

20 June 2017 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks
Despatched: 12.06.17



Housing & Health Advisory Committee

Membership:

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Dr. Canet, Dyball, Eyre, Gaywood, Horwood, Lowe, Parkin, Parson, Pearsall, Scott and Miss. Stack

Agenda

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

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. Appointment of Chairman		
2. Appointment of Vice Chairman		
3. Minutes To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 February 2017, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
4. Declarations of Interest Any interests not already registered.		
5. Actions from Previous Meetings (if any)		
6. Update from Portfolio Holder		
7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
8. Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (requirement to belong to a scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014.	(Pages 5 - 10)	James Cox Tel: 01732227312
9. Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy.	(Pages 11 - 68)	Hayley Brooks, Tel: 01732 227272
10. Housing Strategy 2017.	(Pages 69 - 136)	Gavin Missons Tel: 01732 227332

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 11. Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy. | (Pages 137 - 150) | Hayley Brooks
Tel: 01732 227272 |
| 12. Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment. | (Pages 151 - 164) | Hayley Brooks
Tel: 01732 227272 |
| 13. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board
To note the minutes of the meeting of the Health Liaison Board held on 24 May 2017. | (Pages 165 - 168) | |
| 14. Work Plan | (Pages 169 - 170) | |

EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

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

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

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2017 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Lowe (Chairman)

Cllr. Parkin (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Dr. Canet, Dyball, Eyre, Gaywood, Halford, Horwood, Parkin, Pearsall and Scott

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Parson

Cllrs. Firth, Fleming, Mrs. Hunter, Layland, McGregor, Piper and Purves were also present.

38. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

39. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Mrs. Bosley declared a non pecuniary interest in that she was a Council appointment to the Sencio Board.

40. Actions from Previous Meetings

The actions of the previous meeting were noted.

41. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder's update was noted.

42. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

43. Sevenoaks Leisure Centre Application for a loan by Sencio Community Leisure

The Chief Officer Communities and Business introduced the report and the Chief Finance Officer summarised the financial considerations. Members considered the report which outlined Sencio's proposals for works to Sevenoaks Leisure Centre to improve the Centre and take advantage of unmet latent demand in the town. Members were asked to recommend that Cabinet agree a 10 year loan of £600,000 for Sencio at an interest rate of 6% per annum.

The Committee received two presentations, one from Sencio and one from Createability, and Members had the opportunity to ask questions, particularly on

the potential disruption to customers and predicted achievement of membership targets.

It was noted that the proposed terms would keep the Council protected, and the loan would see improvements for Sencio's business and Sevenoaks residents.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that Sencio be granted a loan of £600,000 over ten years at an interest rate of 6% per annum under the terms set out below

'That the agreed works will be recorded by way of a Licence for Alterations. The Licence will set out the terms for the works, and it is recommended that these will include:

- That the improvements will be made to the Council's satisfaction;
- That the works be carried out in accordance with any statutory requirements, the cost of which need to be met by Sencio prior to any work commencing;
- Sencio will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of and repairs to the works covered by the loan;
- At the end of the current lease in 2029, the Council will not be liable to pay Sencio for the improvements made.
- In the event that Sencio defaults on its loan repayment for the works, the Council will look to declare Sencio insolvent and thereby in breach of the lease and, subject to the Court's relief, terminate the same. This will be actioned if Sencio makes one loan repayment in excess of 30 days late or three loan repayments in excess of one day late.'

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

With the Committee's agreement, the Chairman brought forward consideration of agenda items 8 and 9 (Minutes 44 and 45).

44. Statement of principles for determining the amount of a penalty charge

The Housing Standards Team Leader presented a report which sought adoption of the proposed statement of principles associated with enforcing The Smoke and

Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/1693). He tabled a flow chart to aid understanding of the process.

Members discussed the importance of this and felt that the penalty charge could be initially tougher than suggested.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the statement of principles and associated penalties charges associated with the regulations, be approved, and Cabinet asked to consider raising the initial penalty charge to a higher figure.

45. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The Chairman of the Health Liaison Board presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2017 highlighting some of the discussion. The minutes were noted.

46. Housing needs study

The Housing Policy Manager tabled data for additional information and introduced Michael Bullock, Managing Director of ARC, from whom Members received a presentation on the key findings of the housing needs study. His key message was that the figures would help identify imbalances and provide a better range of evidence for what the Council was trying to achieve when developments came forward. The report would be complete within the next two to three weeks.

Resolved: That the report and related housing needs evidence as set out in the consultant's presentation, be noted.

47. Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) - Housing Provision

In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman had agreed to accept the report as an urgent matter to provide the Committee an opportunity to consider the report before a decision was made at Cabinet on 9 March 2017. Members were reminded that they were welcome to attend Cabinet where a decision would be taken.

The Housing and Health Manager presented the report which set out information about a vacant six bedroom social housing property and sought approval to work with West Kent Housing Association to make the property available for a Syrian refugee family, if a suitable family could be identified, as part of the Kent Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). Suitability would be based on whether the property location, adaptations and other required support services were available to meet their needs. The Council had previously not been in a position to consider housing a refugee family due to the lack of available and suitable housing.

It was noted that any potential family would be security vetted by the Home Office. The Council would have access to local authority funding, provided by the Home Office, for support services, with additional funding available for education

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Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 28 February 2017

and any required health and medical care costs. Extra funding may be available in exceptional cases towards updating the property, additional adaptations and to cover immediate property void costs to enable it to remain empty until a suitable family was allocated to the home. There was no financial commitment for the Council.

Some Members raised concerns on suitability of the village for someone with a disability with regards to infrastructure and location; and how much and what type of support would be available particularly whether there would be access to a car. The Housing & Health Manager advised that support would be provided for the family to learn to use local transport and infrastructure and there would be nothing preventing them learning to drive. One of the top priorities would be to register them with a dentist and doctors surgery. The feedback received from other placements within the County was not highlighting any of these issues to be a particular problem.

It was noted that local residents and the Parish Council were in support. The Chairman used her discretion and allowed an interested resident of Farningham who along with friends wished to offer support, and a representative of Sevenoaks Welcome Refugees campaign group to address the committee.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) the Council must 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 the paper directly impacted on end users. The impact had been analysed and did not vary between groups of people. The decisions recommended through the paper would assist vulnerable families.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

48. Work Plan

The work plan was noted, subject to the addition of a report on the Kent & Medway Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.42 PM

CHAIRMAN

REDRESS SCHEMES FOR LETTINGS AGENCY WORK AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT WORK (REQUIREMENT TO BELONG TO A SCHEME ETC) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2014

Health and Housing Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

Report of Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Cabinet - 13 July 2017

Key Decision: No

The Executive Summary: The Order makes it a legal requirement for all lettings agents and property managers in England to join a Government-approved redress scheme by 1st October 2014. Enforcement and the setting of the level of penalty charge applicable for a breach of the Order is the responsibility of the Council.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer James Cox, Ext. 7312

Recommendation to Advisory Committee: To recommend to Cabinet to approve a penalty charge of £5,000 for breaching the order, unless following representation extenuating circumstance applies.

Recommendation to Cabinet: To approve a penalty charge of £5,000 for breaching the order, unless following representation extenuating circumstance applies.

Reason for recommendation: To determine the amount of monetary penalty applicable in each case of a breach of the Order. Without such a determination enforcement activity will not be possible.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014, SI 2014/2359 became operative on 1st October 2014.

As a result of the Order tenants, prospective tenants, landlords dealing with commercial lettings agents in the private rented sector; as well as leaseholders and freeholders dealing with property managers in the residential sector can complain to an independent person about the service

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received. This will make it easier for tenants and landlords to complain about poor service and prevent disputes escalating.

3. The 'Enforcement Authority' for the Order is the Council.
4. The Council can impose a fine of up to £5,000 where it is satisfied, on the balance of probability that someone is engaged in letting or management work and is required to be a member of a redress scheme, but has not joined.
5. The three government approved redress schemes are:
 - i. Ombudsman Services Property (www.ombudsman-services.org)
 - ii. Property Redress Scheme (www.theprs.co.uk)
 - iii. The Property Ombudsman (www.tpos.co.uk)
6. Enforcement process is prescribed by the Order and is set out below.

Step 1: Notice of Intent
When it is proposed to impose a monetary penalty, the authority must serve on that person a written notice of what is proposed.
Step 2: Representations and Objections
A person on whom the notice is served may within 28 days make written representations to the proposed imposition of a monetary penalty.
Step 3: Final Notice
After 28 days the Council will decide on whether to impose a monetary penalty, if it does then at least 28 days must be given before payment is required. When imposing a monetary penalty a final notice must be issued explaining <ol style="list-style-type: none">i) why the fine is being imposed;ii) the amount to be paid;iii) how payment may be made;iv) the consequences of failing to pay;v) that there is a right to appeal against the penalty to the First-tier Tribunal and that any appeal must be made within 28 days after the imposition of the fine.
Step 4: Appeals
An appeal can be made by the letting agent or property manager to the First-tier Tribunal, who can agree with the enforcement authority's notice to

issue a penalty or may decide to quash or vary the notice and fine.
Step 5: Recovery of the penalty
If the lettings agent or property manager does not pay the fine within the period specified the authority can recover the fine with the permission of the court as if payable under a court order.

A flow chart is attached as an appendix.

7. Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government states ‘The expectation is that a £5,000 fine should be considered the norm and that a lower fine should only be charged if the enforcement authority is satisfied that there are extenuating circumstances’. Following this guidance it is envisaged that the full £5000.00 penalty would be applied.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

8. Option 1 - Do nothing, given the determination of Central Government to ensure rogue elements in the private rented sector either improve their service or leave the sector, option 1 is unrealistic.
9. Option 2 - To agree a different penalty charge, Central Government has specifically expressed a wish for the imposition of the maximum monetary penalty.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no significant financial implications in terms of additional administrative or staff costs. It is expected there will be a very limited number of penalty notices issued.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Determining the monetary penalty is required before the penalty charges are enforceable. Processes associated with issuing of a penalty charge, payment and appeals are clearly described within the Order.

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.

Conclusion

It is recommended that the maximum level of monetary penalty, (£5,000) is applied to those who breach the requirements of the Order.

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Appendices

Flowchart - Letting Agent and Property Manager
Redress Enforcement Process

Background Papers:

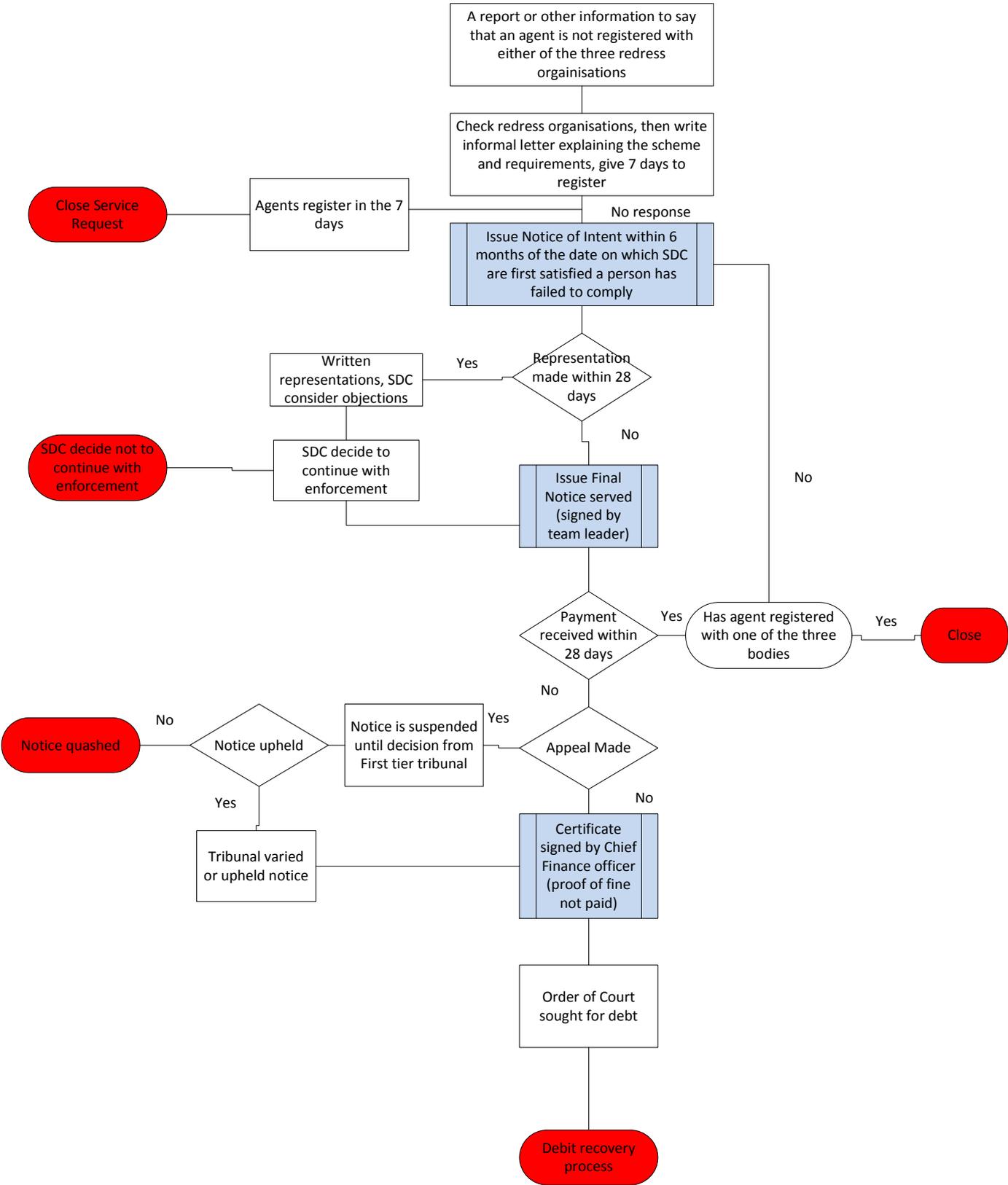
The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work
and Property Management Work (Requirement to
Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014,
SI 2014/2359

Annex C: Improving the private rented sector and
tackling bad practice.

Richard Wilson

Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services

Letting Agent and Property
Manager Redress Enforcement
Process



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DRAFT WEST KENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

Report of Chief Officer, Communities & Business

Status For Consideration

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: A draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2016-21 has been developed. Members are asked to approve the draft strategy for consultation with stakeholders and residents.

This report supports the Key Aims of providing the right support at the right time and 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:

Members are asked approve the draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy for consultation with stakeholders and residents.

Reason for recommendation: The Council has a legal requirement to produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years. This Strategy delivers the homelessness priorities of this Council as part of 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.
- 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

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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.
- 5 This Council has decided to deliver its own Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy which sets out the housing priorities for this District. The other two councils are delivering this Strategy as their Housing AND Homelessness Strategy and therefore it is recognised that some of the housing information provided within the Strategy and associated evidence data, may need to be amended for the purposes of Sevenoaks District.
- 6 The draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy is set out at Appendix A and the evidence data is set out at Appendix B.

Summary of the Strategy

- 7 The mission statement for the Strategy 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.
- 8 There are four key objectives for West Kent Housing Advice Teams 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.
- 9 Members are asked to approve the draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy for consultation with stakeholders and District residents before the final Strategy is brought to Members to adopt.

Key Implications

Financial

- 10 Any actions in the West Kent Homelessness Strategy will be delivered from existing Council housing budgets or sourced external funding.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 11 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.

Equality Assessment

- 12 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.
- 13 The strategy will provide assistance to all residents at risk of homelessness. The Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix C.

Resource (non financial)

- 14 Work and actions within the West Kent Homelessness Strategy will be delivered from existing resources.

Conclusions

- 15 A new West Kent Homelessness Strategy has been developed by the three West Kent Councils and Members are asked to agree the draft Strategy for consultation with stakeholders and District residents.

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy

Appendix B - Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy Evidence Data

Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Lesley Bowles

Chief Officer Communities & Business

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West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021

Final Draft 08 05 2017



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 likely to accelerate. 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.

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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 housing and 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.

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?

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:

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- 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 June 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..

Add statement on EIA

Section Two: Contexts

Over the last five years or so, social housing has undergone profound change. Recent legislation including 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 due to be enacted in 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;

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- a 'pay-to-stay' scheme for social housing tenants, with tenants outside London earning over £30,000 required to pay market or near market rents may be introduced by Government¹;
- housing associations being encouraged through the regulatory system to use their assets to deliver new homes.

Greater focus on home ownership

The Government is strongly committed to extending home ownership. Its priorities are to:

- 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 under 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;
 - refocus the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme on home ownership initiatives, with very limited funding for rented tenures.

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' from April 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 from April 2016, 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 2017;
- continuing the roll out of Universal Credit, with the direct payment of rent benefit to tenants;

¹ Pay-to-stay is mandatory for local authorities and voluntary for housing associations

- 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;

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- **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 1).

Table 1: Kent-wide plans and policies

Document	Relevance
Vision For Kent 2012-22	Countywide strategy for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Kent's communities, led by Kent Council Leaders
Better Homes: localism, aspiration and choice (2011)	A Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway
Every Day Matters: Kent's Children and Young People's Plan (2013-2016)	Kent's Multi agency Strategic Plan for Children and Young People, developed by the Kent Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Board
Rural Homes: Supporting Kent's Rural Communities	Kent Housing Group's cross-County Protocol to help deliver affordable local needs housing in rural parts of Kent and Medway.
Growing the Garden of England:	Strategy for environment and economy in Kent
Think Housing First	Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board's (Housing) strategy to reduce health inequalities through access to good quality and affordable housing
Mind the Gap: Building Bridges to better health for all	Kent's Health Inequalities Action Plan
Better Homes, Greater Choice:	SCCS Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care
Sustainable Lettings Protocol	The protocol highlights the importance of creating sustainable core purpose is to ensure that future housing developments within Kent meet the objective of creating long lasting sustainable communities
Growth & Infrastructure Framework	The 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 leads 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, Planning 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.

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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 price²	£302,000	£260,000	£275,000
Median income	£36,300	£34,600	£36,800
Ratio of income to house price (national average 6.5)³	11	9.7	9.3
Average entry level private sector rent p.m. (2-bed)	£1100	£824	£850
Number on council Housing Register	715	994	1054
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.

² Median house price (Jan 2013-Dec 2014)

³ Lowest quartile (entry level) house price

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

Tonbridge and Malling:

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

West Kent:

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

Tunbridge Wells:

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

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 Officer and 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;
- Flying Start: support project with West Kent Housing Association overcoming barriers to new tenancies;
- 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 2033⁴ 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 a total of 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 last year.

⁴ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015; Tunbridge and Malling SHMA Update Report 2014. All net figures.

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

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

Housing Supply

West Kent is struggling to meet the housing needs and demands across all forms of housing. In particular, the need for affordable housing is currently estimated at 422 homes per year in Sevenoaks, 341 homes in Tunbridge Wells and 277 homes in Tonbridge and Malling⁵. Supply has not kept pace with need. Over the last five years the number of affordable homes developed totalled 87, 396 and 263 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 only for home ownership, with some limited resources for new supported and sheltered 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 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.

⁵ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015; Tonbridge and Malling SHMA Update Report 2014. All net figures.

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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, 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 not 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 income⁶. The problem is even more severe in rural areas, where the average house costs 17 times the average income.

⁶ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015, TMBC SHMA Report 2014

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.

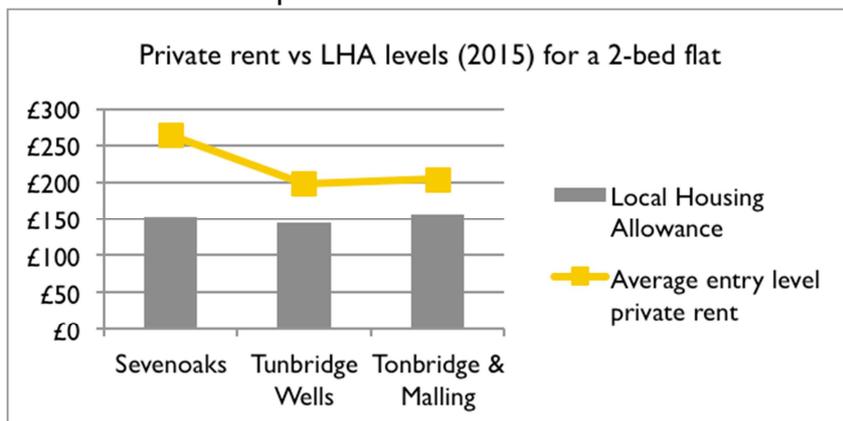
Details of how Starter Homes will operate have not yet formally been released. However, it has been estimated that in order to buy a home costing £250,000 (after the 20% discount has been applied) a household would have to earn £58,000/year plus put down a £47,000 deposit. If mortgage lenders are prepared to offer 95% mortgages, the buyer would need a lower deposit of £13,000 but need to earn £67,000/year.⁷ 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, analysis⁸ 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

⁷ figures based on Shelter, October 2015

⁸ Shelter, July 2015

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- recent changes to the benefit cap, which will mean that over 300 households across West Kent have a shortfall (averaging £61 in Sevenoaks).
- the requirement to meet income thresholds (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.

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.

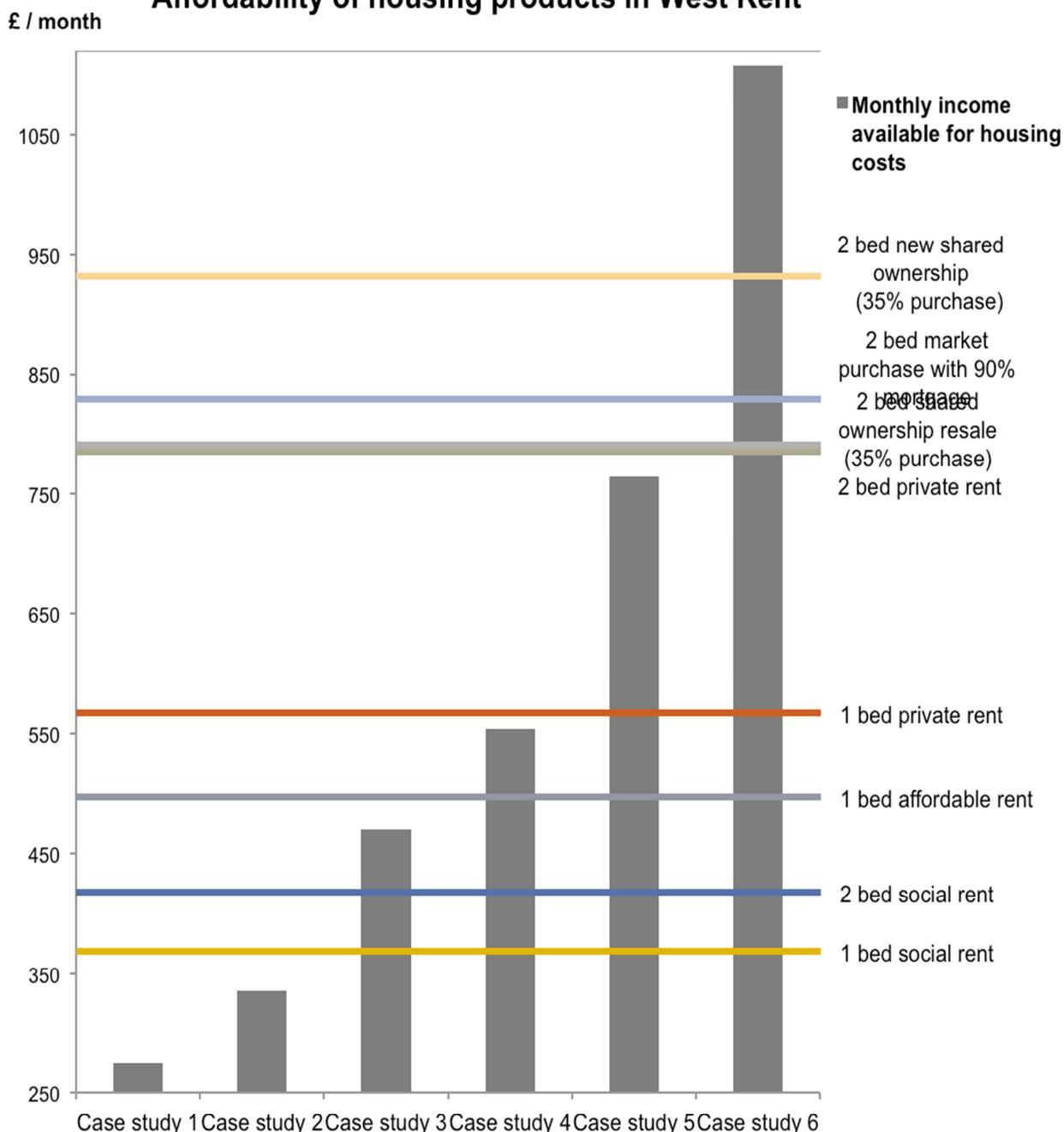
Figure 2: Accessing affordable housing in West Kent

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.



Affordability of housing products in West Kent



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 £5.30 / 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 £275 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.
Case study 2
Household: An unemployed young person (aged 29) living in Tonbridge and Malling without savings

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).

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.

Case study 3

Household: A single person, aged 40, living in Tunbridge Wells

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.

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.

Case study 4

Household: A couple with 1 child living and working in Sevenoaks.

Employment/Income: Annual household income of £22,177. Applying affordability criteria, up to £554 / month could be available for housing costs (30% of income).

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.

Case study 5

Household: A lone parent with 2 children seeking a 2 bedroom property in Tunbridge Wells.

Employment/Income: The family receive £1,667 each month in wages and partial benefits, including payment for housing costs.

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.

Case study 6

Household: A working couple with 1 child living and working in Sevenoaks

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).

