council
WEDNESDAY	18	25	2	9	16	23 Health Liaison Board (2pm)	30	6 Sevenoaks District Joint Transportation Board	13	20	27	4	12	18	25
THURSDAY	19 Cabinet	26	3 DCC	10	17	24 DCC	31	7 Cabinet	14 DCC	21 Policy & Performance Advisory Committee	28 Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Cttee	5 DCC	13 Cabinet	19 Audit Committee	26 DCC
FRIDAY	20	27	4	11	18	26	1	8	15	22	29	6	14	20	27
	AUGUST 2018			SEPTEMBER 2018				OCTOBER 2018				NOVEMBER 2018			
MONDAY	30	6	13	20	27 Public Holiday	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5
TUESDAY	31	7	14	21	28	4 Finance Advisory Committee	11 Sevenoaks District Joint Transportation Board	18 Housing & Health Advisory Committee	25 Economic & Community Development Advisory Cttee	2 Planning Advisory Cttee	9 Direct & Trading Advisory Cttee	16 Audit Committee	23	30 Finance Advisory Committee	6 Governance Committee
WEDNESDAY	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19 Health Liaison Board (2pm)	26	3	10	17	24	31	7 Health Liaison Board (2pm)
THURSDAY	2	9	16 DCC	23	30	6 DCC	13 Cabinet	20 Policy & Performance Advisory Committee	27 DCC	4 Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Cttee	11 Cabinet	18 DCC	25	1 Licensing Committee (6pm)	8 Cabinet
FRIDAY	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9

Key (Most meetings start at 7pm and are held at the Council Offices in Argyle Road - please check the Council website for details.)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Council | Cabinet | Planning Advisory Committee |
| Development Control Committee | Finance Advisory Committee | Joint Transportation board |
| Licensing Committee 6pm | Policy & Performance Advisory Committee | Health Liaison Board - 2pm |
| Audit Committee | Housing & Health Advisory Committee | |
| Scrutiny Committee | Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee | |
| Governance Committee | Direct & Trading Advisory Committee | |
| Standards Committee | Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Committee | |

Agenda Item 8b

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL - DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2018/19

As at 10 OCTOBER 2017

	NOVEMBER 2018		DECEMBER 2018					JANUARY 2019					FEBRUARY 2019		
MONDAY	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7 Licensing Committee (6pm)	14	21	28	4	11	
TUESDAY	13 Scrutiny Committee	20 Council	27 Housing & Health Advisory Committee	4 Sevenoaks District Joint Transportation Board	11 Economic & Community Development Advisory Cttee	18	25 Public Holiday	1 Public Holiday	8 Audit Committee	15 Planning Advisory Cttee	22 Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Cttee	29 Finance Advisory Committee	5 Scrutiny Committee	12 Governance Committee	
WEDNESDAY	14	21	28	5	12	19	26 Public Holiday	2	9	16	23	30	6 Health Liaison Board (2pm)	13	
THURSDAY	15 DCC	22	29 Policy & Performance Advisory Committee	6 Cabinet	13 DCC	20	27	3	10 Cabinet	17 DCC	24 Direct & Trading Advisory Cttee	31 Standards Committee	7 DCC	14 Cabinet	
FRIDAY	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	
	FEB 2019		MARCH 2019					APRIL 2019					MAY 2019		
MONDAY	18	25	4	11	18 Licensing Committee (6pm)	25	1	8	15	22 Public Holiday	29	6 Public Holiday	13	20	
TUESDAY	19	26 Council (Budget)	5 Economic & Community Development Advisory Cttee	12 Planning Advisory Cttee	19 Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Cttee	26 Finance Advisory Committee	2 Scrutiny Committee	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	
WEDNESDAY	20	27 Housing & Health Advisory Committee	6 Sevenoaks District Joint Transportation Board	13	20	27	3 DCC	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	
THURSDAY	21	28 Policy & Performance Advisory Committee	7 Cabinet	14 DCC	21 Direct & Trading Advisory Cttee	28 Audit Committee	4 Cabinet	11	18	25 Council	2 DCC	9 or Annual Council Sp. Cabinet SP. Licensing	16	23 DCC	
FRIDAY	22	29	8	15	22	29	5	12	19 Good Friday Public Holiday	26	3	17	24		

Key (Most meetings start at 7pm and are held at the Council Offices in Argyle Road - please check the Council website for details.)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Council | Cabinet | Planning Advisory Committee |
| Development Control Committee | Finance Advisory Committee | Joint Transportation board |
| Licensing Committee 6pm | Policy & Performance Advisory Committee | Health Liaison Board - 2pm |
| Audit Committee | Housing & Health Advisory Committee | |
| Scrutiny Committee | Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee | |
| Governance Committee | Direct & Trading Advisory Committee | |
| Standards Committee | Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Committee | |

Date: 3 July - 3 November 2017

July 2017	Event	Comments
3 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Conference - Birmingham 	
4 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Conference - Birmingham 	
5 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Conference - Birmingham 	
6 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Conference - Birmingham 	
7 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEP AGM & SELEP AGM and Skills Showcase - Harlow 	
10 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re Corporate Vision - Cllr Hogarth & Cllr Maskell - SDC 	
11 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Improvement & Innovation Board Meeting - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re LGA Member Peer Conference - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remembering Srebrenica - London 	
12 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCN Assembly - Speaker - London 	
13 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet - SDC 	
17 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent & Medway Business Fund Advisory Board - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee - SDC 	
18 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy & Performance Portfolio Holder Meeting - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid Year Appraisal with Pav Ramewal and Cllr Lowe - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Kent Leaders' and Chief Executives' Meeting - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent Council Leaders' Meeting - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council - SDC 	
19 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Leadership Board - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Kent Mind AGM - Sevenoaks 	
20 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Councillors' Forum - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA Executive Meeting - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent & Medway Economic Partnership Board Meeting - Maidstone 	
21 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Visit Kent - Canterbury 	
25 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Project Board - SDC 	
26 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMT Development Day - Sevenoaks 	
27 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Best Certificate Presentation - SDC 	
28 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Kent Partnership - West Kent College 	
31 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Kent Highways - Sevenoaks 	
August 2017		
4 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent & Medway Business Fund Advisory Board - Maidstone 	
6 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BBC Radio Kent Lembit Opik Sunday Programme 	
7 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting re LGA Commercial Advisory Board - London 	
9 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Countryside Properties - SDC 	
10 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Induction Session - SDC 	