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.

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 2015/16 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. 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 2015/16 they achieved this for almost 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 effective⁹. 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. Over the last 9 months they have helped almost 100 households on a one-to-one basis and held a series of workshops with over 75 attendees.

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)

⁹ Heriot Watt University 2007: Demonstrating the cost effectiveness of homelessness

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 homelessness¹⁰, the number of households presenting themselves as homeless and the numbers accepted as homeless have doubled over the last two years across the three authorities (to 191 in 2015/16).

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. 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. At March 2016, a total of 2763 households were on the three Housing Registers (1054 in

¹⁰ The picture does differ significantly across the three authorities due to the different operation of allocation policies.

Tonbridge & Malling, 715 in Sevenoaks and 994 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	4-bed	Total
Tunbridge Wells	430	363	143	53	989
Tonbridge & Malling	545	349	117	51	1062
Sevenoaks	409	241	47	14	711
Total	1384	953	307	118	2762

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 2011 with 29 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;
- 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 places¹¹.

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 2014/15 each council provided an average grant of £7,300 to around 70 households to help adapt their homes. This demand will increase, placing extra demand 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.

Case study: Disabled Facilities Grant

TMBC recently completed a Disabled Facilities Grant for a young man in his 20's 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

¹¹ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015, TMBC SHMA Report 2014

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.

Photos to be added

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. 130 excess winter deaths were attributed to poor quality housing in 2012/13. Local authorities are required to report on the number of dwellings in the private rented sector with Category 1 hazards: in 2015/16, 115 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) 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 Circle Housing Russet 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). 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.

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

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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.

Agenda Item 9

6	Take enforcement action where necessary to respond to complaints, ensure mandatory standards are met, and remove category I hazards in the private sector.
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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.
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 Plan 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.

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

Bridge Trust
CGL Recovery Service
Chapter One
Circle Housing Russet
Citizens Advice (CAB)
Golding Homes
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
Moat Homes
National Landlords Association
NHS West Kent CCG
Orbit
Porchlight
Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI)
South West Kent Community Mental Health Team
SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association)
Town & Country Housing Group
Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter
Tunbridge Wells Street Teams
West Kent Housing Association
West Kent YMCA
West Kind Mind

**Appendix Two
Evidence Base**

See separate attachment

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Appendix Three Glossary of terms

Affordable housing

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

Affordable Rent

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

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

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

Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)

A type of tenancy that entitles the landlord to take possession of the tenancy after the initial agreed period.

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

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

New Homes Bonus

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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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DRAFT West Kent Homelessness Strategy - Evidence Base

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

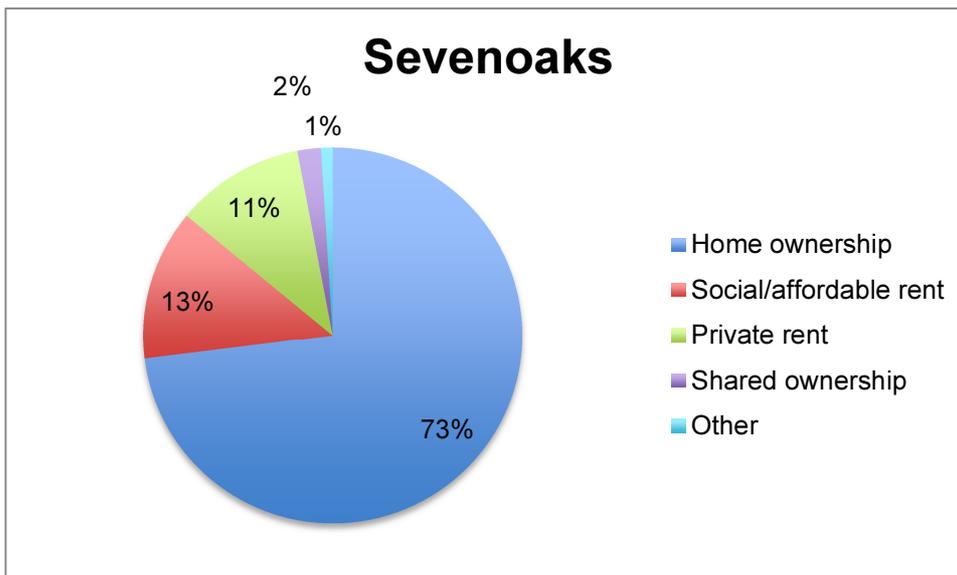
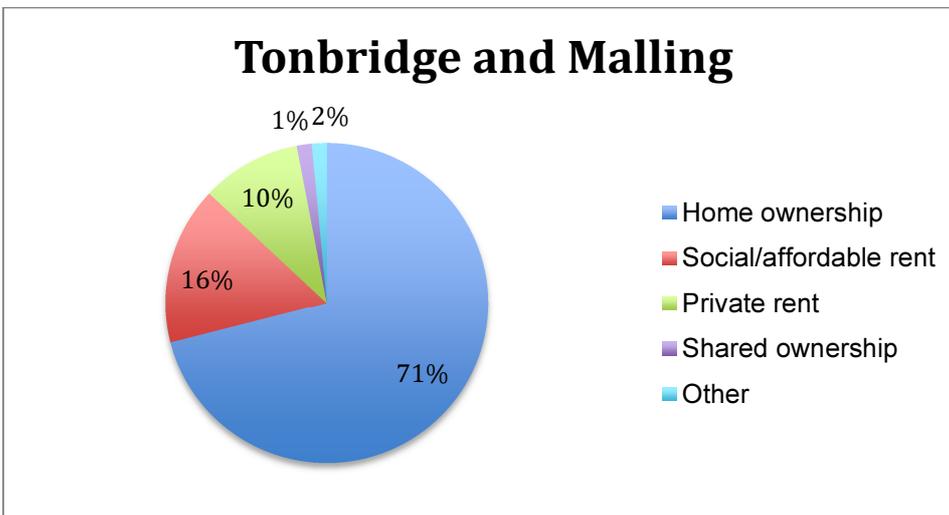
Please note that some of the Housing related data will be removed for Sevenoaks District homelessness purposes, as a separate Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy is being developed.

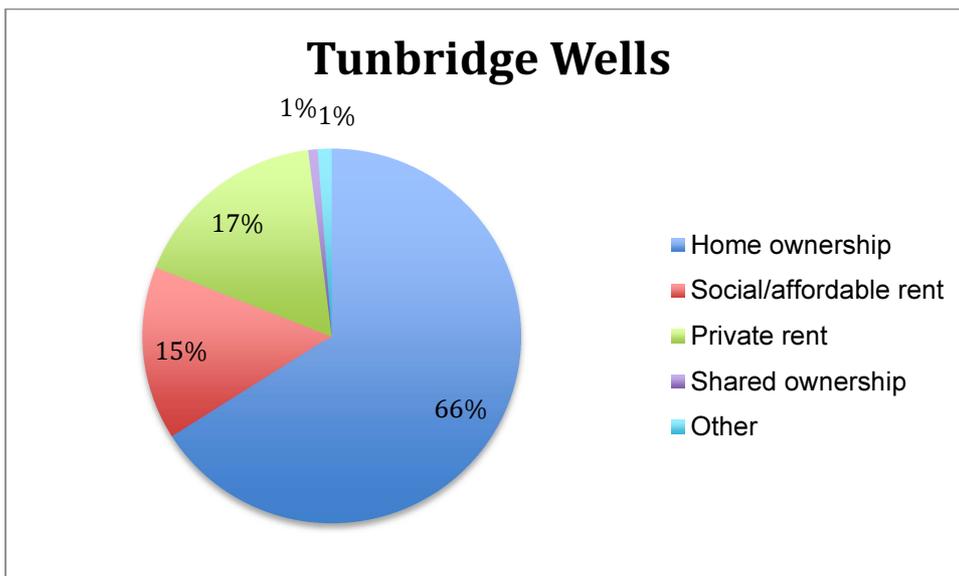
More up to date information relating to 2015-16 to be added.

1. Local Authority Funding

DCLG Homelessness Funding figures to be added

2. Tenure of housing stock within each Local Authority





Source: 2011 Census

3. Social Housing Stock

	Total social housing stock (31 March 2016)
Sevenoaks	7,642
Tonbridge and Malling	8,905
Tunbridge Wells	7,200

Source: Local Authority data

4. 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)

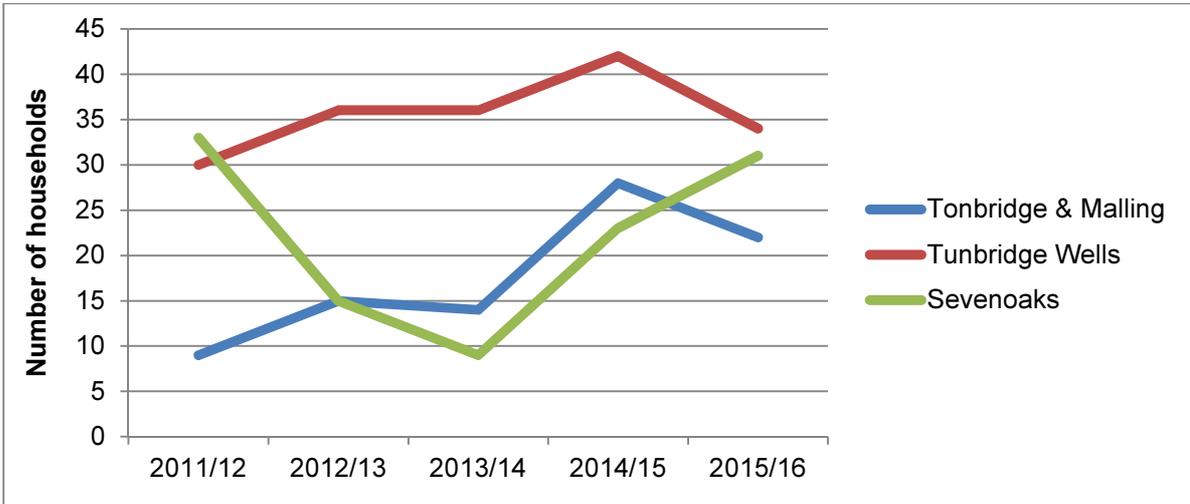
5. Black and minority ethnic (BME) population

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

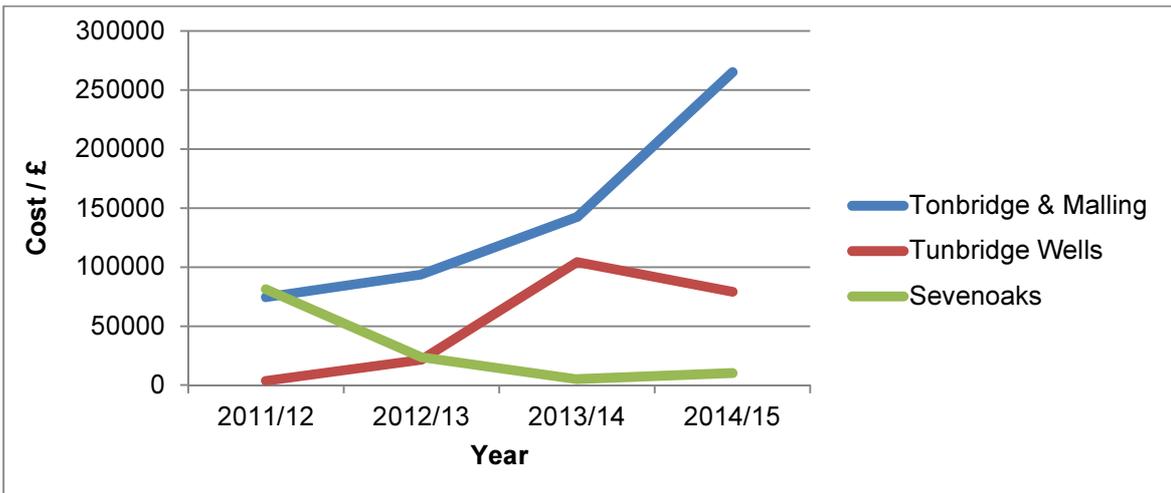
(White: other)					
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Source: ONS (2011 Census)

6. Use of temporary accommodation



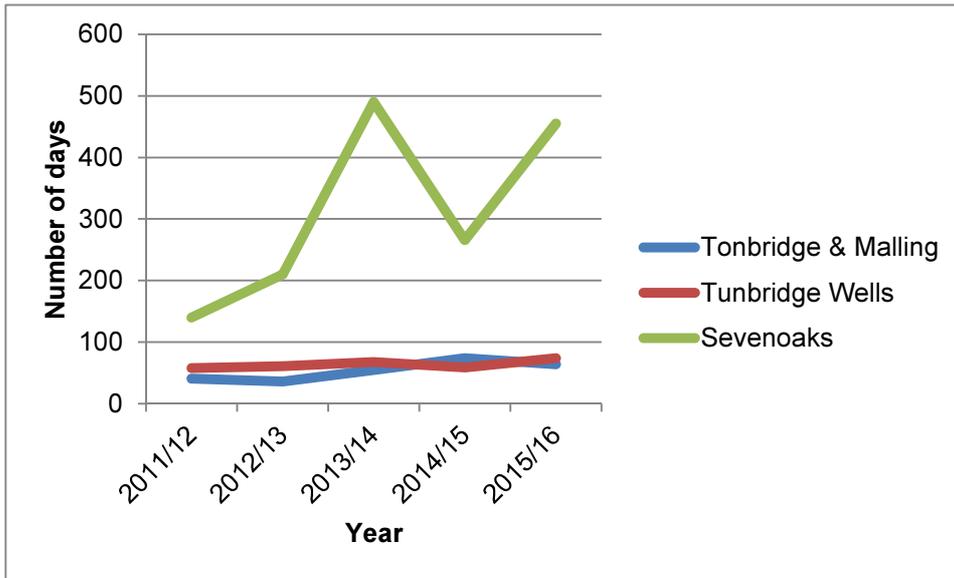
7. Cost of temporary accommodation



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.

8. Average length of stay in temporary accommodation



Source: Local Authority data

9. Housing supply

a. Estimate of affordable housing need

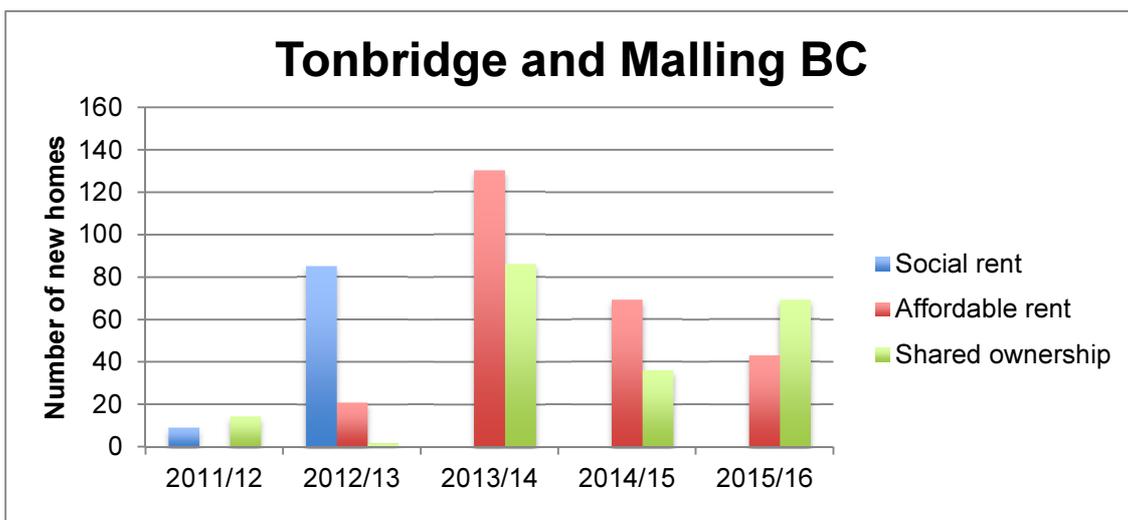
	Number of homes / year
Sevenoaks	422
Tunbridge Wells	341
Tonbridge and Malling	277

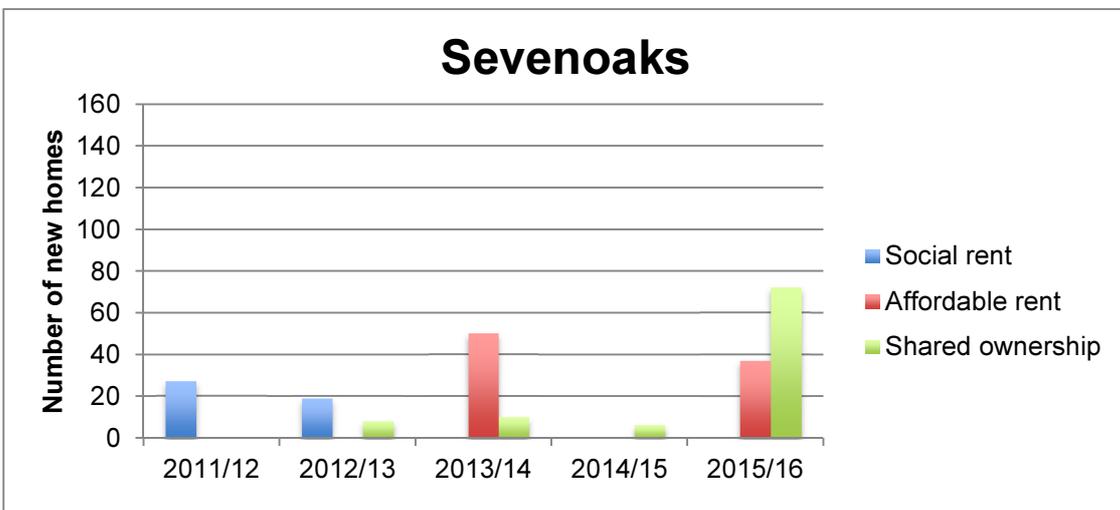
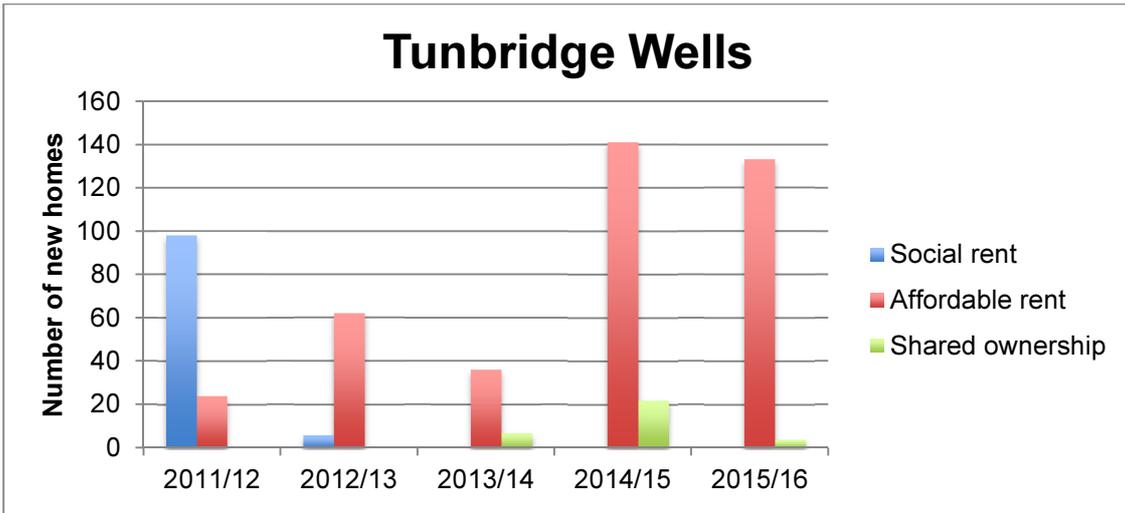
Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)

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)

b. New affordable homes developed





Source: Local Authority data

10. 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)

11. 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)

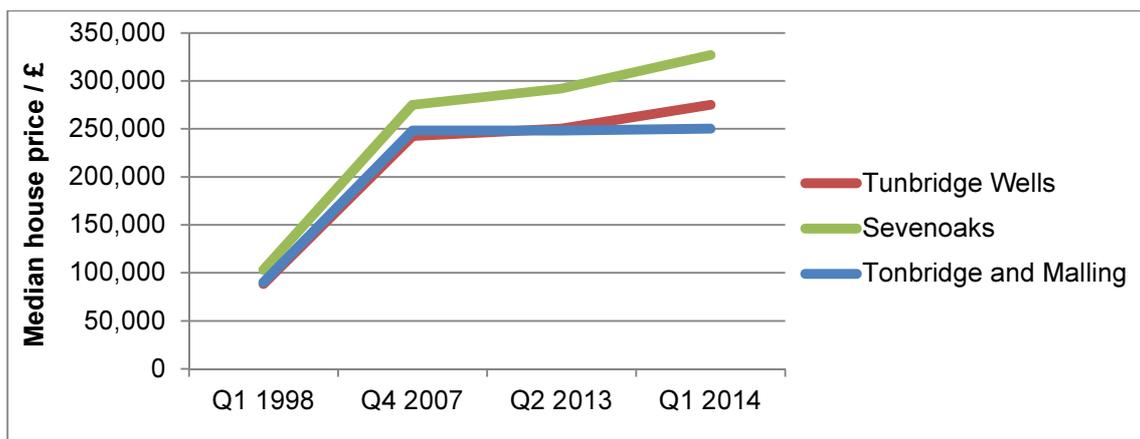
Source: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)
 Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)
 SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: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

12. House prices

	Median House Price
Sevenoaks	£302,000
Tonbridge and Malling	£275,000
Tunbridge Wells	£260,000

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)

13. Increase in median house price (1998-2014)



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)

14. Weekly Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (2015/16)

	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

15. 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)

16. 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

17. Median House Prices

	Median House Prices
Sevenoaks	£302,000
Tonbridge and Malling	£275,000
Tunbridge Wells	£260,000

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)

18. Distribution of income levels across populations of each local authority area

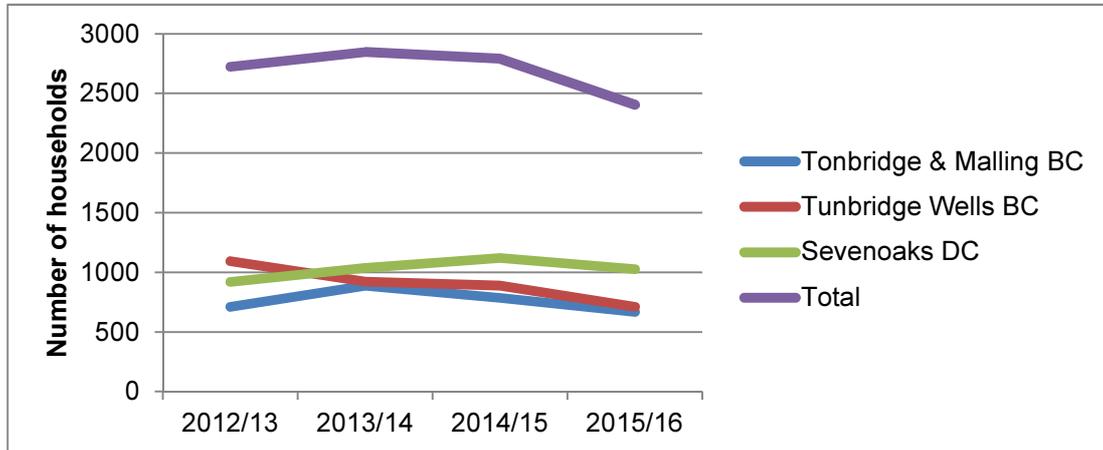
Annual household income	Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge and Malling
Below £20,000	24%	22%
£20-40,000	33%	32%

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)

19 Homelessness: Advice and support

19.1 Number of people approaching Council for housing advice and assistance



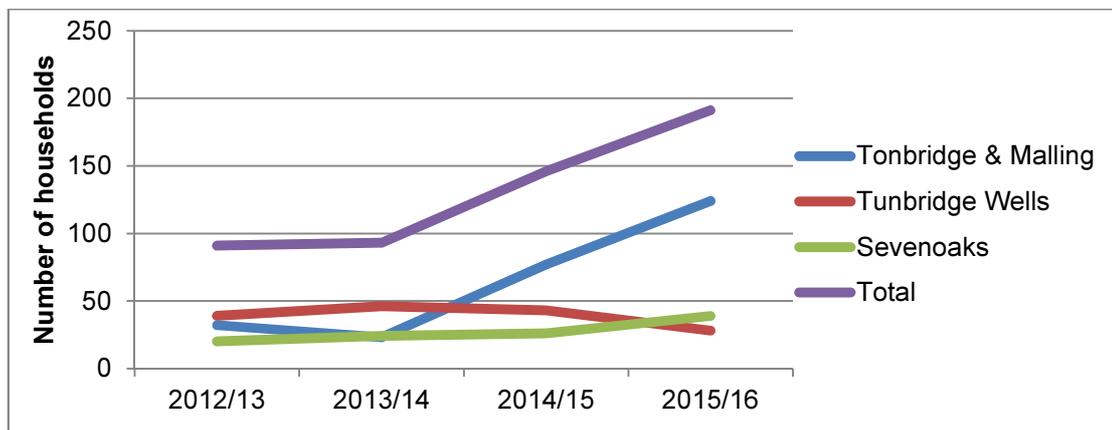
Source: Local Authority data

19.2 Number of cases where homelessness was prevented

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Tonbridge & Malling	202	163	209	144	120
Tunbridge Wells	350	313	153	168	156
Sevenoaks	244	181	334	286	220
Total	796	657	696	598	496

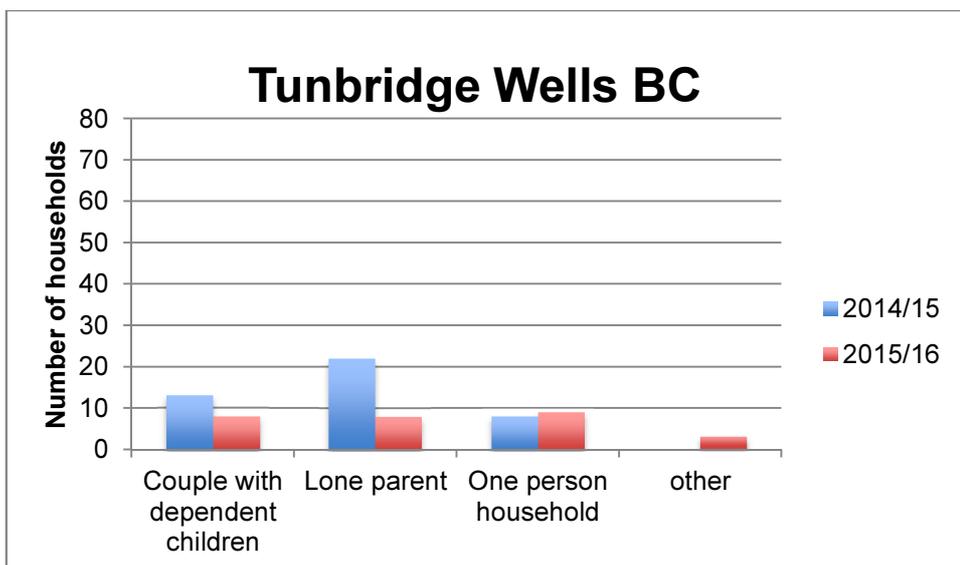
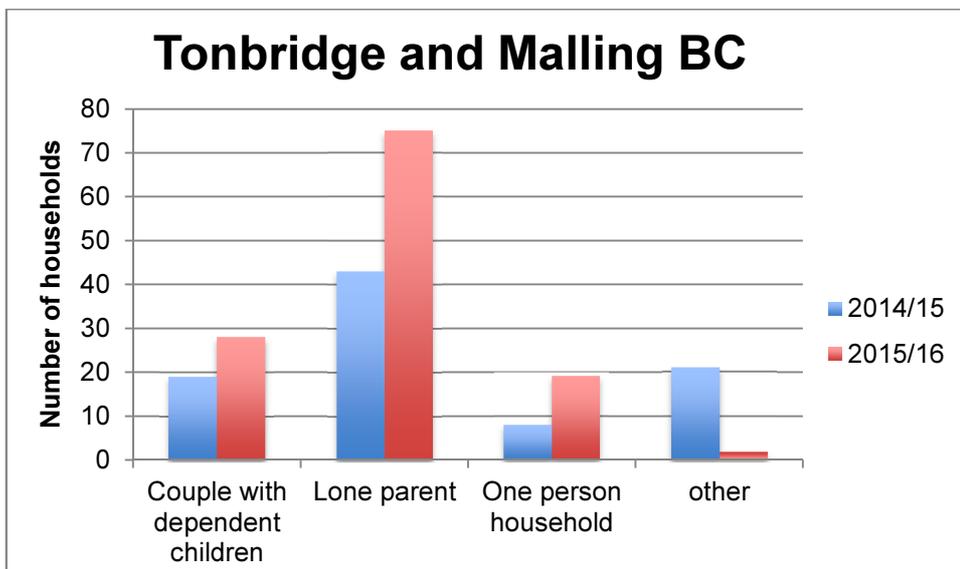
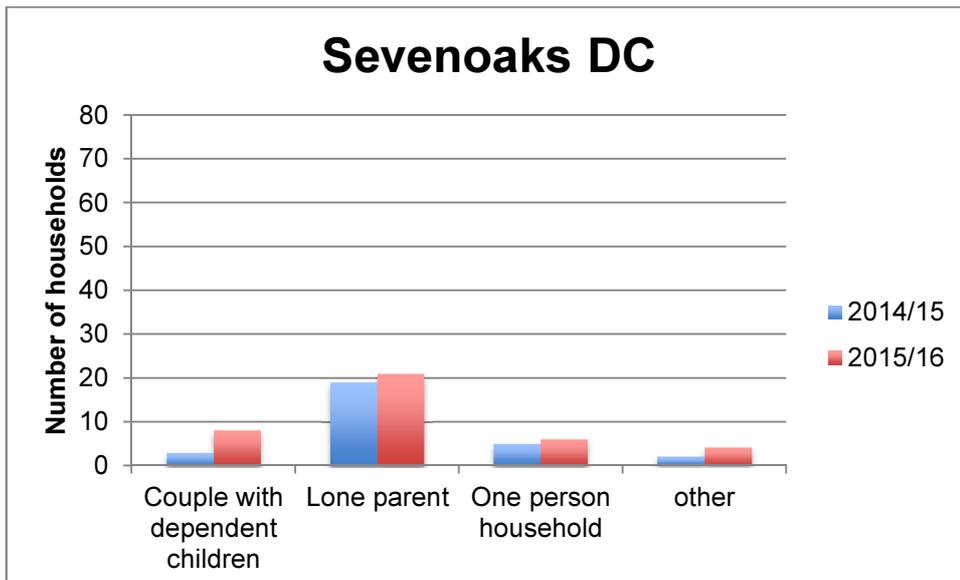
Source: Local Authority data

19.3 Households accepted as homeless



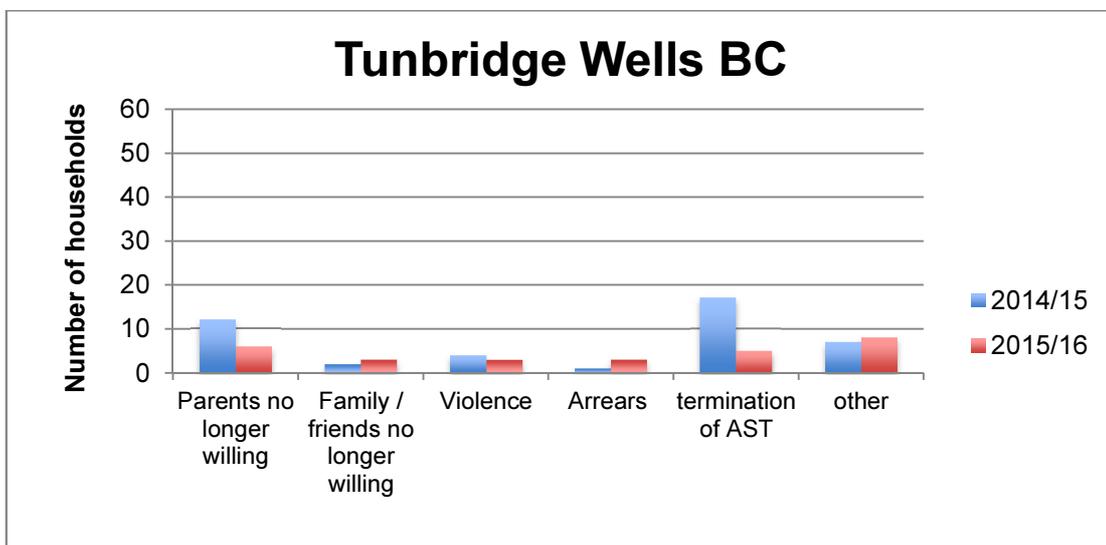
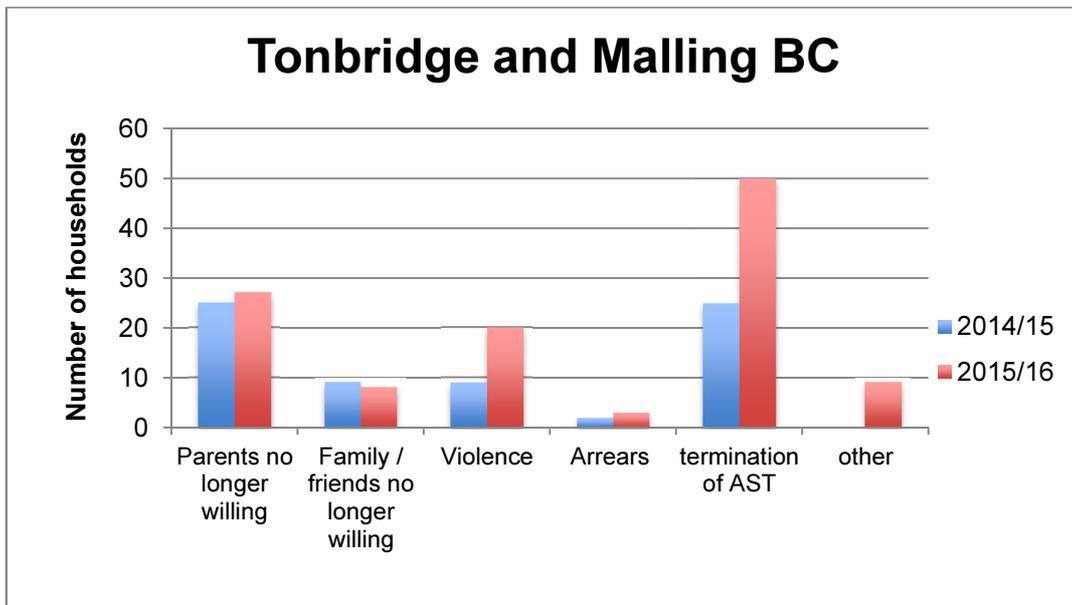
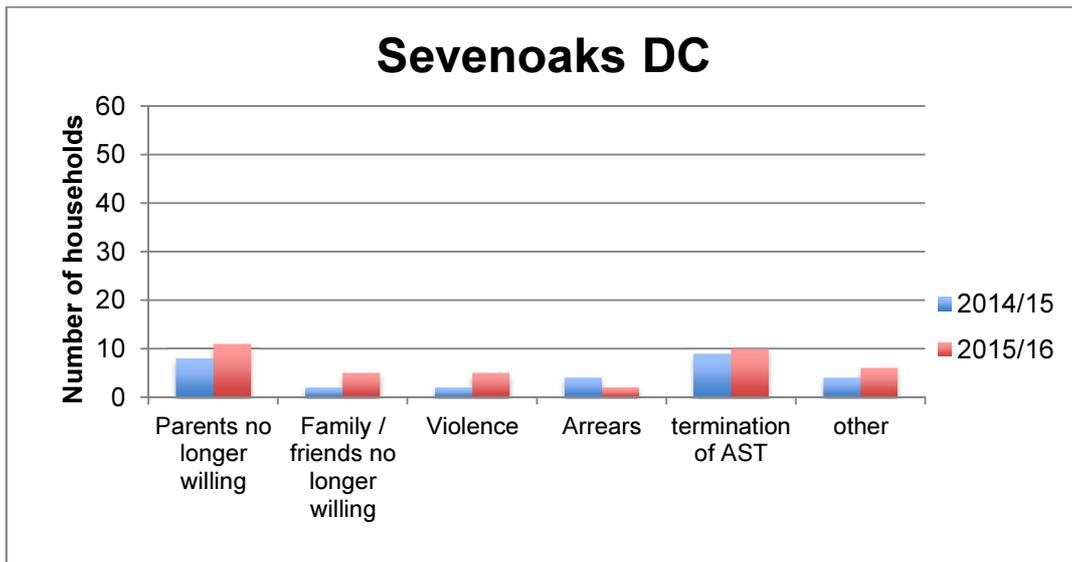
Source: Local Authority data

19.4 Types of household accepted as homeless



Source: Local Authority data

19.5 Reasons for homelessness



Source: Local Authority data

20 Rough Sleepers

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

Source: Local Authority data

21 Housing Register

	Number on Council Housing Register
Sevenoaks	715
Tonbridge and Malling	1054
Tunbridge Wells	994

Source: Local Authority data

22 Disabled Facilities Grant

	Number of completions (2014/15)	Overall spend (2014/15)
Sevenoaks	77	£548,000
Tonbridge & Malling	67	£559,000
Tunbridge Wells	67	£504,099

Source: Local Authority data

23 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)

24 Category 1 hazards:

Number of dwellings in private rented sector found to have 1 or more category 1 hazards after inspection (2015/16)

Sevenoaks	11
Tonbridge and Malling	25
Tunbridge Wells	To be added

Source: Local Authority data

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

Sevenoaks	7.70%
Tonbridge & Malling	10%
Tunbridge Wells	8.60%

Source: Local Authority data

26 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.

APPENDIX C

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

APPENDIX C

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		

HOUSING STRATEGY 2017

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

Report of	Chief Planning Officer
Status	For consideration
Also considered by	Planning Advisory Committee - 22 June 2017 Cabinet - 13 July 2017 Council - 18 July 2017 (decision)
Key Decision	No

This report supports the Key Aim of housing, health and wider community strategy as set out in the District Council's Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer Gavin Missons, Ext. 7332

Recommendation to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee (HHAC): That Members recommend approval of the Draft Housing Strategy.

Recommendation to the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC): That Members recommend approval of the Draft Housing Strategy.

Recommendation to Cabinet: That, subject to comments from the HHAC and PAC, Members recommend approval of the Draft Housing Strategy to Full Council.

Recommendation to Full Council: That Members approve the Draft Housing Strategy as District Council policy.

Reason for recommendation: To agree new approaches to the delivery of housing, health and wider community strategy in the District.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Back in 2016, the District Council's Housing and Health Advisory Committee agreed to review its existing housing strategy with a view to developing an updated version which would better integrate housing and health services.
- 2 The Council's elected members were invited to a housing strategy development workshop led by the Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing and

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Health. Participating members were able to agree a short-list of preferred options and this subsequently formed the general direction of travel for a new Housing Strategy. This was then presented to a wide-ranging audience at the Council's housing forum with Marcus Jones MP and Minister for Local Government as keynote speaker.

- 3 In order to progress the project, a Local Housing Needs Study (LHNS) was commissioned to build on evidence contained in the District Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). **As part of the study a wide ranging survey was sent to every household in the District in order to understand local needs and aspirations and how these might differ around the District. An impressive 18% response rate was achieved which adds strength to the LHNS as an important evidence base.**
- 4 Whereas the aim of a SHMA is to provide high-level data in order to balance the housing market, the LHNS is intended to qualify housing aspirations and provides much more detailed housing intelligence presented at place-making level (six geographically grouped ward areas).
- 5 The key findings of the LHNS are, as follows:
 - Lower quartile house price to lower quartile income ratio of 13.4;
 - Limited private rented sector - lower quartile and median rental prices more expensive than the county, region and England as a whole;
 - House prices and access to deposits will be major stumbling blocks, particularly as there are relatively few intermediate housing products;
 - Skilled middle-income groups excluded from affordable rented housing but struggle to access home ownership;
 - Affordable housing delivery should be more focussed towards sale rather than rent (aspirational, however; LHNS recommends further investigations on economic viability, local income, savings and newly-introduced intermediate housing products etc);
 - A need for smaller social sector and a demand for larger private sector dwellings;
 - A growing need for disabled adaptations and other assistive technologies to support independent living;
 - The majority of older people want to stay put in their own homes with housing-related support and other in situ solutions;
 - A wide-range of housing types and tenures required for older people that *do* intend to down-size to more suitable housing; and

- A continuing need to improve the private sector housing stock condition.
- 6 The completed LHNS has subsequently informed the new Draft Housing Strategy (Appendix A). The strategy sets out a series of strategic priorities, many updated from the previous housing strategy, under the following three headings:
- Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures
 - Improving the quality and use of existing housing stock
 - Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low income households
- 7 The Draft Housing Strategy has been made available for three weeks for public comment. The consultation period runs until 9 June 2017 and comments received will be considered when finalising the Draft Housing Strategy.
- 8 In addition to providing an evidence base to the housing strategy, the LHNS is also a key part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan and has also helped to inform its Issues and Options document.

Next steps

- 9 If approved, the District Council will prepare more detailed action plans (where required) to deliver on the agreed strategic priorities as contained in the Draft Housing Strategy. Once complete, these will be made available to Members as internal working documents.
- 10 The District Council will formally launch the published Housing Strategy at a housing forum which is currently planned for late 2017. Members will be formally invited to the event and a copy of the final document will be provided.

Key Implications

Financial

The Housing Strategy will be delivered with existing resources and by bidding for additional external funding, where required.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

The District Council has certain statutory duties related to this Draft Housing Strategy and it is good practice to set out its approach to strategy in this respect.

Equality Assessment

The Draft Housing Strategy has been developed taking into account all residents in the District and with the aim of improving housing conditions, tackling health

Housing Strategy

Consultation Draft

May 2017



DRAFT

For more information:

Call **01732 227000**

Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/

Email housingpolicy@sevenoaks.gov.uk

This document is available in large print and can be explained in other languages by calling 01732 227000

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Glossary of terms

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BRE	Building Research Establishment
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CLT	Community Land Trust
DFG	Disabled-Facilities Grant
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HERO	Housing, Energy and Retraining Options
HMO	House in Multiple-Occupation
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HHSRS	Housing, Health and Safety Rating System
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
MoD	Ministry of Defence
OMR	Open Market Rents
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure
S106	Section 106
SHELAA	Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Housing association	Also known as registered provider, registered social provider (RSL) or social housing provider. A provider of affordable housing which is registered with Government's Homes and Communities Agency.
Affordable housing	Also known as social housing. Generic term for all social housing tenures.
Social rented housing	Owned by a housing association and let to eligible households in housing need. Rents are set through the national rent regime but are generally around 50-60% of market rents.
Affordable rented housing	Owned by a housing association and let to eligible households in housing need. Rents and service charges can be set at up to 80% of market rents but tend to be capped at a lower level to ensure housing benefit can cover all eligible costs.
Intermediate housing	Owned by a housing association which is sold or rented to eligible households at a cost above social rent levels but below market levels. Applicants can have a household income of up to £80,000 per year. Priority is given to military personnel and, for a limited period, to those with a local connection to the District. Intermediate housing includes shared equity, shared ownership and intermediate rented housing.

Why housing matters

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. The home where we live and the location of that home has a massive impact on our overall health and wellbeing. Good housing policy that is strongly underpinned by planning creates strong and healthy communities. Our Housing Strategy's overarching aim is to try to meet the District's housing need. Whether that means home adaptations for older or vulnerable people; more purpose-built older people's accommodation; or more family-sized affordable and starter homes – and to try to ensure they are built where they are needed.

Whether a home has been neglected and is cold, damp and full of hazards; whether a home is under-occupied or over-crowded; or whether it is isolated or in an unsustainable location – it will have a negative impact on our lives. This Housing Strategy aims to tackle these issues. We also aim to continue to combat homelessness by tackling the root causes of it: whether it is debt, mental health or domestic abuse to list some – we aim to help people before they face eviction and a life of rough sleeping on the streets.

We know that our District is very expensive to live in – with house prices up to thirteen times higher than average wages it is almost impossible for younger people to step onto the housing ladder. Yet home ownership is their ambition. Our Housing Strategy aims to support as many innovative schemes from 'Starter Homes' and shared-ownership to micro-homes as we can to give our young people the chance to own their own home in the District where they grew up. We need to make sure we have enough older people's supported housing and accommodation for vulnerable people such as people with mental or physical ill health issues, or military personnel re-adapting to civilian life.

We want to enable as many local people that grew up in this District and who want to remain in this District to be able to do so. We will support local connection criteria for all affordable homes that we are able to in order to comply with Government policy. We believe that local connection policies help to keep families and communities together – which also promotes overall wellbeing and is a major part of the solution in preventing isolation and loneliness.

This Housing Strategy is based on policies devised by the elected members of this Council combined with a comprehensive Local Housing Needs Study that has examined the housing needs of all of our residents. We are sure it will make a major difference to ensuring people are living in the best possible accommodation to meet their needs, thereby promoting their overall health and wellbeing.

– Councillor Michelle Lowe, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health

The journey so far

Back in 2016, the Council opted to review its existing Housing Strategy with a view to identifying more effective approaches to the provision of housing and related services within the District.

In order to kick-start the process, the Council's elected members were invited to participate in a housing strategy development workshop and which was led by the Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health. Through that process participating members were able to agree a short-list of preferred options and this subsequently formed the general direction of travel. This was all then presented to a wide-ranging audience at the Council's last housing forum and with Marcus Jones MP and Minister for Local Government as its keynote speaker. At that point, and with the support of its partners, the Council committed to develop a full new Housing Strategy with the key aim of better integrating housing and health services.

A Local Housing Needs Study was subsequently commissioned and this provided a wealth of information on a wide-range of housing needs down to individual District ward level. The Council was then able to cross-reference its updated housing intelligence with feedback from members, partners and the wider community in order to develop a more detailed understanding of the District's housing requirements. At that point, the Council was able to determine its strategic priorities going forward and develop a wide-range of contributory actions - all of which are now set out in this Housing Strategy.

If required, a second edition of this Housing Strategy will be issued in order to take into account developing policy and with particular regard to the Council's emerging Local Plan, elements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and Government's Housing White Paper (February 2017): 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market'.

With a significant proportion of existing and long-established housing strategy continuing to be effective, this new document only focuses on areas where updated evidence needs to be reviewed and/or a change in approach is required. Therefore, this Housing Strategy should be read in conjunction with individual housing sub-strategies and action plans.

Key policy context and supporting evidence base

With several local, county and national policies in place and a wide-range of supporting evidence, the following is just a summary of those that are key and most topical in the development of this Housing Strategy.

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities 2016-19

Updated in 2016, the Council's Community Plan Priorities 2016-19 sets out a number of priorities which have helped to guide this Housing Strategy. This includes the provision of affordable housing, support for older and vulnerable people to live more independently, and wider health-related issues such as social isolation and loneliness.

Existing and emerging Local Plan

The Council is intending to update and adopt a new Local Plan by 2019 and this will set its strategic priorities through to 2035. With scope for a new policy direction through the emerging Local Plan, this Housing Strategy will be inform that process.

Housing White Paper 2017

Government has set out its proposals for future housing legislation over four chapters in its latest Housing White Paper. These are: 1) Planning for the right homes in the right places; 2) Building homes faster; 3) Diversifying the market; and 4) Helping people now. Although much of the detail is still to be agreed, this Housing Strategy broadly reflects these Government priorities.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015

Completed in 2015, the Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment was undertaken as part of a wider West Kent analysis and underpins the development of housing, economic development and regeneration policies. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment is a key evidence base for this Housing Strategy and the emerging Local Plan.

Local Housing Needs Study 2016

Whereas the Strategic Housing Market Assessment aims to balance the housing market, the Local Housing Needs Study was undertaken to qualify housing aspirations and provides much more detailed housing-related data down to individual ward level. This provides information across all housing types and tenures as well as a wide-range of client groups, including older and vulnerable people. Again, the Local

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Housing Needs Study is a key evidence base for this Housing Strategy and the emerging Local Plan.

West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy

Being updated in 2017, the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy sets out common areas of work and related sub-regional housing aims and objectives. In the new edition, and for the first time, the strategy will also include some general housing objectives in addition to what has previously been a document focused solely on homelessness.

Better Homes: Localism, Aspiration and Choice - A Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway

The Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway sets out several objectives, including the delivery of key infrastructure to support managed growth and housing delivery, regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, providing housing choice and affordability, retrofitting of the existing housing stock and supporting vulnerable people through good housing and support services.

West Kent Integration Deal

The West Kent Integration Deal has been created to implement the King's Fund¹ recommendations by creating a person-centred approach to the health and wellbeing of the population. This also ties in with the Kent Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Live Well Kent and the Council's own Health Inequalities Action Plan.

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 positions housing as central in the overhaul of the care system in England. The Act encourages providers to establish and develop services that: 1) Promote people's independence, connections and wellbeing; 2) Prevent or postpone the need for care and support; 3) Put people in control and ensuring that services respond to what they need; 4) Give carers a right to assessment for support; and 5) Promote the integration of health and social care.

¹ The Kings Fund: kingsfund.org.uk

Current housing profile

As at 01/04/16, there were 49,820 dwellings in the District and with a split of 85% private and 15% social sector tenures. Within the private sector, 73% of dwellings were owner-occupied and 12% private rented.

Market housing

With the supply of new housing nowhere near matching growth in demand, local property prices have continued to rise steeply. The ratio of median house price to median gross annual salary has increased by nearly ten times the rate of average annual salaries across Kent in the last twelve-years and with the District seeing the largest increase of all local authority areas. Undertaken by the National Housing Federation, research has found that the District is now the fourth most expensive local authority area in the whole of the South-East outside of London.²

	House price (£)		Income to be affordable (£)*		Actual household income (£)
	2000	2016	2000	2016	2016
Lower quartile	96,500	272,000	24,125	68,000	19,500
Median	143,250	355,000	35,813	88,750	32,500

Table 1 (Source: Local Housing Needs Study) * (Based on x3.5 household income and 10% deposit)

As demonstrated in Table 1, the District's lower quartile and median house prices have grown significantly in the period 2000-2016. The results of this growth are clearly evident when compared alongside actual household income.

Taking into account the diverse nature of the District and breaking down average area-based values, properties are found to be less expensive in Swanley and Edenbridge than, say, in Sevenoaks Town, though affordability still remains an issue across the District as a whole. With housing need and supply being that much more acute in the District's rural areas, property prices can be even greater and particularly in the south of the District.

Private rented sector

The District's private rented housing accounts for just 12.6% of the total housing stock. Combined with high rents across the District, the private rented sector does not provide a great deal of viable options for low and middle-income households. For instance, the Local Housing Needs Study found that an income of at least £43,248 would be required for an average lower-quartile private rented property in the

² Home Truths 2016/17, National Housing Federation

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District. As a result, and as evidenced in several studies, there is a continuing out-migration of younger and economically-active people in search of cheaper housing elsewhere.