Agenda Item 11

15 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy & Performance Portfolio Holder Meeting - SDC 	
16 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour of Suffolk House - Sevenoaks 	
21 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Eastern Rail Franchise Meeting - Govia - SDC 	
22 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Ambassadors' Visit - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Project Board Meeting - SDC 	
24 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Eastern Rail Franchise Meeting - Abellio - SDC 	
25 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swanley Town Council 1812 Night - Swanley 	
29 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDC Cricket Match - Sevenoaks 	
September 2017		
6 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Annual Peer Conference - Manchester 	
7 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with John Ruskin College - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit to Sennocke, hotel site - Sevenoaks 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent & Medway Economic Partnership Meeting - Maidstone 	
8 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEEC Workshop - Speaker - London 	
11 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Leaders' Session - Speaker - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Commercial Advisory Board - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with NHS re Swanley Town Centre - SDC 	
12 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy & Performance Portfolio Holder Meeting - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCLG Visit - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Dwayne Branch, Newham Council - Sevenoaks 	
13 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Leadership Board - London 	
14 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Members' Briefing Day - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Executive Meeting - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quercas 7 Trading Company - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Meeting - SDC 	
15 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LocalGov Camp 17 - Bristol 	
16 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LocalGov Camp 17 - Bristol 	
18 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Day Lunch - Head of Licensing - SDC 	
19 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Project Board Meeting - SDC 	
20 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guardian Public Service Awards Judging - London 	
21 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Induction Session - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with iESE - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent & Medway Business Fund Investment Advisory Board - Maidstone 	
22 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent LEP Meeting - Purfleet 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SELEP Strategic Board - Purfleet 	
25 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Strategy Dinner - London 	
26 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT 2018-20 Ideas Meeting - SDC 	
28 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Landowners' Meeting - Sevenoaks 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Leaders' Meeting - Maidstone 	
30 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman's Quiz Night - Sevenoaks 	
October 2017		
1 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BETA Premiere - Stag Youth Theatre - Sevenoaks 	
2 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Locate In Kent - SDC 	
4 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Highways England - SDC 	

5 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevenoaks Town Council Liaison Meeting - Sevenoaks 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with iESE - SDC 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy & Performance Advisory Committee - SDC 	
6 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting re Broadband - SDC 	
9 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Peer Review 	
10 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Peer Review 	
11 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Peer Review 	
12 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Peer Review 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet - SDC 	
16 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Commercial Advisory Board - London 	
18 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Leadership Board - London 	
19 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Councillors' Forum - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Executive Meeting - London 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% Business Rate Retention Pilot Meeting - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Control Committee - SDC 	
20 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Kent Partnership Meeting - Swanley 	
25 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent In Me - Presentation Skills session - SDC 	
30 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit by PA Consulting - SDC 	
31 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent & Medway Business Fund Investment Advisory Board - Maidstone 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Project Board - SDC 	
November 2017		
1 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA Improvement & Innovation Board - London 	
2 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGDP Induction Event - Speaker - Warwick 	
3 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Forum - SDC 	

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Cabinet Membership and Portfolios

(7 Members: 7 Conservatives) Cllrs. Fleming, (Chairman), Dickins, Firth, Hogarth, Lowe , Piper and Scholey

Portfolio Holders 2017/18 (Annex to Appendix H of the Constitution – revised November 2017)

Cllr. Peter Fleming	Leader Policy & Performance	Corporate Policy & Performance, Communications, Customer Service Standards, Business Transformation, Special Projects (Asset Acquisition, Disposal & Redevelopment), Digital, Human Resources.
Cllr. Matthew Dickins	Direct & Trading Services	Direct Services, Street Cleansing, Waste & Recycling, CCTV, Environmental Health, Markets, Parking, Pest Control.
Cllr. Roddy Hogarth	Economic & Community Development	Economic Development, Business Continuity, Emergency Planning, Regeneration, Town Centres, Tourism, West Kent Partnership, West Kent Leader Programme, Community Grants, Community Plan, Community Safety, Safeguarding, Youth, Parishes.
Cllr. John Scholey	Finance	Audit & Corporate Governance, Budget & Financial Strategy, Local Tax, Procurement Policy, Facilities Management, Strategic Risk, Housing Benefit, Fraud Prevention , Operational Assets.
Cllr. Michelle Lowe	Housing & Health	Housing Strategy & Policy, Housing Standards, Housing Needs, Empty Homes, Gypsy and Traveller, DFG, Health, Energy Efficiency, Fuel Poverty, Leisure.
Cllr Anna Firth	Legal & Democratic Services	Brexit , Corporate Health and Safety, Equality, Democratic Services, Elections, Land Charges and GDPR , Legal, Licensing, Trading Company, Shared Service Programme, Governance.
Cllr. Robert Piper	Planning	Conservation, Development Services, Development Control, Local Plan, Planning Policy, Building control, Transport policy, Enforcement.

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