Private rents (mean) per calendar month		
	2010 (£)	2016 (£)
1-bed	668	835
2-bed	889	1,135
3-bed	1,246	1,458
4-bed	2,555	2,678

Table 2 (Source: gov.uk)

LHA rates per week: High Weald (£) ³		LHA rates per week: NW Kent (£)	
Shared-accommodation	77.39	Shared-accommodation	70.84
1-bed	135.36	1-bed	124.69
2-bed	176.56	2-bed	153.02
3-bed	223.19	3-bed	174.43
4-bed	336.82	4-bed	242.40

Table 3 (Source: gov.uk)

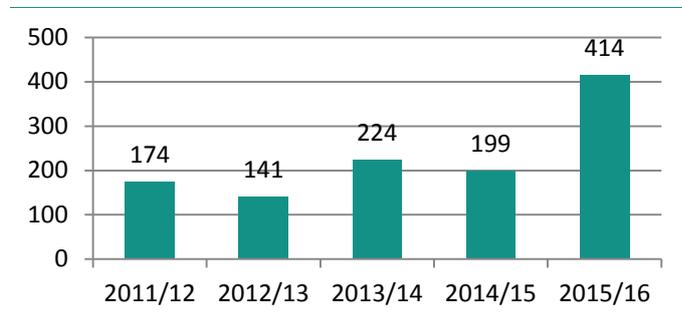
Affordable housing

There are currently 7,733 affordable housing dwellings of all types and sizes in the District and these are owned and managed by several different housing associations, with West Kent Housing Association holding the majority of the stock. Of that housing, around 91% is rented and 9% intermediate housing. In addition, there is a wide-range of supported housing for older and vulnerable people situated throughout the District. By far, the majority of the District's affordable housing is of social rented tenure and, at around 60% of open market rents, the cheapest form of subsidised housing. Since 2011, the majority of new-build rented housing has been designated as affordable rented, however, which is typically set at up to 80% of open market rents.

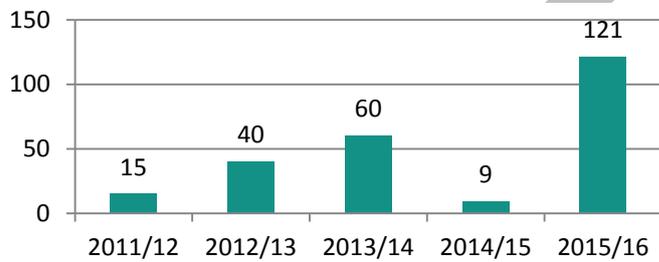
³ Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates – the maximum housing benefit which can be paid in each respective area

Housing supply (2011/12 - 2015/16)

- Total housing completions (new-build only)



- Affordable housing completions (including new-build and change of tenure)



DRAFT

Strategic housing priorities

Having taken into account findings from the recent Local Housing Needs Study and a wide-range of other local housing and health intelligence, the Council has established the following three strategic housing priorities for the coming years.

1. Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

2. Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock

3. Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households

Housing Vision

'To enable a good supply of quality housing that meets the needs of residents of the District and which is located in safe and sustainable communities to support and promote the economy and health and well-being of all'.

Who we consulted:

Priority 1: Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures**Land**

The District is designated 93% Green Belt and with 60% in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In addition, land and property values are typically the highest in Kent and amongst the most expensive in the UK. This presents a number of challenges in the delivery of new housing and particularly affordable tenures. In such a high value area, developable land is mostly secured by private developers able to pay more than housing associations. As a consequence, land-led affordable housing schemes are very few and far between and the majority of new affordable housing is consequently secured via planning agreements on private developments.

The District Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment has found an unconstrained need for 12,400 homes over the period 2015-35. With a Government focus on securing development through non-Green Belt land, the Council will need to adopt an approach that focusses on supply within settlements and brownfield land. In doing so, the majority of housing is likely to come forward in the top-tier settlements of Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge and with a particular urban regeneration focus on Swanley. There will also need to be limited growth of lower-tier settlements in the District's rural areas. The Council's recent Call for Sites process will enable it to evaluate additional development opportunities across the District into the future.

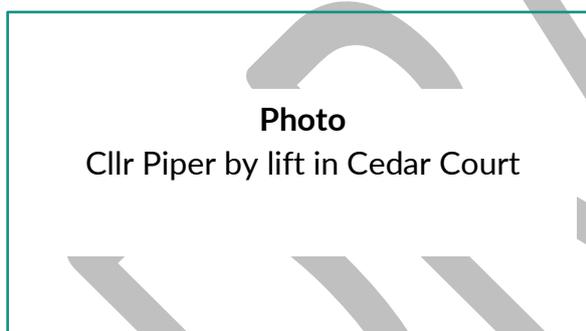
With limited land, the Council will also need to continue to encourage creative development whilst continuing to maximise every opportunity for affordable housing through the planning process. For example, a good use of land could be to enable alternative employment space on a smaller footprint of an existing commercial site which is not performing a function any longer and to then utilise the rest of the site for housing. Another option could be for potential air-space development above an existing shop, station, office or other building, though this would be subject to a building's structure. These and other more creative approaches will need to be increasingly considered in the future.

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Design

New housing must be designed to ensure that it meets the needs of an ageing population and remains fit for purpose long into the future. For instance, the inclusion of assistive technologies in new-build properties can help to enable a person to live independently as they become less mobile. An example would be the inclusion of a lift in a flatted development to enable an older person to continue to occupy a home as they age and become less mobile. The creation of wheelchair accessible or adaptable step-free housing is another means to support those with disabilities. As recently provided in the new supported housing scheme for adults with learning disabilities in Edenbridge, other relatively simple measures such as adjustable cookers and sinks can enable people to continue to live independently as they age.



With the recent removal of the Code for Sustainable Homes, the Building Regulations are now the key standard for affordable housing. Space standards in the social sector are set by Government's Homes and Communities Agency, though these are set to be reviewed following the issue of Government's Housing White Paper and its intention to see more housing built through increased density. A balance will be required, however, to achieve density aims whilst still enabling housing with additional space for wheelchair use.

With a rapidly increasing requirement for digital services and home working, the Council must also seek to enable the building of technology-ready housing. Latest statistics show that 5.44% of the District's population works from home compared to a figure of 3.47% for England. Not surprisingly, home working is expected to grow significantly in the coming years and the Council must step up its activity in this area

by building housing fit for the twenty-first century as well as being adaptable for future technologies.

The Council now requires that all new housing developments should have fibre broadband to pavement level in order that housing can be connected as and when the service becomes available in each area. Alongside its work to improve broadband connectivity across the District, the Council will be increasingly able to take advantage of IT-based assistive technologies in the coming years. This will better enable people to remain living independently in their own home whilst generating significant efficiency savings across sectors in the process. Building the right housing will also support the move from analogue telecommunications to fully digital infrastructure.

New housing must also be much more efficient in energy and water use. By building more efficient housing, the District can play its part in protecting the environment whilst also contributing to the Kent Environment Strategy and wider national carbon reduction targets. Costs can also be minimised for households as the price of utilities increase and this will help with overall housing affordability in the future.

Strategic priorities

The Council will consider its surplus land for housing.

The Council will seek to develop sites to maximise land use and inform future housing strategy.

The Council will promote housing that is technology-ready and with space to enable home working.

The Council will aim to pilot emerging IT-based assistive technologies as part of its emerging strategy and feed this into its new affordable housing work programme.

The Council will aim that all new affordable housing developments will be fit for life.

The Council will consider local space standards for new housing development.

Affordable housing

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Government's Affordable Homes Programme has switched from a capital to revenue-based model and housing associations are required to maximise revenue on which to borrow against. To support this change in approach, Government introduced an 'Affordable Rent' tenure which enables housing associations to increase revenue by setting rents at up to 80% of open market rents. In areas such as the Sevenoaks District, however, rents at 80% typically far exceed Local Housing Allowance (otherwise known as LHA) rates and affordability issues consequently arise. To address this, the Council has generally supported housing associations to set rents at up to 80% but to a threshold of the respective LHA. In doing so, this has provided a protection net for those fully reliant on welfare benefits.

This approach has worked well though further cuts have seen housing associations increasingly struggle to achieve a financially viable position on capped rents and particularly now the freeze on inflation-indexed rent increases has taken effect. In response, the Council has agreed to relax its cap if a particular scheme is found to unviable when applying the respective LHA threshold. It is recognised, however, that the flip-side of this new approach will be a proportion of future affordable housing units being less affordable for those taking up any uncapped tenancies. That said, the District's existing affordable housing stock will continue to be subsidised at 60% of open market rents, and well within LHA levels, so the vast majority of affordable housing relets in the future will continue to be offered at the most affordable option available. By adopting this change in approach, the Council is now better able to support its housing association partners to continue to develop affordable housing in the District. However, the Council will continue to review its position in respect of capping as more information emerges about Government's proposed new rent standard which may see a return to inflation-linked rent increases when the current freeze comes to an end in 2020.

Net affordable housing imbalance by Placemaking area 2016/17 - 2020/21⁴						
Place-making area	General needs		Older persons		Total	% by area
	1/2 bed	3+ bed	1 bed	2+ bed		
Darent Valley	40	0	3	0	43	7.1
North East	121	10	22	5	158	26.2
North West	80	10	9	0	98	16.2
Sevenoaks Urban and Surrounds	129	13	23	1	166	27.5
South	65	2	12	0	78	12.9
Upper Darent Corridor	28	26	3	3	60	9.9
Total	463	62	71	8	604	100
% by size and designation	76.7	10.3	11.8	1.3	100	

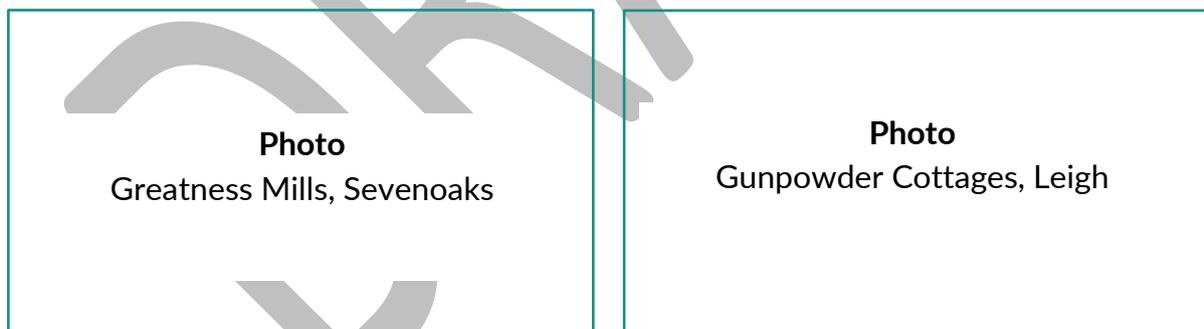
Table 4 – Sources: Local Housing Needs Study; CORE Lettings and Sales

⁴ See page 62 for the District's Placemaking areas

Intermediate housing

Intermediate housing, and particularly shared-ownership, has been an effective means to enable low to middle-income households in the District to access home ownership. In addition, the Zone Agent waiting list for shared-ownership is consistently overly-subscribed for the District and demonstrates an ongoing demand despite rising values. Intermediate housing can also enable existing affordable housing tenants to access home ownership and, in doing so, help to free-up much needed rented housing for others in need. The shared-ownership model is flexible and allows households to staircase up in stages to outright ownership or to maintain their share and rent the remainder for an indefinite period. With the housing market being volatile at present, this allows households to minimise the risk of running into negative equity and so can also provide a safety net for those already just about managing.

Recent research has highlighted that a significant proportion of shared-ownership resales are at the cheapest end of the market and a good and often cheaper option to buying similar products on new-build developments. Where existing shared-ownership properties are to be marketed, applicants on the Zone Agent waiting list are given first refusal in order to help others in need before being sold on the open market. As a result, and to make best use of this opportunity, the Council has started to actively market resales itself to raise awareness of this particular housing option for low-income households.

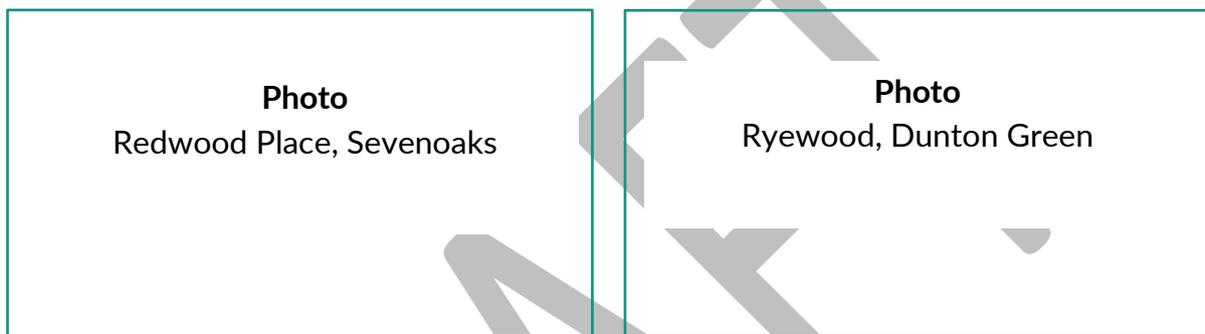


Government has set out its intention to increase home ownership through a mix of tenures and with a 10% target of all sites to include affordable home ownership. This is now to include a percentage of 'Starter Homes' set by local authorities as opposed to a previously planned mandatory 20% across all sites. The length of time before any homes could be sold on the open market has also been increased from five to fifteen-years. The Homes and Communities Agency is now exploring joint venture arrangements by purchasing land for 'Starter Homes' development and this presents a new opportunity for the Council to explore in the future. With a property value threshold of £312,500 before any discount is applied, however, the Council will be

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limited in the areas it can seek to provide this product due to such high property values.

Moving forward, and to help prevent further out-migration of the District's existing and emerging workforce, the Council will work to provide a mixed package of intermediate affordable housing that can respond to local needs and sub-area markets. In doing so, this will also contribute to wider economic development strategy as set out in the Council's Community Plan. With a greater emphasis on intermediate tenures nationally and Government's Affordable Homes Programme reflecting that approach, the likelihood of creating viable schemes at maximum contribution levels will also be that much greater in the future.



Strategic priorities

To enable a better understanding of local recruitment and retention issues with local employers and to help identify any potential joint ventures for the provision of affordable housing with larger employers, an employer study will be commissioned (to be funded through S106 affordable housing planning gains).

To maximise take-up of new shared-ownership housing for those with a local connection to the District, the Council will undertake a wide-range of early promotional activity to raise local awareness.

The Council will encourage housing associations to work towards the Chartered Institute of Housing's Shared-Ownership: Charter for Housing framework to promote the benefits of shared-ownership housing.

The Council will seek to increase its list of preferred affordable housing providers including specialist providers and those with access to a wide-range of finance options, including private institutional investment and other cross-subsidy models.

To help unlock unviable affordable housing projects, the Council will consider the use of S106 affordable housing funding to supplement projects in lieu of low or zero grant availability and/or where other viability issues may exist.

Through its company, the Council will seek to deliver a proportion of affordable housing on its own private developments as part of its growing property portfolio and objectives contained in its Economic Development Strategy.

Through the 2016-21 affordable homes programme, the Council will work with the Homes and Communities Agency in order to identify any sites suitable for it to purchase directly for 'Starter Homes' provision.

The Council will seek new investment opportunities for affordable housing through the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership.

Affordable rural housing

With limited opportunities for housing development in the District's rural areas, the Council seeks to deliver the majority of rural affordable housing through its rural exceptions site policy. If a local housing need exists and is evidenced through an independent study, affordable housing can potentially be built on Green Belt land for those in housing need and with a local connection to the respective village. To

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evidence need in the District's rural areas, the Council part-funds Action with Rural Community in Kent to undertake housing needs surveys. Being a typically contentious area of housing strategy, the provision of affordable housing is lengthy and involves a great deal of community and parish council involvement. Key to the successful delivery of affordable housing is the guarantee that all exceptions housing remains for local people and in perpetuity. Government has also announced that local connection rules can apply to 'Starter Homes' provision on rural exceptions sites and this is seen as a positive for the Council's affordable housing work programme by introducing another intermediate product.

In early 2017, the Council was successful in receiving funding from Government to develop affordable housing in its rural areas through the setting up of Community Land Trusts (otherwise known as CLTs). In order to maximise this funding, the Council will work with Action with Rural Communities in Kent and its West Kent local authority partners to create a West Kent hub to promote rural housing development across the wider area and through measures including the sharing of expertise, resources, training, publicity and promotional events.



Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference data from the Local Housing Needs Study and undertake a review of its future approach to the provision of affordable housing in the District's rural areas having regard to the revised Kent Rural Housing Protocol 2017.

The Council will review its remaining land in order to identify any possible development opportunities and any potential joint ventures with partners by combining sites.

Where values permit, the Council will aim to provide an element of 'Starter Homes' on future rural exceptions sites.

Through the Community Housing Fund, the Council will work with Action with Rural Communities in Kent, and Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells borough councils to develop a West Kent community-led housing hub to promote development in rural areas and encourage the creation of CLTs.

Additional action to be considered in the Local Plan review:

To adopt a rural policy that allows specialist housing on exceptions sites.

Private rented sector

With significant local demand, private rents in the District are typically high and do not offer many options for other than higher income households. The District's private rented sector is also one that now caters for a much more diverse range of people than ever before. For instance, the Local Housing Needs Study has found that higher income households in the District are often renting privately whereas in other parts of the country they would typically purchase. In addition, the two Local Housing Allowance (otherwise known as LHA) rates in the District do not reflect the actual cost of local lower-quartile private rents. With higher earners being able to pay and being perceived as less risky in terms of arrears, there is very little incentive for the District's private landlords to consider LHA rates when marketing their homes.

As a result, welfare-dependent households are often prevented from accessing the private rented sector due to affordability issues. In many cases, shortfalls can be considerable and way beyond the scope of most low-income households unless a top-up is made via Discretionary Housing Payment. As evidenced in several studies,

this contributes to a continuing out-migration of younger and economically-active people in search of cheaper housing elsewhere. As a result, the District is seeing a diminishing local workforce at a time when the local population is also ageing at a rapid rate. In order to improve housing options across the private rented sector, the Council needs to offer a range of landlord incentives to better encourage private landlords at the lower end of the market to accept welfare-dependent households. Although several incentives are already in place, the Council will consult the District's private landlords to identify other possible incentives to encourage take-up.

Institutional private rented sector

The emerging institutional private rented sector has been identified as a potentially significant means to tackle the District's housing crisis. This has also been recognised as a national priority with Rent-to-Buy housing featuring in Government's White Paper. Being a tenure which is typically purpose-built and with good management standards, this could also help to drive up standards in the existing private rented sector by pressuring private landlords through what would be a new and highly competitive product. With Government's intention to introduce more family-friendly tenancies of up to three-years as opposed to six to twelve months, institutional providers would also likely be well placed to deliver on this objective.

Several housing associations across the UK have started to develop private rented housing in order to generate a rental income surplus in lieu of low or zero grant and to cross-subsidise the delivery of affordable housing. Although this has not yet occurred in the District, the Council will need to increasingly explore this option with its partners in the future and as part of a wider package of affordable housing products.

Strategic priorities

In partnership with the South East England Council's group, the Council will request that Government reviews the District's Local Housing Allowance rates with a view to an increase across its two broad market rental areas.

The Council will review related data down to ward level in the Local Housing Needs Study and feed this into the review of the Local Plan.

To support the delivery of high standard private sector rented housing, the Council will work with providers to create policy-compliant schemes at the lower end of the market and seek to negotiate nominations agreements whereby those with a connection to the District will be prioritised.

The Council will work with its housing association partners to explore suitable cross-subsidy projects with an element of private rented housing.

The Council will consult private landlords to identify other potential incentives and seek to develop a more attractive landlord package.

Through its company, the Council will explore direct provision of private rented housing.

Market housing

The District's market housing requirements are very different to that of affordable housing. The Local Housing Needs Study has been able to compare demand with the existing housing stock profile in order to identify any mismatches between availability and aspirations. Whereas a need exists for additional one and two bed dwellings in the social sector, the Local Housing Needs Study has found that 72.1% of owner-occupied households intending to move in the next 5-years would like 3-bedrooms or more. In addition, 55.3% of those households have stated a preference for a detached house. It should be noted that a proportion of those intending to move will be looking to do so outside of the District, however.

Although generally high across the District, property values are that much higher in the District's commuter towns and villages as well as in areas with good quality private and state primary schools. As a whole, the local housing market reflects the generally affluent nature of the District. Through consultation as part of the Local Housing Needs Study, local estate agents have all confirmed that the District's housing market remains strong and with demand far outstripping supply.

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With a growing population and a far greater proportion of older and retired households anticipated to stay put in larger housing as time goes by, demand for larger and executive housing will likely increase into the future. That said, the Council will also need to enable the delivery of smaller and more appealing housing for those wishing to downsize to more suitable housing.

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference local market intelligence with data from the Local Housing Needs Study and feed this into the Local Plan review and with a particular emphasis given to the need for market housing for older people.

Modular housing and micro-homes

Government has recognised the part that modular housing has to play in a move towards wider construction methods. Having looked at several modular housing products, the Council has identified this form of construction as a good opportunity to enable the delivery of low-cost housing. By using off-site construction methods, development times can be significantly reduced and this would allow for rental income to be generated much more quickly. In doing so, this would create efficiencies through much shorter forward-funding timeframes.

Modern micro-homes have also been identified as having the potential to deliver high density development through creative design and good use of land. In doing so, this could also result in a much more affordable and increasingly fashionable housing solution and particularly for the District's younger people and first-time buyers. Micro-homes could also be developed as 'Starter Homes' or shared-ownership products and create a more affordable housing solution. With a higher than average anticipated turnover rate, this could also be a potential recycling solution through shared-ownership and open market resales, thereby multiplying the positive effects of related housing strategy well into the future.

In its latest Affordable Homes programme 2016-21, the Homes and Communities Agency has stated that it will expect to see an increasing quantity of innovative housing construction within its programme and with advantages matching its core criteria relating to value for money and speed of delivery.⁵ There is significant potential for this form of housing in the District, therefore, though the availability of suitable mortgage finance will need to be closely monitored as the sector develops.

⁵⁵ HCA Shared-Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021 Prospectus (April 2016)

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference specific Local Housing Needs Study data on micro-homes with wider market research and feed this into local housing strategy and the emerging the Local Plan.

Through its company, the Council will aim to develop a pilot micro-homes scheme on one of its housing developments and use this as a blueprint for similar development elsewhere in the District.

Should a pilot prove to be successful, the Council will also seek to work with the Homes and Communities Agency, housing associations and other partners to deliver additional micro-homes schemes.

The Council will explore external funding opportunities for modular housing, including Government's Accelerated Construction initiative.

The Council will explore other larger modular products with a view to widening its enabling role through alternative construction methods and related business models.

The Council will share any consequent best practice in this new area of modular housing provision.

Self-build and custom housebuilding

Regulations now require that local authorities operate self-build and custom housebuilding registers for those seeking to acquire serviced plots of land and to enable a sufficient supply of land suitable for self and custom build housing to meet demand on the respective register. The Council is also required to consider expressed need when developing its housing strategies and considering plans for new housing on its own land. As at 01/05/17, the Council had received 31 expressions of interest and this will be used to inform the ongoing review of the Local Plan.

Being a Government priority and another potential solution to the District's growing housing need, the Council will need to increasingly consider this form of housing in developing housing strategy. Delivery of self-build housing will also contribute to meeting the objectively-assessed housing need as set out in the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

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Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference data from the Local Housing Needs Study with self and custom build registers and other local intelligence in order to determine the true level of need and develop a subsequent plan of action.

The Council will also seek to work with the Homes and Communities Agency, housing associations and other partners to explore the delivery of self-build and custom-build housing.

The Council will work with the Right to Build Taskforce to further develop its current database and to prepare plans for land identification and allocation.

Through its recent Community Housing Fund and additional Self and Custom Build Housing funding allocations, the Council will explore the potential to develop a joint West Kent approach with its partner local authorities.

The Council will share any consequent best practice in this developing form of housing provision.

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Priority 2: Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock

With such a high level of local housing need, the Council must continue to develop housing strategy which helps to improve, preserve and make best use of the District's current housing stock. In doing so, there will be less pressure on new development and local housing strategy will be that much more effective. As well as preserving the District's housing stock for future use, improvements can also contribute to a wide-range of health outcomes and reduce housing costs. For example, low-carbon retrofit can improve the condition of a property whilst helping to tackle health inequalities and reducing living costs in the process.

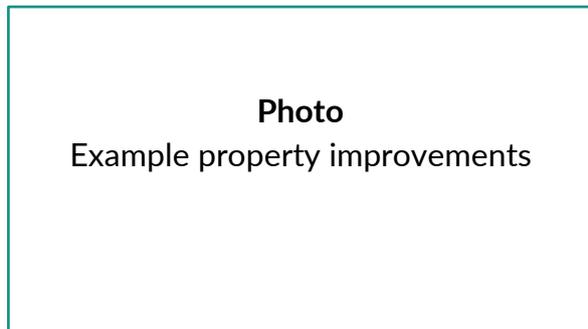
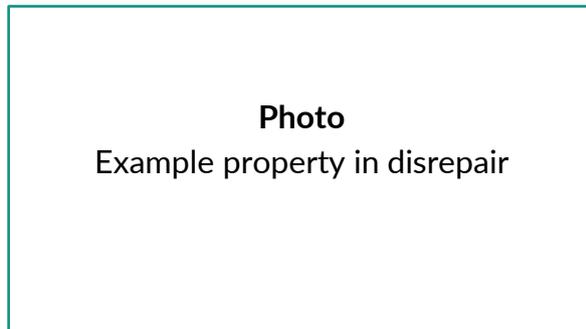
Housing stock condition

Undertaken by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) in 2016, the Council's latest private sector housing stock condition survey has estimated that 19% of properties in the private sector have category one hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The total cost of mitigating those hazards is estimated to be £19.4 million. As would be expected, the District's affordable housing stock is generally in a better condition on indicators relating to hazards, disrepair and energy efficiency. This is, in part, due to wide-ranging improvement programmes to the affordable housing stock in the years leading up to the 2010 Decent Homes Standard.⁶ The District's affordable housing stock is now maintained at that level or beyond through several ongoing improvement and maintenance programmes.

As per the national picture, private dwellings perform the worst across key hazard indicators including excess cold, fuel poverty, fall hazards and disrepair. With housing condition being a key determinant of health and contributing to health inequalities, there is a continued need for provision of assistance in housing renewal. With limited renovation grant availability, the Council must seek to improve the District's housing stock through a combination of support, advice and enforcement powers. The Council is due to review and update its Housing Renewal Policy and this will set its private sector renewal policy moving forward.

⁶ Decent Homes Standard - minimum standard of housing conditions for all those who housed in the public sector

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Strategic priorities

The Council will review and update its Housing Renewal Policy placing much greater emphasis on health outcomes.

The Council will review its enforcement role to identify any further potential regulatory interventions to improve the private sector housing stock condition.

The Council will monitor progress on the Decent Homes Standard and also work with providers to explore a potential local housing standard.

Energy efficiency and fuel poverty

The Council's latest private sector housing stock condition survey has found an average SAP rating of 54⁷, which is a measure of the property's thermal performance. This is almost on a par with the national level of 55. The survey also found that 14.3% of owner-occupied and 21.3% of private rented dwellings in the District are estimated to have Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)⁸ ratings below band E, which is a poor rating. Again, the private sector housing stock fares worse than the social sector and is reflective of generally poorer standards in the sector nationally.

Low-carbon energy retrofit measures are essential to tackle fuel poverty and positively contribute to a wide range of health outcomes. In doing so, this also helps to maintain and improve the housing stock whilst reducing the District's carbon footprint to contribute towards a targeted 34% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020. Around 9.92% of the District's residents suffer fuel poverty, which is slightly below the county average of 9.85%. With a higher level of solid-walled properties in the District's rural parishes and several areas not having access to mains gas, more people tend to experience fuel poverty. Not surprisingly, older people are more at

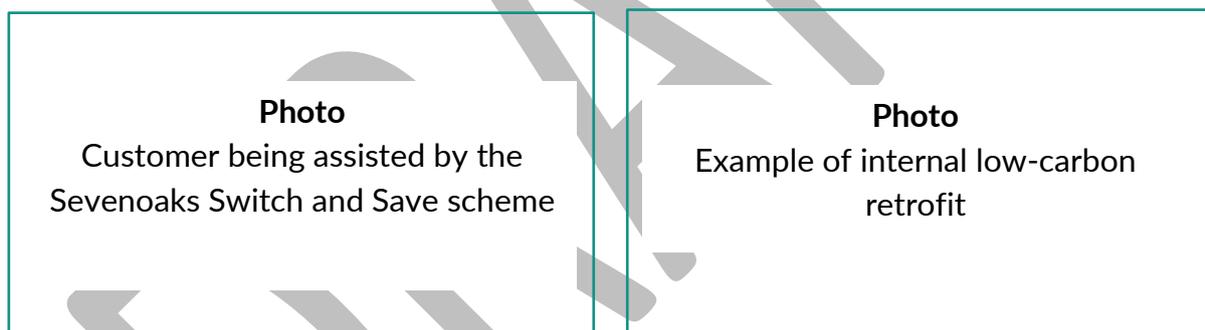
⁷ SAP – Standard Assessment Procedure: quantifies a dwelling's performance in terms of energy use per unit floor area

⁸ EPC: Energy Performance Certificate – rates the thermal efficiency of a building

risk of fuel poverty with the most common category one hazard found in homes of older people in the District being excess cold.

This can have serious knock-on effects such as chest complaints and increased risks of slips, trips and falls. In turn, this can result in older people spending lengthy periods in hospital and, as a direct consequence, become more infirm over time. More worryingly, research has found that there is a 23% increase in deaths from heart attacks and strokes during the winter months.⁹ Children can also suffer the consequences of cold housing with increased risk of respiratory problems, low weight gain and slower developmental progress.

In order to assist those struggling with energy bills, the Council has created an energy comparison and switching service to help people onto cheaper tariffs. The Sevenoaks Switch and Save service is available through an online facility and freephone service which can enable a person to compare and switch providers. Periodic energy switching surgeries are also offered and have been found to be particularly beneficial by enabling the Council to identify wider issues of concern and where support can be given. To date, the Council has enabled 163 switches and achieved combined savings of £46,950 in first year savings alone.



Funded by £4.02m grant from Government's Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), the Council was also part of a joint project with Dartford Borough Council and Kent County Council to deliver external wall insulation and other low-carbon retrofit measures on hard-to treat properties. As well as improving thermal efficiency of the housing stock, the project also tested new technologies for efficiency by measuring positive health impacts through a subsequent monitoring programme. The Council was also successful in securing grant funding to test new IT-based retrofit technologies and this is part-way through completion. This will all help to inform future low-carbon retrofit strategy, both locally and nationally.

⁹ Excess Winter Mortality in England and Wales – Office for National Statistics (GB)

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With Government's Green Deal programme now withdrawn and no replacement scheme at the time of writing this Housing Strategy, the Council must tackle energy efficiency and fuel poverty in other ways and until such time as a new national grant programme is introduced. In the interim period, the Council is working with its partners through the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership in order to develop local strategy that prioritises the most vulnerable people in need.

For instance, the Warm Homes scheme provides a one-stop shop for those looking for insulation measures such as cavity and loft insulation or new energy efficient boilers. This is focussed on vulnerable and low-income groups experiencing high energy costs. Key priorities are set out in the Council's Climate Local Sevenoaks document. The Council has also recently submitted its latest biennial report to Government which sets out progress in this area of its work in the past two-years and also includes key objectives for the next two.¹⁰

Strategic priorities

The Council will develop local energy efficiency and fuel poverty strategy in the interim period and until such time as a new national initiative is introduced.

The Council will analyse results from its testing of modern retrofit technologies as part of its strategy to health-proof housing and produce an options report for the Housing and Health Advisory Committee to consider as potentially new energy initiatives.

The Council will, where required, integrate energy strategy with health strategy through the Health Action Team.

Once received, the Council will review EPC data from its recent stock condition survey and develop strategy to tackle properties with low ratings.

The Council will undertake another campaign to help raise awareness of the Sevenoaks Switch and Save scheme.

¹⁰ Home Energy and Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) report

As per the national picture, there is a high level of under-occupation across the District. The Council's key area of influence in this work programme is the social sector, however, and particularly in respect of older people. As would be expected, evidence has shown that older people tend to stay put if there are no suitable options in the local area where friends, family and support networks exist. This can result in many people remaining in homes that become unsuitable as they age and increase the risk of accidents and ill health. Local estate agents have indicated that the main drivers for older people looking to downsize are seeking more age-suitable accommodation, releasing equity for the future and, as is becoming more common, to provide a substantial deposit for their children.

In order to aid the downsizing process, the Council works with housing associations to help people to downsize into more manageable housing and can offer or signpost to a wide-range of support services such as the arranging of removal companies, house and loft clearances, through to setting up utilities accounts or appointing lawyers. Part-funded by the Council, the Small is Beautiful scheme has assisted 82 social tenants to downsize to more suitable housing in the last 3-years. For those wishing to stay put, the Council can offer disabled-facilities grants (otherwise known as DFGs) and other assistive technologies to support independent living, but this is not always the best and safest option. In such cases, the Council and its partners will work with the household in order to identify a wide-range of other support services.



If the Council is to make any great strides in this area of housing strategy, it must seek to enable housing which is much more appealing to those considering a move and in the areas where people already live. In doing so, demand for long-term care would be reduced with occupants being in more accessible and adaptable housing. With limited developable land, this is an ongoing challenge and the Council will need to expand its enabling role to one that is much more flexible.

Over-crowding

Conversely, the Council must continue to tackle overcrowding as this can have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of those living in such circumstances. Overcrowding can also indicate hidden homeless people through sofa-surfing, for

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instance. The Local Housing Needs Study has found that a total of 1,922 households in the District are classed as overcrowded according to the national Bedroom Standard.¹¹ With such a high mismatch in households to housing, this is a key area which needs to be tackled in a variety of ways through developing housing strategy.

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference data relating to under-occupation in the Local Housing Needs Study and update its existing Under-Occupation Action Plan.

The Council will cross-reference data relating to over-crowding in the Local Housing Needs Study and undertake an options appraisal for future strategy.

The Council will undertake further investigations with estate agents in order to identify any ward-specific limitations and/or issues for older people wishing to downsize.

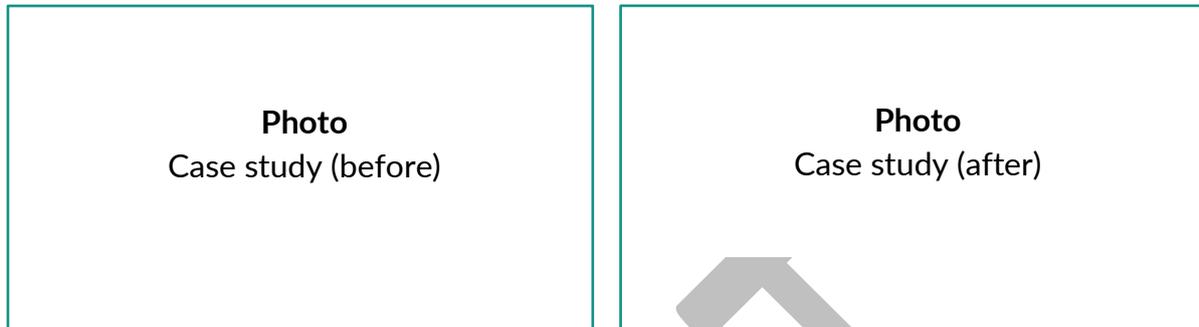
Long-term empty homes

Returning long-term empty homes back into use is part of the Council's wider strategy to tackle local housing affordability. As at 01/04/17, there were 324 long-term empty homes in the District. Long-term empty homes are defined as those having been vacant for 6-months or more and this is the point at which the Council will seek to intervene. Housing can remain empty for a number of reasons with examples being periods of probate, projects for future occupation or property owners seeking any uplift in property values and not wanting tenants in the meantime.

The Council provides support to property owners in several ways and this can range from simple advice and signposting through to repayable grant assistance to bring a property back up to a marketable standard. Being a key and existing housing resource, the Council will continue to focus local housing strategy on reducing the number of long-term empty homes in the District. In doing so, this will not only provide housing which is typically at the lower end of the market but also help to address any related anti-social behaviour or environmental impact that may occur as a result of properties sitting empty for lengthy periods.

¹¹ Section 325 of the Housing Act 1985

In its White Paper, Government has also indicated that it will continue to support local authorities in making best use of the existing housing stock by proving the same level of New Homes Bonus for bringing an empty home back into use as that of a new-build property. There is an added incentive to consider in this work programme, therefore.



Strategic priorities

Through developer contributions, the Council will explore the potential for a new bespoke product to provide repayable grant assistance for first-time buyers to purchase long-term empty homes at the lower end of the housing market.

The Council will link up its long-term empty housing and commercial work programmes to identify joint solutions to return back to use premises such as empty shops with vacant accommodation above.

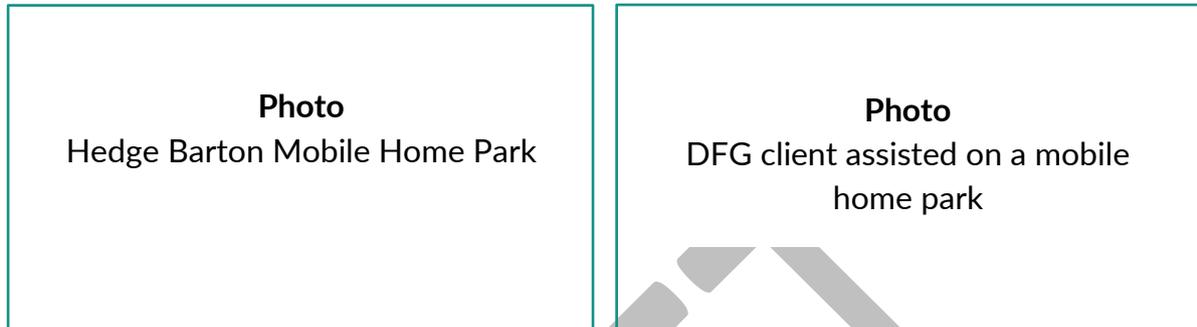
The Council will review and update its Empty Homes Action Plan when it expires at the end of 2017/18.

Mobile homes

With over 600 permanently-occupied mobile homes situated on twelve mobile home parks and several other single plot pitches, the District has the highest level of provision in Kent. In the main, mobile homes are occupied by those aged 55 and over and typically provide for an appealing retirement option. As would be expected, mobile homes can quickly deteriorate and, in the process, also lose value. This can often create a situation whereby an occupier is living with serious disrepair and no means to fund essential works. In turn, this can render the occupant at risk of accidents and poor health. Thermal efficiency is also seriously compromised as a mobile home deteriorates and residents can suffer fuel poverty and ill health as a direct consequence. With heating systems typically fuelled by electric or LPG, energy costs are also higher and this can see a greater proportion of mobile home residents suffering fuel poverty in comparison to those in conventional housing.

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Through its site licensing powers, the Council monitors the District's mobile home parks as part of its routine inspection programme. With a growing older population and mobile homes consequently occupied for that much longer, it is likely that disrepair levels will grow over the coming years. As a result, the Council will need to monitor the situation and, if required, consider additional positive interventions to help to maintain the condition of mobile homes as they age.



Strategic priorities

The Council will track occupancy to disrepair rates and review housing and health strategy accordingly.

The Council will actively promote Disabled-Facilities Grants (DFGs) on mobile home parks to raise awareness.

The Council will actively promote its Sevenoaks Switch and Save Service on mobile home parks to help reduce energy costs amongst older occupiers.

Houses in Multiple-Occupation (HMOs)

Commonly known as HMOs, houses in multiple-occupation typically include several separate households in one building. There are currently seven 3-storey HMOs situated in the District and a further 250 smaller HMOs with 2-storeys or below. At present, only those HMOs with 3-storeys or above fall within national licensing requirements and the majority of the District's HMOs are not licensed, therefore. Instead, the Council inspects non-licensable properties through the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System and this helps to maintain standards across the sector. Government is currently reviewing legislation with a view to potentially extending licensing to HMOs with 2-storeys and five or more people sharing facilities. Being high-risk housing, the Council must continue to focus its efforts on raising standards across the District's HMO stock and work to prevent the creation of any new sub-

standard HMO accommodation as demand for low-cost housing increases in response to restricting welfare reform.

Strategic priorities

The Council will monitor developments with the potential extension of licensing and, if required, introduce a new inspection programme for the District's smaller HMO stock.

The Council will set up a multi-agency network to help raise awareness and report any new sub-standard HMO accommodation being set up in the District.

Preserving the existing affordable housing stock

Where it can, the Council must work to preserve the District's existing affordable housing stock in order to provide affordable housing solutions long into the future. With housing associations increasingly looking to dispose of housing stock in peripheral areas and with low supply to support business operations elsewhere, the Council must continue to negotiate transfers to other more local housing associations. With the removal of the consents regime and housing associations no longer needing the Homes and Communities Agency's approval to dispose of stock as part of deregulatory measures, this will become an increasingly difficult challenge, however.

The Council also recognises the importance of the District's smaller housing associations and how these organisations can be important in meeting the housing needs of older and vulnerable people. This is particularly the case with many having a detailed knowledge of the local area in which their housing is situated. To demonstrate its support, the Council has assisted a number of almshouse providers to undertake essential maintenance works and upgrade facilities in line with the Decent Homes Standard. The Council has also assisted local organisations to introduce rent restructuring programmes as part of a move towards self-sufficiency.

Quote from Margaret Hyde Almshouse Trust:

"The Housing Department of the Council has played a significant and valuable role in their support of the Margaret Hyde Almshouse Trust based in Chiddingstone. In particular, their financial generosity has meant we have been able to carry out essential work thus ensuring long-term sustainability."

Quote from Sevenoaks Almshouse Charity:

“After many years of very frequent repairs to the slate roofs at Sevenoaks Place Trustees were keen to completely refurbish the roofs, and during 2013 this work was undertaken by local contractors. Financially the project was huge for us, and without the financial support of the Sevenoaks District Council the Sevenoaks Almshouse Charity would have had to delay the work significantly. Maintaining these grade 2 properties is inevitably expensive and the Charity is committed to providing good quality comfortable semi-sheltered housing for elderly folk in the Sevenoaks area. We are very grateful for the involvement and support of the Council.”*

Photo
SDC-funded works at Margaret
Hyde Almshouses

Photo
SDC-funded works at Sevenoaks
Almshouses

Strategic priorities

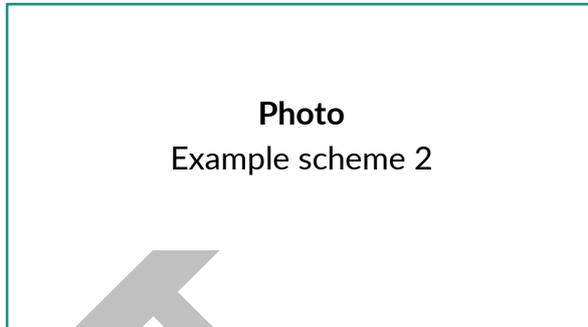
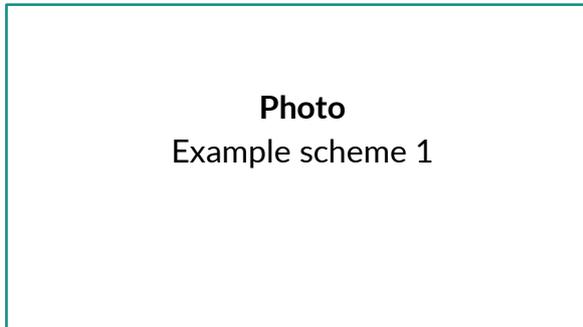
The Council will expand its support to almshouses charities and other small providers through a variety of means in order to improve the housing stock condition and create more effective business operations.

The Council will hold a forum for almshouses and other small affordable housing providers to create a support network and share good practice with those organisations that have already benefitted from its assistance.

Fixed-term tenancies

Developed in response to the Localism Act 2011, the Council’s Tenancy Strategy recommends the use of fixed-term tenancies to ensure that the District’s future affordable housing stock is occupied by those in most need. With the Council having no power to require the use of such tenancies, however, this is a recommendation only and the majority of housing associations retain lifetime tenancies. With recent deregulation measures, however, the use of fixed-term tenancies is once again under discussion. As a result, the Council will once again recommend fixed-term tenancies to make best use of its limited affordable housing stock by addressing under-

occupation and tackling low-level anti-social behaviour. To support this approach, the Council will increasingly look to work with housing associations with fixed-term tenancy policies on new developments and through relets of the existing affordable housing.



Strategic priorities

The Council will review its Tenancy Strategy with a view to working towards fixed-term tenancies on new affordable housing developments and on relets of the existing affordable housing stock. This will include the option to support selective use for high demand areas, adapted properties and encouraging higher income households into tenures such as shared-ownership.

The Council will work with housing associations to address low-level anti-social behaviour through improved tenancy procedures and monitor progress of the Government review into housing associations' powers in relation to anti-social tenants.

Right-to-Buy

Government has set out its intention to introduce a new Right-to-Buy scheme which will include, for the first time, properties owned by housing associations. Having transferred its housing stock back in 1989, all of the District's affordable housing is now owned and managed by housing associations. With far greater discounts being proposed through the new Right-to-Buy scheme, the Council is anticipating an increase in take-up and further consequent loss of much-needed affordable housing. Any loss of stock through this scheme would have an obvious effect on strategic housing management with there being no control as to where stock is sold. As such, this initiative has the potential to undo any positive steps achieved through the years to provide more balanced housing provision in the District.

The new Right-to-Buy scheme could also potentially see District's rural areas affected

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the most with those communities having already lost much of their affordable housing stock through the original Right-to-Buy programme. With the lengthy and often highly contentious rural exceptions site route already a challenge, the replacement of any stock would be far from straightforward. As currently proposed, portable discount arrangements would also likely be impractical. If Government does extend Right-to-Buy in rural areas, therefore, this will be at odds with local housing and wider community strategy in relation to rural sustainability.

Government has also advised that it intends to prevent local authorities from excluding the Right-to-Buy in their affordable housing stock delivered through private housing companies. As a result, the Council will need to consider its position with any future affordable housing development plans through its company.

Strategic priorities

The Council will lobby Government for stronger exclusions to the Right-to-Buy in rural areas.

The Council will review its position with regard to affordable housing on projects delivered through its company as and when Government clarifies its position on Right-to-Buy.

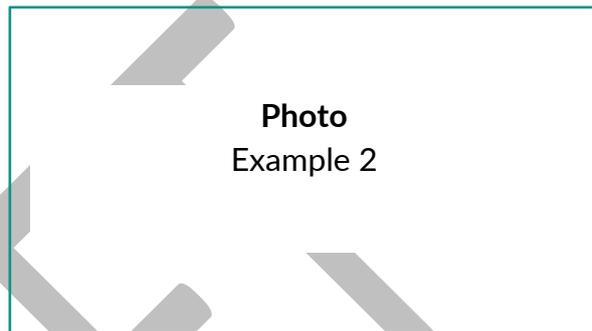
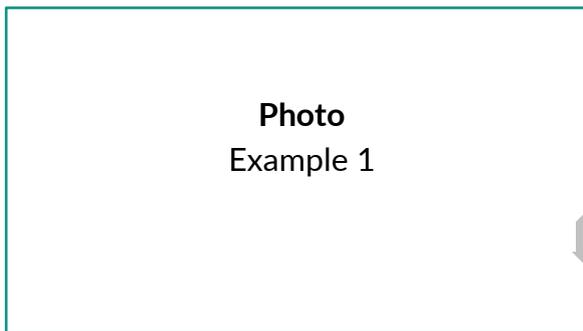
Pay-to-Stay

Under recent deregulatory measures, housing associations now have the option to introduce pay-to-stay schemes whereby those earning over £30,000 can be charged up to near-market rents on an incremental scale. In doing so, this can generate additional revenue to be reinvested in new affordable housing whilst also encouraging higher earners to consider more suitable forms of housing such as shared-ownership. As with fixed-term tenancies, the pay-to-stay initiative is a key opportunity to ensure best use of the District's limited housing stock and one which would support the delivery of housing strategy. As with fixed-term tenancies, however, the Council will have no control as to whether housing associations introduce such a scheme and it is not currently known if this is likely to be used by its partner providers.

Sub-letting and unlawful housing

With the District and wider UK housing market as it is, there is a growing demand for cheap and sub-standard housing for those who cannot secure a property elsewhere. As can be regularly seen in town and cities across the UK, properties are being crudely and dangerously sub-divided into multi-occupancy housing and also illegal

premises such as sheds or shipping containers set up as a form of low-cost housing. Although not currently a significant issue in the District, the Council has identified a small number of cases in the area and it is anticipated that this will grow over time if not tackled effectively. As a result, the Council must seek to raise awareness of these issues and highlight the risks involved to encourage those living in such accommodation, or in the vicinity, to come forward and make it aware. Again, and in order to tackle this issue, the Council must seek to provide affordable and low-end market housing solutions for households typically at risk of taking up such accommodation.



Strategic priorities

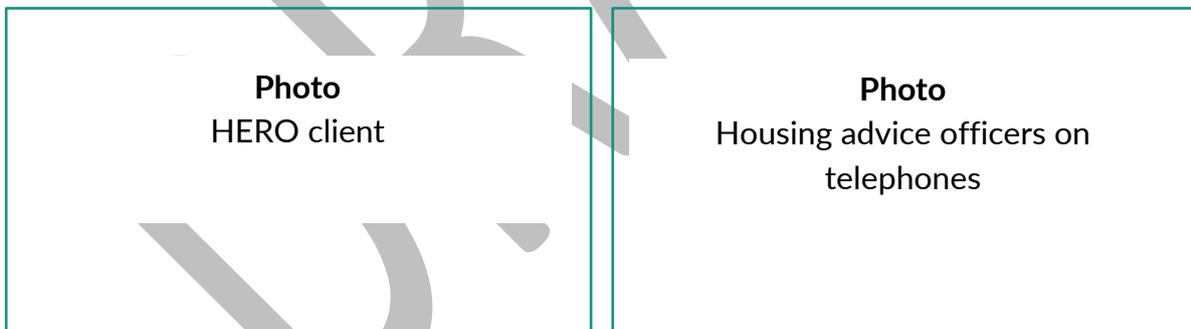
The Council will set up a multi-agency network to help raise awareness and encourage the reporting of any new illegal and/or sub-standard premises being set up in the District that it can then tackle.

Priority 3: Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households

Housing options and homelessness prevention

The Council is legally required to assess and prevent homelessness in the District as part of a Government focus on homelessness prevention. With growing affordability issues and fewer consequent housing options, preventing homelessness is an increasingly difficult challenge and one that needs to be tackled in several different ways. For instance, the Council currently offers rent-in-advance, deposit bonds, tenancy sustainment services, the use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), welfare benefits support and wider financial appraisals.

The Council has developed a holistic approach to housing options in recent years and this helps to identify solutions bespoke to the household or individual in need. For instance, the Council's HERO officers will consider wider issues associated with housing need including employment, training and debt matters. In doing so, specific plans of action can be developed and ones which will often result in the client being supported into employment or training as well as housing. Already an award-winning scheme which has been rolled-out to West Kent Housing Association, Kent County Council and local children's centres, the HERO service has transformed the Council's housing options approach and helped it to deliver wider community strategy in several different priority areas.



Following a successful bid for Government's Trailblazers' Funding, the Council is currently developing and expanding its HERO service. New and improved, the service will also now include wider health assessments as part of the Making Every Contact Count ambition. Delivered through targeted community outreach services and in partnership with GP surgeries, children's centres and housing associations, this project will help to minimise a wide-range of negative impacts on both physical and mental ill health associated with poor housing situations.

For those in emergency need, the Council has access to 55 units of temporary accommodation and with plans to increase its supply. In the past, however, there

have been several cases of tenants in temporary accommodation falling into arrears and finding their ability to move into permanent occupation consequently restricted. As a result, the Council's housing staff work with affected households to try to reduce arrears and prepare for a tenancy in conventional housing. Following a successful bid for grant through the Behavioural Insights Project, further support is now to be offered in relation to tenancy sustainment.



The availability of good quality housing advice is essential to enable people to make informed decisions about their housing options. The Council provides a wide-range of housing information and in several formats. With a growing older population, and the vast majority wishing to live independently, there will be an increasing demand for information in larger text and other formats. In order to ensure that housing-related information can be received, read and understood by the groups for which it is intended, the Council is working with partners to achieve the NHS England 'Accessible Information Standard' which aims to ensure that people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss can access suitable information in order to effectively communicate with support services.¹²

The Council is exploring a wide-range of activities to better interact with and support private landlords to take on clients through its private sector lettings scheme. In partnership with Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells borough councils, the Council also holds regular landlords' forums and these are aimed at encouraging private landlords to take on clients in housing need through a number of incentives such as grants, landlord insurance and ongoing tenancy support. Periodic joint housing forums are also held and these help to provide up-to-date information on housing legislation and standards, tax and finance issues, and energy efficiency options.

¹² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2016/08/accessible-information-standard/>

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Photo
Landlords' forum

Photo
Housing information event

Strategic priorities

The Council will develop and launch its new Super-HERO service.

The Council will work with its West Kent partner local authorities to adopt and implement the new West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

The Council will monitor developments with the Homelessness Reduction Act and undertake a full review of its homelessness services when related associated guidance is issued.

The Council will undertake a survey of private landlords to identify potential incentives to encourage take-up as part of a new landlord package.

The Council will evaluate the GP housing advice pilot with participant outcomes and feedback to determine future models for delivering targeted holistic advice services as part of an integrated health hub.

The Council will implement a tenancy sustainment training programme through the Behavioural Insights Project.

The Council will monitor developments relating to the Renters' Rights Bill and Housing (Tenants' Rights) Bill and, where approved, promote additional related rights to those seeking and occupying the District's private rented housing.

Sevenoaks District Housing Register

As at 01/04/17, there were a total of 803 households registered on the Sevenoaks District Housing Register and with the majority requiring 1- or 2-bed properties. With just 249 relets in the year 2016/17, need is typically growing. With growing levels of in-migration, particular pressure points can be created in the local housing

market and those with a long-established local connection to the District can find themselves having to out-migrate in search of cheaper housing elsewhere. This can then result in a loss of essential workers important to the economic development of the District's towns and villages. Although the Council actively promotes mobility in the housing market, and particularly to support the wider economy, there is a need to prioritise local people as part of its work to prevent the breaking up of families, support networks and wider communities – all of which is occurring at an increasing pace. This approach ties in with several objectives, including the aim to tackle social exclusion and loneliness amongst older people.

With a rapidly-changing policy environment, a review of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register is being undertaken to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. In doing so, income thresholds are also to be reviewed in order to ensure that they remain pitched at the correct local income levels.

Total housing association lettings (through Council nominations)			
2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
383	327	338	249

Table 5 - Source: ELASH data

Households on register as at 01/04/17	
1-bedroom	456
2-bedrooms	260
3-bedrooms	65
4-bedrooms +	21
Total	803

Table 6 - Source: Sevenoaks District Housing Register

Strategic priorities

Following the review of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register, and if required, the Council will make adjustments to its policy to better meet local housing needs.

Supporting people to remain independent in their own homes

Evidence consistently shows that the vast majority of older and vulnerable people wish to continue living independently in their own homes. As a result, adaptations and floating support will be increasingly important as time goes by and a key objective of local housing and wider health strategy is to enable that to happen.

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Setting the budgetary framework for housing-related support in future years, the Kent Supporting People Strategy is key to the future delivery of floating support services in the District. Key objectives of the strategy are to prevent long-term occupation of supported housing by better supporting transitions back into conventional housing, redressing the balance between accommodation-based services and floating support, and redesigning services for other client groups where a greater need arises. Again, the Council's Local Housing Needs Study will be fed into the ongoing review of Supporting People services as part of the cross-agency assessment process.

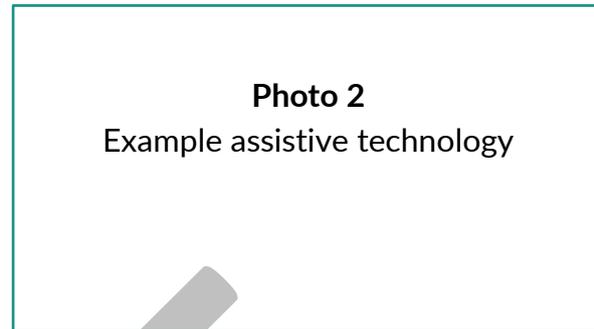
In partnership with Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells borough councils, an innovative hospital-based service has been introduced in an effort to help patients ready for discharge to return home more quickly. In doing so, this will help to free-up hospital bed spaces whilst reducing pressure on a wide-range of acute services and helping to avoid relocation-induced loneliness. As part of this project, the Council will also explore the possibility of setting aside a small number of extra care units as temporary accommodation for those leaving hospital and in preparation for a safe return home.

Evidence shows that the effects of a forced move can significantly affect a person's overall health and wellbeing. In addition, care and support costs for specialist housing can be significant and place further strain on already stretched care budgets. The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (otherwise known as DFGs) and other assistive technologies can mean the difference between a person staying put in their own home or having to move into specialist accommodation. Assistive technologies can also help to save money across health and social care services. It makes sense to continue to invest in this area of the Council's work, therefore, and to build on the work programme as the local population ages.

In order to maximise funding to best effect, the Council must continue to work with Clinical Commissioning Groups (otherwise known as CCGs) and other health and social care professionals to develop integrated strategies and to consider the pooling of resources if more can be achieved. Being linked to the Council's hospital discharge scheme, there is significant scope to achieve positive outcomes across community strategy as well as there being a clear business case for such an approach. This area of the Council's work has already been stepped up in the last year with its DFG budget being significantly increased to £977k in 2017/18.

A multi-agency referral form has also been developed and provides a checklist of issues across housing, health and wider well-being services as part of the Council's developing housing and health strategy. Through this work, officers will be trained to

identify and prescribe health improving measures and/or refer clients on to specialists across a range of disciplines. This will help the Council to better contribute to a wide-range of health outcomes through a developing out-of-hospital care system.



Strategic priorities

The Council will feed results from the Local Housing Needs Study into the Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership and its sub-groups to determine group priorities going forward.

The Council will cross-reference Local Housing Needs Study data with the Supporting People needs analysis and subsequently work with Kent County Council, the NHS and other care providers to identify common priorities.

The Council will cross-reference Local Housing Needs Study data and related priorities with a wide-range of third-sector partners, including but not limited to the Sevenoaks Seniors' Action Forum, Mencap and Age UK as part of the strategy development process.

As Part of its strategy to health-proof housing, the Council will seek to utilise new plug-and-place IT-based assistive technologies to improve support packages for older and vulnerable people remaining independent at home.

The Council will seek to maximise DFG funding through the Integration and Better Care Fund.

The Council will work with extra care housing providers to explore the possibility of allocating a small number of units as temporary accommodation for older people leaving hospital.

Supported housing

Supported housing can assist a wide range of groups, including younger and older people, those with physical and mental ill health, sensory disabilities, people recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, victims of domestic abuse and those at risk of offending or re-offending. The provision of supported housing is also key to prevent delayed transfers of care by creating a better functioning social care system. Being such a wide-ranging area of housing strategy, the Council works with a number of partners across the housing, health and social care sectors to ensure that supported housing is developed, refurbished and remodelled in line with evidenced need and as identified by the Kent Commissioning Body.

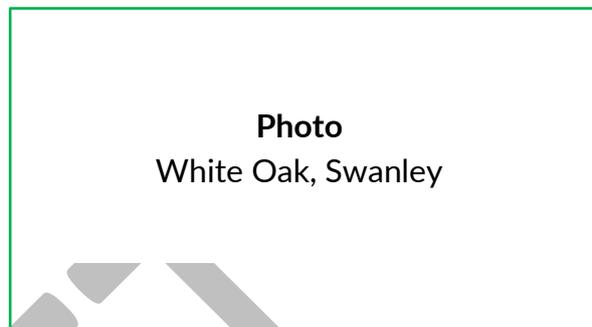
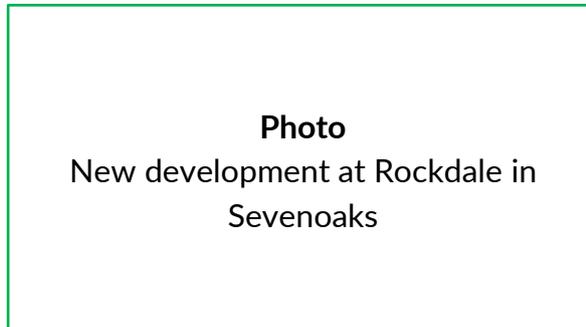
Setting out the policy and budgetary framework for supported housing in the coming years, the Kent Accommodation Strategy is key to the future delivery of supported housing in the District. Several local priorities have been identified, including the need for additional supported housing for a range of client groups including those with learning disabilities, mental health needs and vulnerable younger people. As would be expected, accommodation for older people is identified as needed and particularly extra care housing as part of a reduction in the reliance of care home places. That said, the phasing out of old care home provision will need to run in tandem with the development of more modern and purpose-built care homes with en-suite facilities and other space and design standards, including dementia-friendly measures.¹³ To demonstrate a need, there is an average of thirteen clients moving into residential care in West Kent each month and who would otherwise be suitable for extra care housing.

The Kent Accommodation Strategy also sets out the County Council's intention to review existing provision across all accommodation types in order to identify any schemes which would benefit from remodelling to cater for other client groups in greater need. As part of a cross-agency needs assessments approach, and to support this work, the Council's Local Housing Needs Study covers need across all vulnerable client groups. All related evidence will be fed into this ongoing review and to support the future provision of supported housing with a clear evidence of need in the District.

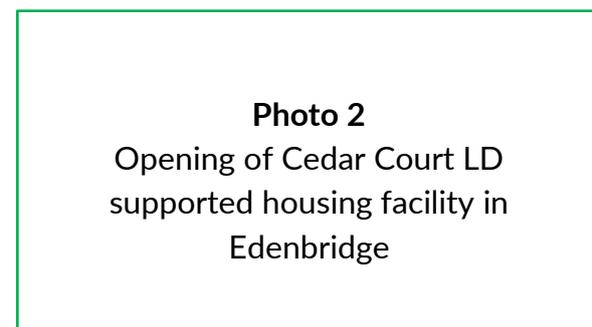
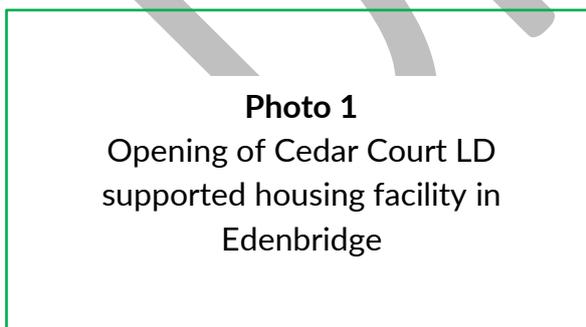
The Council also supports housing providers to remodel existing facilities to extra care, where possible, with White Oak Court in Swanley and Hollybush Court in Sevenoaks being recent examples of good practice. The Rockdale scheme in Sevenoaks is another good example of a housing scheme for older people which provides a choice of high and low-level supported housing options and is located

¹³ KCC Accommodation Strategy Older Persons' Care Home Design Principles, Oct 2015

central to the town in easy reach of a range of services. Rockdale has also recently managed to improve and increase its stock numbers to provide additional housing for local older people and all within its existing boundaries. Again, and through more efficient use of the existing housing stock, the Council is less reliant on land and new development.



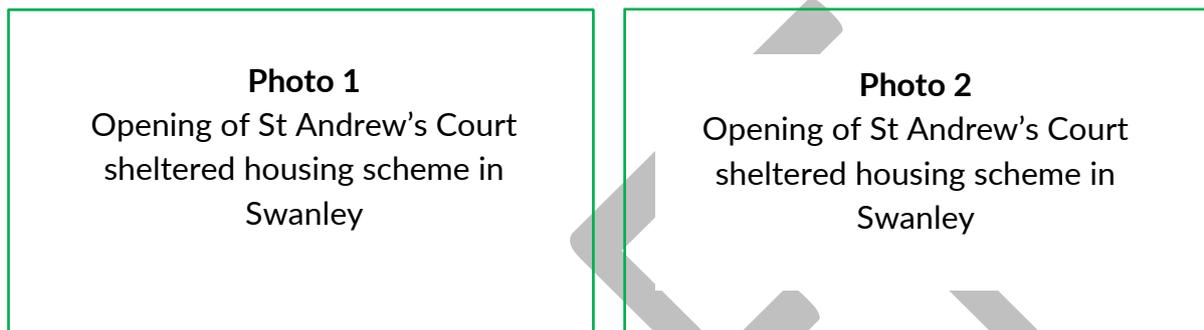
Completed in March 2017, West Kent Housing Association's new housing facility for adults with learning disabilities is another good example of enabling new supported housing through the development of existing land or by remodelling the existing stock. Part refurbishment and part new-build, this new facility provides nine self-contained apartments and a range of communal services. In order for the project to go ahead, the Council contributed £100,000 from developer contributions towards project costs totalling around £1-million. Through its partner, Mencap, the Council was also able to provide the housing association with an additional £5,000 to purchase a wide-range of equipment to help improve life skills for the new occupiers. This project is an example of how the Council and its partners are contributing to the Alternative Models of Care project as well as the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group's Mapping the Future programme.



Key to supported housing provision is the creation of well-designed and appealing schemes. Older people, for instance, increasingly resist supported housing schemes with a more institutional-type feel and instead favour modern products which are more akin to conventional housing. Opened in March 2017, the new £3.8m Moat Homes sheltered housing scheme in Swanley has provided 28 one and two-bed

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apartments for those aged 55 and over. Demolished to make way for this new facility, the old St Andrew's Court's bedsit units fell below modern space standards with no lifts and several corridors too narrow for wheelchair use. The new scheme has been designed to 'Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation' (HAPPI) principles.¹⁴ In addition, the scheme has shared gardens and courtyards and is situated just 5-minutes from the town centre and in easy reach of a wide-range of services. Such design standards will be key when working up new supported housing projects in the future and the Council will continue to consult end-users to ensure it enables the right type of housing through the emerging Local Plan.



In 2019, Government will introduce a new funding structure for supported housing which will be linked to the Local Housing Allowance (otherwise known as LHA). With the LHA not taking into account the types of buildings and associated facilities required for supported housing and complex and costly service charges, there is a growing concern that the new funding structure will not only cause issues for existing schemes but prevent providers from delivering any new schemes. In fact, there is local evidence of this occurring already and there is much caution across the sector. Government has indicated that it intends to introduce a ring-fenced budget to top up any shortfalls, but this will likely be prioritised by geographical area and client group. The end result could be that some client groups and/or areas may lose out to others, as with the Kent Supporting People programme. With older people's accommodation accounting for around 70% of all supported housing and conventional sheltered housing not being commissioned, there is an additional concern as to the future workings of the proposed system in relation to older people.

¹⁴ HAPPI - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378171/happi_final_report_-_031209.pdf

Strategic priorities

The Council will feed evidence from the Local Housing Needs Study into the Kent Accommodation Strategy as part of the cross-agency assessment process and as part of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme.

The Council will work with the Kent commissioning bodies and a range of providers to seek to establish additional provision to complement existing services and in line with latest evidence from the Local Housing Needs Study.

The Council will seek to ensure that a proportion of outdated social sector care home provision is replaced with modern purpose-built care homes which also provide specialist dementia care and extra care schemes (in line with need identified in the Local Housing Needs Study and KCC Accommodation Strategy).

The Council will work up bids for supported housing grant under the Homes and Communities Agency's 2016/21 grant programme and taking into account the non-mainstream housing guidance Housing Our Ageing population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles.

The Council will maintain contact with Government as the Local Housing Allowance supported housing review progresses to ensure that local issues are fully considered as a part of that process.

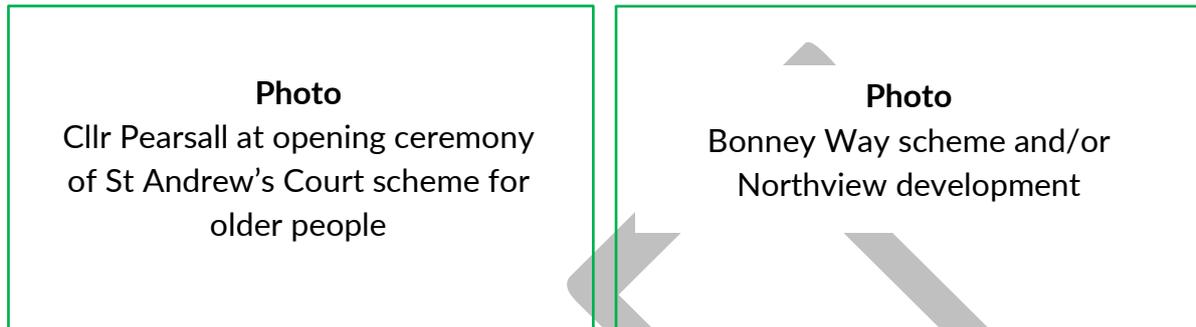
Older people

In the next few years, the District will see a significant increase in the number of over 65s and particularly the over 75s. It is essential that the Council further develops housing and health strategy to assist older people to live fully independent lives for as long as possible, therefore. The Council will work to achieve this by enabling the right mix of housing and communities such as dementia-friendly towns and villages and through the increasing use of a wide-range of digital and non-digital assistive technologies. For example, simple devices which act as reminders to detect falls or inactivity and fires can be significantly contribute to independent living.

There is also clear evidence of need for more housing which can be adapted as people's needs change, including Lifetime Homes and wheelchair-accessible homes. In doing so, people can remain in housing as they age and become less mobile. Building more purpose-built older people's accommodation to 'Age Friendly' neighbourhood principles will also help to combat loneliness and prevent slips, trips and falls, especially if homes are step-free and in accessible locations close to existing

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communities. The use of temporary modular housing units could also be a quick and ready-made solution by allowing older relatives to be situated adjacent to relatives' houses, for instance, and be cared for by their families. The Council will not be able to meet older people's housing needs solely by focussing on the District's four towns, however, and older people's accommodation or retirement villages could work well in rural locations if providing their own amenities and integrated with health and care services to support positive ageing.



Housing and Dementia

With a growing older population and predicted rise in diagnosis rates of dementia, the Council needs to continue developing positive interventions to support those affected. The Council considers cognitive impairment in both its existing housing schemes and new developments. Emily Court, for instance, which is the Council's first purpose-built extra care facility, was designed to cater for those with memory issues and to aid navigation. When designing new housing developments, the Council must create housing that encourages public interaction and in easy-to-navigate physical environments that feel safe. With improving digital technologies, the Council will increasingly explore additional support systems to enable people living with dementia to remain safe at home.

The Council provides a housing officer once a month at each of its five dementia cafes to provide a wide-range of housing advice and support. Swanley is also working towards being a 'Dementia Friendly Community' and two of the District's villages, Eynsford and West Kingsdown, are doing similar in partnership with Age UK. The next step in this work is to develop a toolkit which can be rolled out across the District. The Council is also a member of the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Friendly Community Forum and works closely with partners including Age UK and The Good Care Group to support those living with dementia. The Council was awarded the 'Most Dementia-Friendly' organisation in Kent in 2016 and is now a Dementia Champion mentoring other councils to become dementia-friendly.

Photo

1970s reminiscence room at Emily Court extra care housing scheme

Photo

Opening of new dementia café at Knole House, Sevenoaks

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference related data in the Local Housing Needs Study and feed related evidence into the Local Plan review to ensure the right housing is built for older people.

The Council will work with providers to identify a suitable site for a Help to Buy project specifically for those aged 55 and over.

In partnership with town and parish councils, the Council will develop housing elements of a toolkit to work towards Dementia-Friendly Communities.

The Council will work with the Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board's Dementia Action Allowance Housing Sub-Group to develop good practice in related housing strategy.

Additional actions to be considered in the Local Plan review:

To permit modular housing units on garden land on a non-permanent basis to allow households to care for older relatives.

Younger people

National research has found that 37% of those aged 25–34 are mortgagees against 59% just a decade ago. The Council of Mortgage Lenders has also predicted that just 25% of those aged 30 will own their own home by 2020.¹⁵ Due to acute local affordability issues, it is likely that this figure is even lower in the District. The District's younger people are increasingly finding housing options limited or, for those on low-incomes, almost non-existent. This has been further exacerbated by the

¹⁵ Sellhousefast.uk

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introduction of single-room rates for those aged 35 and under and single claimants aged 18 – 21 completely excluded from housing benefit, save for certain exemptions. With a limited supply of bedsit and multi-occupancy housing in most areas of the District, younger people are finding it increasingly difficult to find any form of affordable housing. This can often result in younger people having to stay in the family home, sofa-surf or, as has been found in recent studies, out-migrate to other areas in search of cheaper housing elsewhere.

This can all prevent younger people from typical life progression and, in many cases, contribute to health conditions such as anxiety and depression. In order to assist the District's younger people, the Council must develop housing solutions which can support younger people into suitable housing. For example, this could be through micro-homes designated as 'Starter Homes' products or professionally operated lodgings schemes. A more recent example is that of co-housing whereby occupiers have independent studios which typically include an en-suite room and a kitchen. Residents will then have access to shared communal kitchens and communal spaces which include work areas, libraries and games rooms. These schemes are proving to be popular with millennials and such a model could potentially be replicated as an affordable solution in the District. An additional option, and one which has been identified as a priority in the Kent Supporting People Strategy, is to develop a supported housing scheme for vulnerable younger people in one of the District's key towns.

Through the Behaviour Insights Project, the Council is exploring a project to assist under-35s to rent a room in shared houses and this is potentially a future solution for the District's younger people. Government is looking to redesign its rent-a-room relief with a view to increasing affordable long-term lodgings for younger people and this could create new opportunities for the Council in an enabling role. The Council must continue to work with the County Council to help deliver the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme in relation to vulnerable 16-25 year olds by redesigning and aligning accommodation and support pathways as part of the development of integrated strategies.

Photo

HERO officer assisting a client

Photo

HERO surgery

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference relevant data from the Local Housing Needs Study and develop an action plan to respond to younger people's housing accommodation and related support needs.

The Council will monitor the effects of changes to Housing Benefit and seek to develop supporting housing strategy to tackle any negative effects.

The Council will cross-reference relevant data from the Local Housing Needs Study and review its criteria for a suitable site for the development of a new town centre supported housing scheme for vulnerable younger people.

The Council will develop a housing information pack for younger people seeking housing.

The Council will consider an enhanced enabling role following the national rent-a-room review.

The Council work with Government's Behavioural Insights Team to take forward a potential shared-lodgings project for under-35s.

The Council will work with partners to deliver the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme in relation to vulnerable 16-25 year olds.

The Council will explore a co-housing project for younger people.

The benefit cap

With a growing tension between housing and welfare policy, it is becoming increasingly difficult for low-income households to find and keep a home in the District. The benefit cap has been further reduced to £20,000 per annum and, as a consequence, a wider demographic has been affected. With slowing wage growth and a predicted 10% in the cost of living by 2020, all of which will be made worse with cuts to tax credits, this is a growing concern and one which must be tackled in the early stages to minimise future household crises.

In order to support and prepare households, the Council's HERO service has made direct contact with those likely to be affected and offered a wide-range of advice on housing, budgeting and employment. In doing so, it is hoped that the Council will be able to better support people into employment and either remove the need for

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welfare benefits altogether or, where a top-up is still required, enable an exemption to the cap through active employment status.

Housing associations are also increasingly tightening up their affordability criteria in order to ensure that those seeking affordable housing can afford the property whilst helping to safeguard housing associations against arrears at a time when revenue is already significantly reduced as part of the rent freeze. With a potential relaxation of social sector rent setting rules on the horizon, the Council will need to ensure that adequate controls are in place to minimise any potential negative knock-on effects of such a change.

Strategic priorities

Through the HERO service, the Council will work to identify those likely to be affected by future welfare reform and offer proactive advice and support.

The Council will extend its shared-ownership housing surgeries to include wider housing advice for those affected by the benefit cap and wider welfare reform or seeking more general housing, budgeting and employment advice.

Domestic abuse

Back in 2012, and as a result of a need identified in the Kent Supporting People Strategy, the Council worked with a partner housing association to create a new domestic abuse refuge for females fleeing domestic abuse. If deemed safe to do so, the Council can also offer security works in existing properties through various security measures and in partnership with agencies, including Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue. Key to future domestic abuse provision, however, is supporting victims back into conventional housing when the time is right. On occasions, victims can remain in refuge accommodation for two or years or more. In doing so, this can make it more difficult for those households to return to normal life whilst also blocking up much needed space for others fleeing domestic abuse. As a result, the Council will seek to work with specialists across agencies to identify better ways to improve this area of its work and for the benefit of domestic abuse victims and their families.

Strategic priorities

The Council will work with Kent Adult Social Services and Kent Supporting People to develop a process to better support refuge occupiers back into general needs housing and to free-up limited local refuge places in the process.

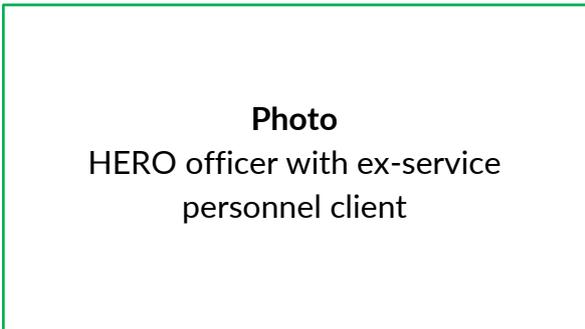
Through the Community Safety Partnership, the Council will work across departments and with external partners to identify additional measures to better support transitions back into general needs housing.

The Council will cross-reference evidence from the Local Housing Needs Study and feed this into the Kent Accommodation Strategy and Kent Supporting People Strategy as part of the cross-agency assessment processes.

Ex-service personnel

Ex-service personnel can often find themselves in a housing crisis when returning to civilian life. In order to better understand the nature and scale of the problem in the District, the Council included specific provision for this group within its Local Housing Needs Study. This has shown a total of 252 current or ex-service personnel with a connection to the District, which is a greater number than anticipated.

The Council's HERO service now offers in-house expertise for both current and ex-service personnel and has already supported several ex-service personnel to access housing, financial, employment, training and health services. A housing information pack is currently being developed and this will be added to as and when additional housing products are made available. The information pack will be launched by Council's Chairman and Member Champion for the Armed Forces to help raise awareness of the wide-range of housing options for current and ex-service personnel as part of a focus on the military in the coming year. The Council is also proud to be a signatory of an Armed Forces Covenant which aims to redress disadvantages that the armed forces community may face in comparison to other citizens and to recognise sacrifices made.



Strategic priorities

The Council will work with its Member Champion for the Armed Forces to develop and formally launch a housing information pack for current and ex-service personnel.

The Council will explore the possibility of a pilot project with the MoD whereby those leaving the Armed Forces are automatically referred to local authorities for housing advice.

The Council will work to deliver suitable housing for older ex-service personnel by providing a number of dedicated places in any future extra care housing schemes.

Filthy and verminous premises

In recent years, the District has seen a growing trend of filthy and verminous properties. This can typically include accumulations of waste and hoarding, infestations of rats and mice, and unsightly properties which may also be in a poor state of repair. The reasons behind such situations are wide and varied, but can typically include older people suffering with Diogenes Syndrome or other mental health conditions. As a consequence, the Council adopts a multi-agency approach to all filthy and verminous cases and with key partners across health, social and fire services. With a growing older population, the Council will need to step up its response to this concerning trend.

Photo 1
Example F&V property



Photo 2
Example F&V property

Strategic priorities

The Council will monitor trends in this area by client group, and particularly the growing older population, in order to identify any early potential interventions.

Pet policies

For those living alone, and particularly older people, a pet can provide good company and significantly contribute to the owner's physical and mental health and wellbeing. With loneliness and social exclusion being a growing phenomenon, or at least more apparent, the Council must work with providers to develop policies which could allow pets in supported housing schemes. Homeless people can also find themselves having to give up a pet in order to take up emergency or short-term accommodation. With a pet often being a significant part of a vulnerable person's life and consequent well-being, this can prevent many from doing so. Again, this needs to be considered in the future to try to ensure, where possible and practical, that homeless people may not have to give up their pet in order to secure a roof over their head. That said, the Council does accept that this can be impractical at times and potentially have a negative effect on other residents or the management of the scheme in question. As a result, the Council will seek to develop a pet policy supporting and seeking a balanced approach to the allowance of pets in housing schemes.

With dog fouling being a key issue in the District and this likely to have a bearing on whether certain housing schemes allow pets, this is another area where Council intervention could potentially bring about positive benefits – not only in addressing a public health issue but also by encouraging providers to allow pets if the situation were better controlled. As recently trialled by a local authority in London, the introduction of a dog DNA scheme could help to identify offending pet owners that do not clear up after their dogs and, in the process, encourage more responsible pet ownership. In doing so, this could also encourage housing providers to permit pets.



Strategic priorities

The Council will develop a database of housing providers' pet policies in order to be able to offer advice to older and vulnerable clients looking for pet-friendly housing.

The Council will develop a pet-friendly policy with its recommendations for affordable and supported housing providers.

Where pets are not permitted, the Council will signpost to services such as the pet fostering scheme.

The Council will promote the Cinnamon Trust and its pet walking services for older people and those suffering from ill health.

The Council will explore a dog DNA scheme to encourage pet-friendly housing policies.

Within any new housing that the Council develops through its company, it will aim to achieve the RSPCA's Gold Standard pet policy.

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Health, sustainability and equality impact assessments

All key objectives have been subject to related impact assessments in the development of this Housing Strategy and, where necessary, adjustments made to address any potentially negative effects. As and when more detailed action plans are developed, and where required, these assessments will be repeated.

Governance and monitoring

In order to ensure that the Housing Strategy is as effective possible, biannual progress reports will be taken to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee. Where adjustments and/or new actions are required and which fall outside of the approved policy framework, reports will be produced setting out any associated recommendations for consideration. A series of performance measures will also be developed as more detailed action plans are drawn up and in order to gauge success of work programmes across the remit of this Housing Strategy.

Consultation arrangements

In the development of this draft Housing Strategy, the Council has consulted partners across sectors and taken into account a wide-range of legislation, policies, strategies and good practice at local, sub-regional, county and national level. Every household in the District was also given the opportunity to provide comments as part of the recently completed Local Housing Needs Study. If you wish to provide any comments and/or suggestions on this draft Housing Strategy, please do so in one of the following ways:

Online questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/housingstrategy>

Email:

housing.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk

By post:

FAO: Gavin Missons (Housing Policy Manager)
Strategic Planning
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy Consultation

1) Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures.

Do you agree that these are the right approaches to better deliver a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures and do you have any suggestions to help us deliver on this objective?

[Empty response box for objective 1]

2) Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock.

Do you agree that these are the right approaches to improve the quality of and make more effective use of the District's housing stock and do you have any suggestions to help us deliver on this objective?

[Empty response box for objective 2]

3) Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households.

Do you agree that these are the right approaches to better meet the needs of vulnerable and low-income households and do you have any suggestions to help us deliver on this objective?

[Empty response box for objective 3]

Do you have any further comments and/or suggestions in relation to this Draft Housing Strategy?

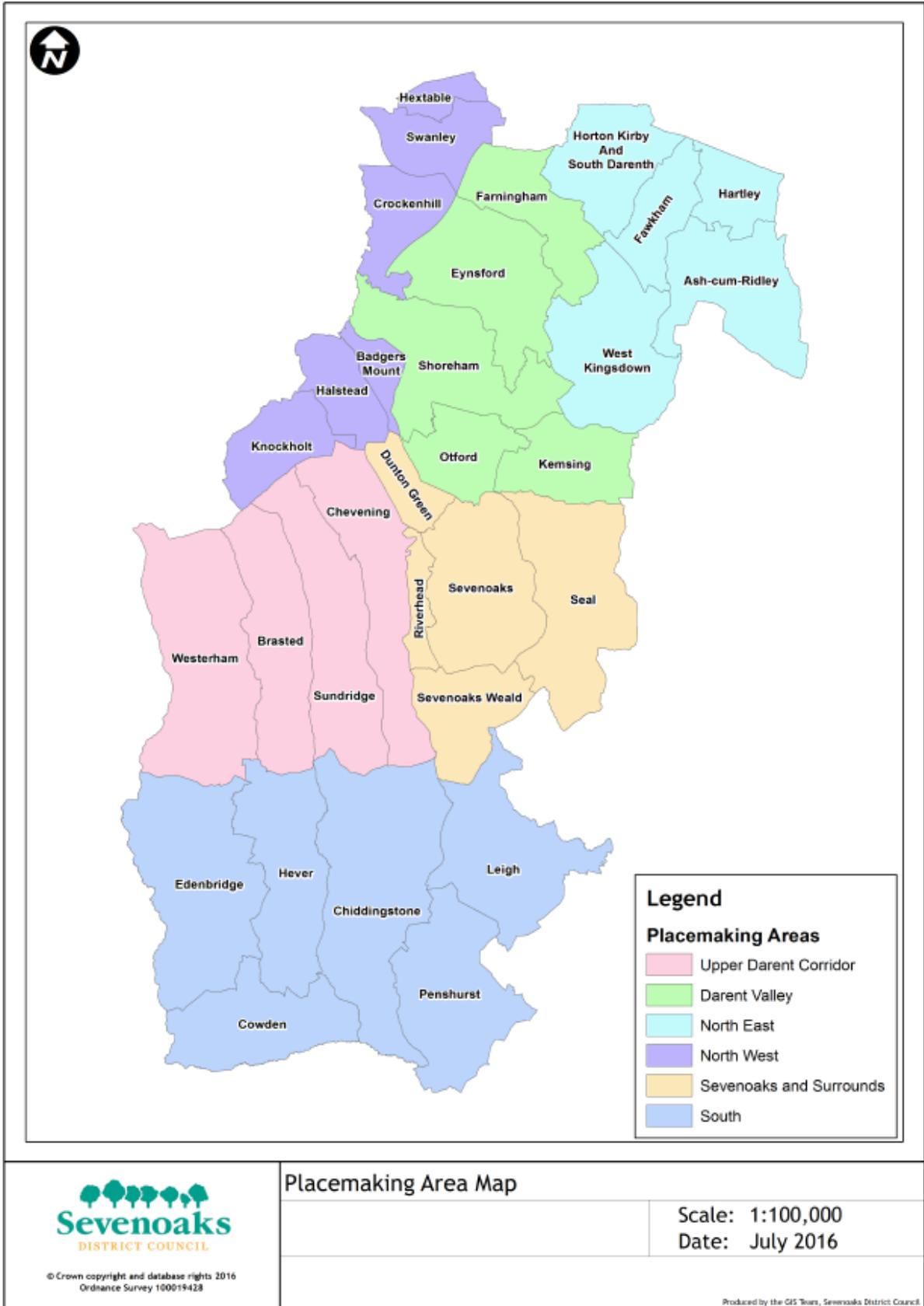
Thank you for your input.

Please provide contact details for our records.

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KEY LINKS	
Authority Monitoring Report	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20014/planning_policy/257/authority_monitoring_reports
Climate Local Sevenoaks	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/87/climate_local_sevenoaks
Community Plan	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20026/your_community/290/community_plan
Empty Homes Action Plan	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/170/empty_homes_action_plan
Kent Accommodation Strategy	http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/adult-social-care-policies/accommodation-strategy-for-adult-social-care
Kent Environment Strategy	http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-environment-strategy
Local Housing Needs Study	
Local Plan	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20014/planning_policy/247/new_local_plan_2015-35
Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy	http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/Data/Services%20Select%20Committee/200804151900/Agenda/Report%20-%20Item%2009%20-%20Private%20Sector%20Housing%20Assistance%20Programme%20-%20Appendix.pdf
Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocation Policy	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/directory_record/1910/housing_register_allocation_policy/category/30/housing
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment	http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s31097/09%20SHELAA%20report.pdf
Strategic Housing Market Assessment	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/699/strategic_housing_market_assessment_shma_september_2015
Tenancy Strategy	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/directory_record/138/tenancy_strategy/category/30/housing
Under-Occupation Strategy	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/760/under-occupation_strategy



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Ordnance Survey 100019428

Placemaking Area Map

Scale: 1:100,000
Date: July 2016

Produced by the GIS Team, Sevenoaks District Council

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**SEVENOAKS DISTRICT SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME
POLICY**

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

Report of Chief Officer Communities & Business

Status For Consideration

Decision by Cabinet - 13 July 2017

Key Decision Yes

Executive Summary: This report sets out this Council's Policy for participating in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in Kent.

This report supports the Key Aim of safe and caring communities and healthy environment

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officers Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee: For consideration and to note the content of this report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- a) to adopt the Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy set out in Appendix A;
- b) to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to make decisions relating to the Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy.

Reason for recommendation:

This Council has been asked to support to resettle Syrian refugee families as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in Kent. This report sets out a Policy to enable further properties to be used, if affordable and suitable accommodation and support services are identified in the future.

Introduction and Background

- 1 In response to the current crisis in Syria, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in February 2014. This

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scheme involves taking identified vulnerable refugees straight from the Middle East and resettling them in the UK. The refugees are given five years Humanitarian Leave to Remain and as such are able to work and claim benefits and other public funds from day one.

- 2 On 7 September 2015, the Prime Minister announced that SVPRS will be expanded so that 20,000 people will be assisted under the scheme by the end of the Parliament in 2020. Local authorities are key to the delivery of this offer.
- 3 The national SVPRS is currently voluntary and dependent on local authorities agreeing to take part. Every local authority is being asked by the Home Office to support this Scheme. To date, around 32 families have been resettled by district councils in Kent, in partnership with Kent County Council.
- 4 On 28 February 2017, Members approved for Officers to work with West Kent Housing Association to make available one vacant six bedroom adapted social housing property in Eynsford as part of the Kent SVPRS. This work continues to be progressed in partnership with the housing association, Home Office and Kent County Council to find a suitable Syrian refugee family.
- 5 Housing Syrian refugee families in rented accommodation relies mainly on local private landlords willing to offer a property to this Council and the Home Office as part of this Scheme, when no local need has been identified for the property. This Council has not yet been approached by any private landlords or other organisations offering suitable family sized properties to resettle refugee families.
- 6 The recommendation set out in this report asks Members to adopt the Sevenoaks District SVPRS Policy, as set out at Appendix A, to enable this Council to participate in the national scheme when suitable and affordable properties are identified.
- 7 The Policy provides for this Council to work closely with local partners including Kent County Council, and the contracted support provider. Any property put forward for approval under the Policy would have to be assessed as affordable and suitable by the appropriate Officers in consultation with Kent County Council and the local health provider.
- 8 When making a decision under the Policy, the Council will have regard to a number of national strategic policies and procedures, already in place as part of the national SVPRS, including the Strategic Partnership for Migration's Statement of Outcomes and the setting up of a Sevenoaks District SVPRS Steering Group including appropriate representatives from this Council and Kent County Council.

Key Implications

Financial

- 9 If this Council were to support the resettlement of families in this District under the SVPRS, the Council would receive the local authority tariff from the Home Office to cover the support and associated costs relating to the work. Additional Home Office funding may be available for exceptional circumstances such as home adaptations.

Resource (non financial)

- 10 If this Council supports the resettlement of families in this District, existing Officer and partner resources would be required to meet the support and housing requirements. This Council's existing strong partnerships with local key agencies, the voluntary sector and local community groups would be needed to support the families and this work.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 11 This Council has a Memorandum of Understanding with Kent County Council outlining the responsibilities of both parties as part of the SVPRS. This is already in place as it was needed for the property approved by Members on 9 March 2017.

Equality Assessment

- 12 Members are reminded Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) the Council must 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.
- 13 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out. The decisions recommended through this paper will assist vulnerable families.

Conclusions

- 14 Members are asked to adopt the Sevenoaks District SVPRS Policy to enable this Council to support the resettlement of Syrian refugee families, if suitable and affordable housing is identified. This Policy includes delegating powers for this work to the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, in consultation with local Members.

Appendices Appendix A - Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy and Policy appendices 1-4

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Background Papers [Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement \(VPR\) Programme - Guidance for local authorities and partners \(28 October 2015\)](#)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf

Lesley Bowles
Chief Officer Communities & Business

Sevenoaks District Council
Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) Policy

V1: 150517

1. This policy sets out how Sevenoaks District Council acting in their capacity as the local Housing Authority will support the resettlement of refugee families within the Sevenoaks District, as part of the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.
2. When making a decision under this Policy the Council will have regard to:
 - a. South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) Statement of Outcomes (at pages 2-3);
 - b. Syrian VPRS Memorandum of Understanding (at page 4-8);
 - c. Sevenoaks District Council Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Flowchart Summary (page at 9).
3. Any identified properties, which may be suitable for refugee families as part of the Kent SVPRS, will be inspected and considered by this Council for suitability and other local needs. Only properties that are unable to meet a local need will be considered for use under the SVPRS. An assessment of affordability will be made by Sevenoaks District Council against Local Housing Allowance rates when considering the suitability of properties.
4. Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, following consultation with local Members, has delegated powers to offer properties to the Home Office.
5. In line with the Memorandum of Understanding (pages 4-8), we will form a Sevenoaks District Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Steering Group which will include appropriate representatives from Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council.
6. The Steering Group will ensure compliance with the SESPM Statement of Outcomes (at pages 2-3) and co-ordinate support and communication across Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council when involved in:
 - a. Decision making on accepting cases
 - b. Pre-arrival planning
 - c. Financial planning
 - d. Post arrival support
 - e. Ongoing support
 - f. Planning for years 2-5 and exit

South East Strategic Partnership for Migration – Statement of Outcomes

1. Section 1 – Delivery Outcomes

- 1.1 The SRP is made up of two elements:
 - 1.1.1 **Pre arrival** – Provision of medical and travel services enabling the migration of accepted Beneficiaries to the UK; and
 - 1.1.2 **Post arrival** – Housing provision, initial reception arrangements, casework and orientation support including English language provision.
- 1.2 This Statement of Outcomes describes the **post arrival outcomes** to be achieved.

2. Post Arrival Outcomes

Provision of accommodation:

- 2.1 The Recipient will arrange accommodation for the arriving Beneficiaries which meets local authority standards and which will be available on their arrival and is affordable and sustainable.
- 2.2 The Recipient will ensure that the accommodation is furnished appropriately. The furniture package should not include luxury items. This means that funding received through this Instruction should be used for food storage, cooking and washing facilities but should not include the provision of other white goods or brown goods, i.e. TV's, DVD players or any other electrical entertainment appliances. This shall not preclude the Recipient from providing Beneficiaries with additional luxury, white or brown goods through other sources of funding.
 - 2.2.1 The Recipient will ensure that the Beneficiaries are registered with utility companies and ensure that arrangements for payments are put in place (no pre pay/card accounts).
 - 2.2.2 The Recipient will provide briefings on the accommodation and health and safety issues for all new arrivals including the provision of an emergency contact point.

Initial Reception Arrangements:

- 2.3 The Recipient will meet and greet arriving Beneficiaries from the relevant airport and escort them to their properties, briefing them on how to use the amenities.
- 2.4 The Recipient will ensure that Beneficiaries are provided with a welcome pack of groceries on their arrival – the content of this pack should take into account the culture and nationality of the Beneficiary(ies).
- 2.5 The Recipient will provide an initial cash allowance for each Beneficiary of £200 – this is to ensure they have sufficient funds to live on while their claim for benefits is being processed.

Casework Support:

- 2.6 The Recipient should ensure that Beneficiaries are provided with a dedicated source of advice and support to assist with registering for mainstream benefits and services, and signposting to other advice and information giving agencies – this support includes:
 - 2.6.1 Assisting with registration for and collection of Biometric Residence Permits following arrival
 - 2.6.2 Registering with local schools, English language and literacy classes

- 2.6.3 Attending local Job Centre Plus appointments for benefit assessments
- 2.6.4 Registering with a local GP
- 2.6.5 Advice around and referral to appropriate mental health services and to specialist services for victims of torture as appropriate
- 2.6.6 Providing assistance with access to employment.
- 2.7 The Recipient shall develop an overarching (or framework) support plan and bespoke support plans for each family or individual for the first 12 month period of their support to facilitate their orientation into their new home/area.
- 2.8 The Recipient shall undertake an assessment with each Beneficiary of their English language capability to determine appropriate support arrangements through provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or equivalent. The purpose of the language tuition is to ensure that each Beneficiary is able to carry out basic transactions within the communities in which they have been placed. Beneficiaries should be able to access such classes within one month of their arrival and they should be made available until such time as suitable mainstream provision becomes available or until 12 months after arrival (whichever is sooner).
- 2.9 Any language support provision should be delivered by an accredited provider.
- 2.10 Throughout the period of resettlement support the Recipient will ensure interpreting services are available.
- 2.11 The above outcomes will be provided through a combination of office based appointments, drop in sessions, outreach surgeries and home visits.
- 2.12 The Recipient shall collate such casework information as is agreed to enable the Authority to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Programme's delivery.

Requirements for Beneficiaries with special needs/assessed community care needs:

- 2.13 Where Beneficiaries are identified as potentially having special needs/community care needs the Authority will ensure, as far as possible that these needs are clearly identified and communicated to the Recipient six (6) weeks prior to the arrival of the Beneficiaries.
- 2.14 Where special needs/community care needs are identified only after arrival in the UK, the Recipient will use its best endeavours to ensure that care is provided by the appropriate mainstream services as quickly as possible.
- 2.15 Where sensitive issues (including safeguarding issues or incidents of domestic abuse, violence or criminality) are identified pre-arrival by the Authority, the Authority will notify the Recipient immediately, and not longer than 24 hours, after its receipt of the information.
- 2.16 Where sensitive issues such as the above are identified post-arrival by the Recipient, the Recipient shall notify the Authority within 24 hours, setting out what procedures are to be put in place to mitigate the situation.

SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN**

- (1) Kent County Council, whose principal office is at County Hall, Sessions House, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ AND
- (2) Sevenoaks District Council, whose principal office is at Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

1. Purpose of the Memorandum

To set out clearly the basis on which the two local authorities will work together to deliver the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in the Sevenoaks area.

2. Background

As part of its response to the current situation in Syria, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in February 2014. This scheme involves taking particularly vulnerable refugees straight from the Middle East and resettling them in the UK. The refugees are given five years Humanitarian Leave to Remain and as such are able to work and claim benefits and other public funds from day one.

On 7 September 2015 the Government announced that the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme will be expanded so that 20,000 people will be assisted under the scheme by the end of the Parliament in 2020. The scheme is currently voluntary and dependent on local authorities agreeing to take part.

The scheme is based on need. Working closely with the UNHCR, it prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin, including:

- women and girls at risk
- survivors of violence and/or torture
- refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs
- refugees with medical needs or disabilities
- children and adolescents at risk
- persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity

Individuals accepted onto the scheme are able to bring their immediate family with them. Once cases have been assessed and referred from the UNHCR, the Home Office checks that the individual meets the eligibility criteria, carries out medical and thorough security checks and arranges the necessary visas. The cases are then passed to a local authority that has agreed to participate in the scheme. The referral will include details on family make up, age and specific needs, including a full medical health assessment report. If accepted the local authority (both district and county in two-tier areas) will need to arrange housing, school places and any additional support that is required. An arrival date is agreed with the Home Office.

3. Responsible Authority

In two-tier areas it is the Housing Authority that is treated as the responsible authority by the Government. Any delegation of functions and/or funding to Kent County Council (KCC) has to be with the agreement of the relevant Housing Authority.

4. Kent Response

Following a meeting of Kent Leaders on 23 September 2015 and Kent County Council on 22 October 2015 it was agreed that KCC would work with district Housing Leads (through the Kent Housing Group) to determine the best way to set up the scheme in Kent.

Several meetings have been held with district housing leads and other key partners and it has been agreed that KCC should co-ordinate and commission a service in partnership with those districts that wish to take part. This memorandum sets out the basis on which the County Council will work together with Sevenoaks District Council. There will be a separate Memorandum of Understanding for each area of Kent that wishes to take part.

5. Governance Arrangements

A local District Steering Group will be set up to cover arrangements for families to be resettled in Sevenoaks. This will include representatives of:

- Sevenoaks District Council (where the refugees will be settled);
- Kent County Council Commissioning;
- Kent County Council Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance;

The District Steering Group will hold regular planning meetings before and after arrival bringing in other partners as needed, including the resettlement support provider. The District Steering Group will be responsible for ensuring that all activities pre and post arrival are carried out, although many of these will be delegated to the resettlement support provider, various functions within KCC and other partners including Health.

The steering group can meet in person or via teleconference as appropriate. Meetings must always include at least one representative of Sevenoaks District Council and KCC.

It will be the responsibility of individual partners to update their own senior management and elected Members.

6. Information Sharing

Parties to this agreement must sign up to the Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement.

Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council will be Joint Data Controllers (as defined in the Data Protection Act) for the purposes of information governance. The support provider will also be classed as a Joint Data Controller as they will receive and disseminate information to Sevenoaks District Council and KCC. This means that the following information will be treated as belonging equally to both parties to this agreement and the relevant support provider:

- Referral details provided by the Home Office/UNHCR;
- Advice and service arrangements made by various partners (e.g. Education, Social Care, Jobcentre Plus etc);
- Information gathered by the support provider in the process of their work with the family. This includes Integration Support Plans and updates on progress in specific areas.

The families will have signed a consent form for information to be shared by the UNHCR and Home Office before they arrive. This gives authority for the initial sharing of

information with other bodies, including the support provider, Health, Jobcentre Plus etc. Once arrived they will be:

- Provided with a document (Privacy Notice) explaining who now holds their information and what will be done with it.
- Asked to sign a consent form for the continuation of sharing of specific information more widely to named organisations (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, schools, colleges etc). The consent will apply to all the Joint Data Controllers.
- The consent form will include a reference to the fact that information will be shared with the British Government about how a family's resettlement is progressing, when requested. This will cover the routine monitoring carried out by Government. However if a more detailed report is required on an individual family, additional specific consent will be required.

7. Security of Personal Data

Both the Sevenoaks District Council and KCC have responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998 and it is essential that all staff are trained in this regard and understand their responsibilities to ensure personal and organisational compliance in this area. Sevenoaks District Council and KCC have exchanged copies of appropriate information handling policies and both parties are satisfied that there are appropriate policies in place for handling and processing of personal data and Information Security, including the handling of information security breaches.

Data Protection training is in place at both the Sevenoaks District Council and KCC and regularly rolled out to all staff.

In the event of a security breach involving beneficiary information originating from the Home Office/UNHCR it must be reported to the Home Office immediately (within the first 24 hours of becoming aware), in the first instance through Strategic Regional Leads and notifying the Home Office's Corporate Unit at: HOSecurityenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

The Home Office will provide direction on the appropriate steps to take about the best approach in terms of containment of the breach and any requirements to report the breach to the Information Commissioner's Office. Each bodies Senior Information Risk Owner can decide to report a breach by their own body (while simultaneously discussing this with the other body and the Home Office). If one body's SIRO becomes aware of a breach by the other body, they should raise it with the other body straightaway, but will reserve the right to report the breach to the Home Office even if the other body's SIRO decides not to.

8. Funding for the scheme

Funding from the Home Office for local authorities is as follows:

Year one

Adults:	£8,520
Children 5-18:	£8,520 plus £4,500 for education
Children 3-4:	£8,520 plus £2,250 for education
Children under 3:	£8,520

This funding is ring-fenced to the scheme.

It is important to note that the above figures do not include the Housing Benefit and other DWP benefits (which will be paid in the usual way) or the health care costs (which will be paid direct to the CCGs - £2,600 per person).

Extra payments may be available for education for refugees under the age of 18. There will also be a Special Cases Fund to provide extra support for the most vulnerable refugees.

Years two to five

Year 2 - £5,000 per person.

Year 3 - £3,700 per person.

Year 4 - £2,300 per person.

Year 5 - £1,000 per person.

There will also be support for education and health in years 2-5, which will be funded separately to the local authority tariff.

The funding is to be drawn down in stages from the Home Office, following submission of forms stating what has been spent to date.

Sevenoaks District Council agrees to inform the Home Office that the funding will be sent to Kent County Council in the first instance and that KCC will be the official budget holder for the scheme. This has to be done annually. The funding will then be distributed as follows:

- Payments to providers including the resettlement support provider, bodies providing furniture, interpreting services, transport provider etc.
- Sevenoaks District Council for any expenses they have incurred.
- Specified amounts to KCC Education to then pass on in full to schools.
- Other ad hoc expenses as they occur.

The above arrangement, whereby KCC administers the funding, can be reviewed if either party to this agreement is not satisfied with the way it is working.

9. Identification and management of properties used for the scheme

It will be the responsibility of Sevenoaks District Council to find, inspect and secure suitable properties for the scheme. They should also ensure that landlords/agents have brought the properties up to a habitable standard, that the properties are clean, any necessary repairs have been carried out and they are ready to be furnished and set up by KCC (see next section).

If the rent is above Housing Benefit (LHA) rates, it may be possible in exceptional circumstances for the Home Office Syrian VPRS funding to be used to cover any shortfall for a period. However, using the SVPRS funding for this purpose must be mutually agreed by Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council.

Any necessary and reasonable costs needed to secure the property will be reimbursed out of the funding for the scheme. This includes:

- Void costs before the family arrive or after they leave if necessary
- Deposits (if it is not possible to use the Housing Authority's Rent Deposit Scheme)
- Rent in advance – if required by the landlord before Housing Benefit is paid

Any deposit, rent in advance paid must be returned at the end of the tenancy to whichever body has paid it (whether that is KCC or Sevenoaks District Council).

10. Furnishing and setting up of the property prior to the arrival of the family

It will be the responsibility of KCC to arrange for the furnishing of the property and to ensure that all essential items are in place before the family arrives. They will also deal with any appropriate requests for additional items. Funding for this will come from the money available through the Syrian VPRS and claimed as part of the process set out in section 8.

11. Pre-arrival liaison with the Home Office and South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) and coordination of pre-arrival arrangements

KCC will be responsible for the liaison with Sevenoaks District Council, the Home Office, SESPM and relevant partners such as Health and Education over which families can be accepted under the scheme.

KCC will also oversee the process whereby the relevant services and support have been put in place before/shortly after the families arrive. This includes, but is not limited to, Health, Education, ESOL provision, Benefits, Adult Social care, Children's Services etc. The majority of this will be carried out via the commissioned support providers (Centra).

12. Resettlement support provision

The two local authorities (Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council) will agree which body will be appointed to carry out the provision of intensive resettlement support for the first year (from the KCC list of providers approved for use on the scheme or another body or section of the two councils if this is felt to more appropriate). Once this has been decided any commissioning arrangements will then be the responsibility of KCC Commissioned Services.

13. Monitoring and review

KCC Commissioned Services will be responsible for regularly reviewing the operation of the chosen support provider and dealing with any day to day issues that arise in the course of the provider's work with the family. They will make available to the rest of the District Steering Group (i.e. KCC SPRACA and Sevenoaks District Council) the Integration Support Plan and further regular up-dates on the progress of the family.

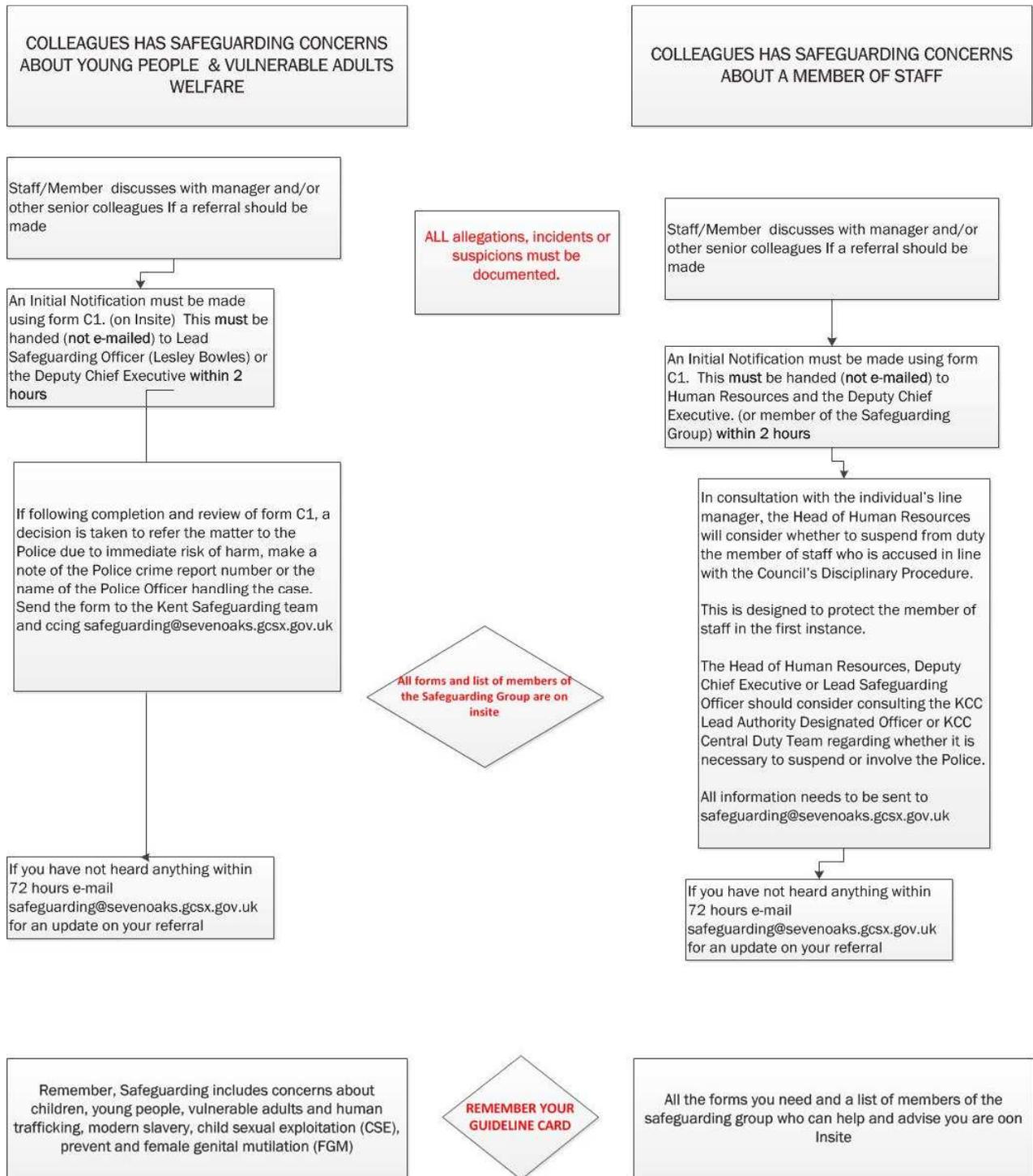
At specific points, to be determined, both Sevenoaks District Council and KCC will visit the family (without the Support Provider) to review the progress of the family.

In addition, specified officers from Sevenoaks District Council have the right to visit the family on occasion (provided with an interpreter where necessary) and request information from the Resettlement Support Provider on the progress of the family. Sevenoaks District Council also has the right for any expenditure (if reasonable and agreed) they have had to incur to be reimbursed out of the funding for the scheme.

14. Review of this Memorandum of Understanding

The terms of this Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed if either party believes it is no longer fit for purpose. A minimum of two months' notice should be given if this applies.

Sevenoaks District Council Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Flowchart Summary)



For full details please see the Sevenoaks District Council's Safeguarding Policy and related forms at: https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/3/safeguarding_policy_for_children_and_vulnerable_adults

Alternatively email the Safeguarding Leads: safeguarding@sevenoaks.gov.uk

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VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME (VPRS) - COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME RESETTLEMENT PLAN ASSESSMENT

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

Report of Chief Officer Communities & Business

Status For consideration

Decision by Cabinet - 13 July 2017

Key Decision Yes

Executive Summary: This Council may be asked by local charities, who apply to resettle families as part of the Home Office Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) Community Sponsorship Programme, to agree their application to operate as a community sponsor in this District. Sponsoring organisations need the agreement of their local authority in order to be able to apply to the Home Office for the scheme.

At its meeting on 15 October 2016, Cabinet resolved that Officers work on and implement a process to consider applications from potential Community Sponsors under the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) Community Sponsorship Programme.

Members asked Officers to bring back the assessment matrix once it was developed. This report sets out the proposed Assessment Form.

This report supports the Key Aim of safe and caring communities and healthy environment

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officers Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee:

For consideration and to note the content of this report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- a) to approve the assessment form for this Council's response to Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan applications as set out at Appendix A;
 - b) to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, following consultation with local Members, to make decisions relating to the VPRS
-

Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan assessment.

Reason for recommendation:

This Council may be asked by local charities, who apply to resettle families as part of the Home Office VPRS Community Sponsorship Programme, to give consent to approve their application to operate as a community sponsor in this District.

Introduction and Background

- 1 In response to the current crisis in Syria, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in February 2014. This scheme involves taking identified vulnerable refugees straight from the Middle East and resettling them in the UK. The refugees are given five years Humanitarian Leave to Remain and as such are able to work and claim benefits and other public funds from day one.
- 2 In July 2016, a Community Sponsorship Programme was launched by the Home Secretary. This scheme enables local registered charities or Community Interest Companies to act as a Sponsor to apply directly to support the resettlement of refugees as part of the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS).

Sevenoaks District Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment

- 3 The Sponsor must have written evidence from local authorities in which they wish to place a resettled family, which supports the approval of their Resettlement Plan application. In two-tier areas, consent must be sought from both the County and District Councils. The application is then considered by the Home Office and other Government agencies.
- 4 On 15 October 2016, Members asked Officers to develop a process to consider applications from potential Community Sponsors so that this Council can assess whether it should consent the approval of the applicant to operate as a Community Sponsor in this District.
- 5 The Sponsor must be able to demonstrate that they have suitable and sustainable accommodation for a resettled family, and that it will be available for a resettled family to use for a minimum of two years.
- 6 The Home Office guidelines state that a local authority might object to a Resettlement Plan application based on:
 - a) insufficient capacity to accommodate a family in the proposed housing area (e.g. lack of school places);
 - b) concerns about community tensions in the proposed housing area;
 - c) where they have reason to believe that the community organisation is not suitable to undertake the resettlement of vulnerable adults and children; or

- d) another appropriate reason.
- 7 The proposed Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan assessment form is attached at Appendix A. This will enable Officers to assess any proposed Plans submitted by potential local Sponsors against a set scoring criteria.
- 8 Members are asked to approve this assessment form and delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, in consultation with local Members, to make decisions relating to this work.

Key Implications

Financial

- 9 The Community Sponsor will need to demonstrate sufficient resources (financial, housing and personnel) and a detailed plan, backed by relevant experience of supporting communities. They will be responsible for meeting and welcoming the family, providing housing for the first two years, supporting access to services and support towards employment, language tuition and self-sufficiency.
- 10 If an approved Community Sponsor fails in their responsibilities, additional costs may be required to put in place alternative support. However, additional funding may be available on a case by case basis.
- 11 In the event that a family becomes homeless the local authority would be expected to house the family in accordance with their normal procedures.

Resource (non financial)

- 12 Officer time will be required to undertake the assessment process.
- 13 If this Council supports the Sponsors’ Resettlement Plan, some existing Officer and partner resources may be required as part of the standard service delivery requirements which support local residents and communities.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 14 Beneficiaries have the same entitlements as any UK citizen. Successful community sponsors will be required to sign an agreement with the Home Office, setting out the responsibilities of the sponsor and the Home Office.

Risk	Mitigation
Suitability of the sponsor	Both the District and County Council are required to assess the sponsor before they consent to an application being made to the Home Office.

Agenda Item 12

Failure of the sponsor to perform	The Home office may terminate the contract with the Sponsor
Security and Safeguarding	Beneficiaries will be assessed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as being exceptionally vulnerable. The final decision on acceptance of cases is taken by the Home Office. The Sponsor is required to demonstrate to the Home Office that they have a robust safeguarding policy and procedures in place.
Family becoming homeless after the first two years	A meeting would be held between the sponsor and the housing authority towards the end of the two year period to allow for any housing issues to be discussed and solutions agreed in advance of the two year period.

Equality Assessment

- 15 Members are reminded Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) the Council must 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.
- 16 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out. The decisions recommended through this paper will assist vulnerable families.

Conclusions

- 17 It is necessary to have in place a system of assessment in case the council is approached by a potential community sponsor. Members are asked to approve this assessment form to enable this Council to consider whether it should consent the approval of the applicant to operate as a Community Sponsor for a refugee family in this District. The Sevenoaks District Community Sponsorship Resettlement Plan assessment is attached at Appendix A.
- 18 Members are asked to delegate powers for this process to the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, following consultation with local Members.

Appendices Appendix A - Community Sponsorship Resettlement Plan Assessment

Background Government's Full Community Sponsorship:

Papers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship>

Lesley Bowles

Chief Officer Communities & Business

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Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
1. Resettled family has a home in which to settle in the UK, with adequate space and facilities to live in comfort and safety.	What accommodation has been identified?		5
	Has local need been considered for this property?		5
	When will it be available?		5
	What size and composition of family could be accommodated, consistent with Sevenoaks District Council guidance on occupation levels?		5
	Will the property be available for use by the resettled family for a minimum period of two years?		5
	Will the cost of rent be fully covered by the Local Housing Allowance? If not, does the sponsor have sufficient funds to cover the difference for at least two years?		5
	What will happen after two		5

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Agenda Item 12

Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
Page 158	years? If the accommodation will no longer be available to the resettled family after two years, how will their transition (if required) be supported to alternative sustainable accommodation?		
	How will sponsor ensure that the resettled family be able to raise issues about their accommodation with the landlord, bearing in mind the potential language barrier?		5
	TOTAL SCORE SECTION 1		
2. Resettled family members feel welcome in the UK and are able to quickly acclimatise to living in the UK	Who will meet and greet at the airport?		5
	Will there be an interpreter there?		5
	Has transport to and from the airport been considered?		5

Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
Page 159	Has the family’s privacy and dignity been considered, so as not to overwhelm them on arrival at the airport?		5
	On arrival at the accommodation, how will the sponsor ensure that the family is able to cook and look after themselves?		5
	How will the sponsor help the family to settle/acclimatise to their new environment over the following days?		5
	Will the sponsor provide a welcome pack of groceries that take into account the culture and nationality of the resettled family? What will they provide and what has informed this decision?		5
	Sponsors should provide £200 per person (adults and children) in		5

Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
Page 160	cash on arrival for initial expenses. Has the sponsor considered providing the appropriate cash?		
	Has the sponsor thought about supporting the family with access to local shopping and transport?		5
	TOTAL SCORE SECTION 2		
3. Resettled family are able to make a life for themselves in the UK, through accessing community activities, medical care, language skills, education and employment.	Will the sponsor ensure the family gets their Biometric Residence Permits within 7 days of arrival in the UK?		5
	Will the sponsor assist with registering children with local schools within two weeks of arrival?		5
	How will the sponsor provide formal ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) tuition?		5

Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
Page 161	Has the sponsor factored in the costs of ESOL tuition?		5
	How will the sponsor provide additional conversational English language support?		5
	How will the sponsor monitor the family’s progress with learning English?		5
	What additional steps in the sponsor prepared to make to ensure that the family makes progress with learning English?		5
	How will the sponsor support the family with attending local Job Centre appointments for benefit assessments? Has the sponsor familiarised themselves with the available benefits?		5
	How will the sponsor assist the family with signing up with a GP?		5

Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
Page 162	How will the sponsor advise on accessing appropriate mental health services and specialist support services e.g. for victims of torture, as appropriate?		5
	How will the sponsor provide assistance with access to employment, including development of CV and education?		5
	How will the sponsor assist with access to digital media and services, including providing support where a lack of digital skills is a barrier to independence?		5
	How will the sponsor make the family aware of and support attendance at local community activities, including playgroups, local clubs, events etc?		5
	Will the sponsor provide		5

Sevenoaks District Council
 VPRS - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment Form

Criteria Description	Detail	Summary of Application	Points Available
Please use the following scoring chart to assist you when allocating points: 1 - Poor; 2 - Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very Good; 5 - Excellent			
Page 163	interpreting services from arrival for 12 months? Have they identified a suitable interpreter?		
	Have they considered the costs of an interpreter?		5
	What is the interpreter’s availability?		5
	Has the sponsor considered the likely need for intensive interpretation services in the first few days and weeks?		5
	Will resettled individuals have access to telephone or text support for interpretation?		5
	TOTAL SCORE SECTION 3		
TOTAL POINTS ALLOCATED (out of a possible 175)			

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HEALTH LIAISON BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2017 commencing at 2.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Mrs. Bosley (Chairman)

Cllr. Dyball (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Clark, McArthur and Searles

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Dr. Canet and Parkin

Cllr. Firth was also present.

1. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 8 February 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Searles declared that he had been appointed to Kent County Council's Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee.

3. Actions from the Previous Meeting

The action was noted. The Chairman would email Councillors to advise them of the training.

4. Housing Needs Survey - Update

The Head of Housing and Health updated Members on the Housing Needs Survey, on behalf of the Housing Policy Manager. The survey would provide more detailed information on the housing needs of the District and future demands. From the results so far, key themes related to the needs of older people such as; residents wanting to remain independent and stay in their own homes; wanting more information on different housing options to be provided. Of those surveyed, 25% wanted help with estate agents and how to declutter for downsizing. Within the next 5 years, 63% wanted to down size with a preference for moving into bungalows. Many older people would require assistance with cleaning and home maintenance, adaptations, better heating and insulation in the home.

In the survey, when questioned about what 'affordable housing' means to residents, 52% responded that they would be able to afford a property up to £200,000 and 33% up to £500,000. In the district 252 homes were occupied by ex-military or servicing armed forces personnel and their families..

The Survey demonstrated the lack of private rented accommodation in the District and a large proportion of the properties required a higher income to make them affordable. The draft housing needs strategy was out to consultation and would be considered by Members at a future Housing and Health and Cabinet.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5. Tackling Loneliness

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Liam Curran from Rural Age Concern Darent Valley, Gillian Shepherd - Coates from Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Margaret Samaran from Churches Together who each gave a presentation on how the different organisations were tackling loneliness in the District.

Liam Curran advised that Rural Age Concern Darent Valley, served the older people in the northern parishes of Sevenoaks since 1951. Services they provided were: Cottage Day Centre near Brands Hatch; lunch and social clubs in Swanley and New Ash Green; minibus services for Cottage Day Centre and lunch clubs; minibus services for shopping in Swanley and Northfleet; Charity Shop in Swanley with advice and information and hosted the NHS Pulmonary Rehabilitation Assessment Clinic to reduce the number of people having to travel to Dartford.

The Cottage day care provided space for 20 people to engage with the staff and build relationships. It was hoped that the service would expand in the future and be able to offer a wider range of activities. Some users of the services were at the early stages of dementia and the facility allowed them to be social with friends. Access to the internet was now available at the Cottage Day Centre and help with using social media was available to enable the older people to be in contact with family.

The minibus service provided users with the ability to go and do their shopping, especially if there was a lack of transport options available to them in more rural areas. Most of the journeys provided a social aspect as well, however there was a small charge for the service. The charity shop was another area that provided a social hub for people to visit. The shop was also providing the volunteers with the opportunity to gain confidence.

A document detailing three case studies which showed examples of the work that the charity was undertaking and how it had helped three residents was tabled. He advised Members that the website was currently going through a reform and there was now a central information hub on the website which listed all the activities taking place. It was hoped that additional funding would be secured to enable clients to access the 'Feel Good' power assisted gym equipment at White Oak Leisure Centre.

In response to questions, Members were advised that users of the service came from referrals from other Age UK charities, Social Services, family members and neighbours. Not many referrals came from doctors. The exact figures of users for the different services was unknown but would be sent to Members.

Gillian Shepheard- Coates informed Members that Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge were an independent charity who were a brand partner of the national organisation. A map was tabled identifying the areas in the District that were at risk of loneliness. Three day care centres were run in the area 3 days a week. On average the number of users per session for Hollybush was 22, Edenbridge 18 and Tonbridge 25. Most of the users were referred by support services including GPs and Social Services, however many also came from concerned neighbours.

Lunch clubs were run by local volunteers and churches in 8 village locations with 40- 45 older people in attendance. Other services provided also included Independent living alone service providing shopping and counselling services, however this was a paid for service. Computer learning services were available in Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and this services was also available in some sheltered accommodation schemes.

In Tonbridge there were 30 - 35 clients using the befriending service where volunteers were matched to client's interests. It was hoped by training more volunteers the work load would be spread further. There were 1300 users of the services but future funding from KCC was unknown, especially with the number of older people increasing.

Margaret Samaran advised Members that she was the coordinator for the befriending scheme initiative from Churches Together for Sevenoaks and the surrounding areas and had been supporting people outside the Church community since 2005, including supporting volunteer mums to befriend older people locally. The scheme was run by volunteers from the churches.

To be a volunteer the process included an application form, reference from the church and a completed DBS from and then an interview. The thorough process enable suitable pairings. Once a volunteer had been paired there would be an initial meeting and then a follow on of 8 sessions, with a review taking place. If both parties agreed after the 8 sessions then the visits could continue until the service moved into friendship. Currently there were two referrals waiting however more volunteers were needed.

6. Updates from Members

Cllr. Clark reported that the local Doctor's surgeries in New Ash Green held a public engagement event which was well attended. The surgeries provided information to patients regarding the running of the surgeries. Positive comments had been received.

Cllr. McArthur reported that a consultation on a new medical facility had taken place in Edenbridge. A new provider was being sought for the nursing home which would provide spare beds for the hospital. There was still a lot of planning to be carried out.

Cllr. Searles reported that he attended the Clinical Commissioning Group for Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley and the Dartford Gravesham and Swanley Health

and Wellbeing Board and had recently been appointed to KCC's HOSC, which was yet to meet.

Cllr. Dyball reported that a pilot scheme for ordering prescriptions was taking place. Some issues had been reported, especially in light of the recent cyber attack. There were mixed responses to the scheme and some people do not want to take part as they were used the dropping off of prescriptions at surgeries for the social aspect. There were also problems with auto prescribing that was resulting in over ordering and medicines going to waste. St Andrew's Court, a new Moat Homes sheltered housing scheme of 26 apartments for the over 55s has just opened in Swanley. There would also be a communal area to help tackle loneliness.

Cllr. Mrs. Bosley reported that the Dementia friendly roadshow at West Kingsdown and Fawkham had been successful with 15 organisations in attendance. Three Dementia Friends training sessions were run and other sessions would be run on 22 June at 11am, 26 September at 11am and 4 October at 11am at the Council Offices.

7. Work Plan

Members discussed the work plan. Members were advised that Licensing and how it contributes to the Health agenda would be moved to the 7 February 2018 meeting and the meeting on 8 November would include a further Dementia update and a presentation from Shona Campbell from 'Up and Running'.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 3.24 PM

CHAIRMAN

Housing and Health Advisory Committee Work Plan 2017/18 (as at 23.05.17)

20 June 2017	10 October 2017	28 November 2017	27 February 2018
<p>Health Liaison Board update</p> <p>West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy</p> <p>Housing Strategy</p> <p>Kent & Medway Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan - Update</p> <p>Syrian Refugee policy</p> <p>Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan assessment</p>	<p>Budget: Service Reviews and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)</p> <p>PSH stock condition survey</p> <p>Kent & Medway Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan - presentation</p> <p>Housing Allocation Policy</p>	<p>Health Liaison Board update</p>	<p>Health Liaison Board update</p>

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