

10 October 2017 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks
Despatched: 02.10.17



Housing & Health Advisory Committee

Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Horwood

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Dr. Canet, Dyball, Eyre, Gaywood, 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. Election of Vice Chairman for 2017/18		
2. Minutes To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 June 2017, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 6)	
3. Declarations of Interest Any interests not already registered.		
4. Actions from Previous Meetings (if any)		
5. Update from Portfolio Holder	(Pages 7 - 10)	
6. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
7. Update on the Kent & Medway (Sustainability and Transformation Plan) Presentation by Ian Ayres, Accountable Officer, West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group.	(Pages 11 - 14)	Lesley Bowles, Hayley Brooks Tel: 01732 227335/7272
8. Budget 2018/19: Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)	(Pages 15 - 38)	Adrian Rowbotham Tel: 01732 227153
9. Draft Housing Assistance Policy	(Pages 39 - 78)	James Cox Tel: 01732227312

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|--|----------------------|---|
| 10. Bre Stock Modelling | (Pages 79 - 80) | James Cox
Tel: 01732227312 |
| 11. West Kent Homelessness Strategy | (Pages 81 - 152) | Lesley Bowles,
Hayley Brooks Tel:
01732 227335/7272 |
| 12. Work Plan | (Pages 153 -
154) | |

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 20 June 2017 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Horwood (Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Dyball, Eyre, Gaywood, Lowe, Parson, Pearsall and Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Parkin and Miss. Stack

Cllr. Mrs. Hunter was also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Cllrs. Horwood and Lowe were nominated and both nominations duly seconded. On a majority show of hands it was

Resolved: That Cllr. Horwood be appointed as Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2017/18.

(Cllr. Horwood in the Chair.)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

No nominations were received for Vice Chairman to the Advisory Committee for 2017/18. Upon advice, the Committee agreed to nominate a Vice Chairman for the purposes of the meeting only.

Resolved: That Cllr. Dyball be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the purposes of this meeting only.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 28 February 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

5. Actions from Previous Meetings

Agenda Item 2
Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

Members' noted the Portfolio Holder's [update](#) which had been previously circulated.

7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (requirement to belong to a scheme etc) (England) Order 2014

The Private Sector Housing Team Leader presented the report which advised Members that the Order made it a legal requirement for all lettings agents and property managers in England to join a Government-approved redress scheme by 1 October 2014. Enforcement and the setting of the level of penalty charge applicable for a breach of the Order was the responsibility of the Council. He advised that he would bring an update report to the Committee after a year.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet to approve a penalty charge of £5,000 for breaching the order, unless following representation extenuating circumstance applies.

9. Draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy

The Housing and Health Manager presented the report which sought approval of a draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2016-21 for consultation with stakeholders and residents. Whilst work had been carried out with Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils, this Council had decided to deliver its own Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy which set out the housing priorities for the Sevenoaks District. The other two councils were delivering the Strategy as their Housing and Homelessness Strategy and therefore it was recognised that some of the housing information provided within the Homelessness Strategy and associated evidence data, would need to be amended for the purposes of the Sevenoaks District.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the draft West Kent Homelessness Strategy be approved for consultation with stakeholders and residents.

10. Housing Strategy 2017

The Housing Policy Manager introduced a report which presented the findings of the recent public consultation on the new Draft Housing Strategy. The strategy set 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; and meeting the needs of vulnerable and low income households. If approved, more detailed action plans (where required) would be prepared to deliver on the agreed strategies. Once completed, these would be made available to Members as internal working documents.

If approved the Housing Strategy would be formally launched the published at a housing forum which was currently planned for late 2017. Members would be formally invited to the event and a copy of the final document provided.

The Housing Policy Manager advised that he would bring twice yearly update reports to the Housing & Health and the Planning Advisory Committees.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet to recommend to Council to approve the Draft Housing Strategy.

11. Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy

The Housing and Health Manager presented the report which set out the Council's Policy for participating in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in Kent. Members were asked to consider the report to Cabinet which recommended adoption of the Sevenoaks District SVPRS Policy to enable the Council to support the resettlement of Syrian refugee families, if suitable and affordable housing was identified. Decision making on a case by case basis would be achieved through delegated powers to the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, following consultation with local Members.

The Housing and Health Manager further advised that the Council had been approached by a homeowner to act as a management agent, but the Council was unable to do this. However, it appeared there may be a letting agent willing to do this work.

The Chairman used his discretion to allow a member of the public to speak who was there on behalf of Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees. She advised that Savills in West Malling were the agents that may be interested in taking on this role.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Members considered the report and it was

Resolved: That the report to Cabinet be noted.

12. Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) - Community Sponsorship Programme Resettlement Plan Assessment

The Head of Housing & Health presented the report which sought Cabinet approval for the proposed assessment form following the meeting of Cabinet on 15 October 2016, when it was 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.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report be noted.

13. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The Vice Chairman of the Health Liaison Board presented the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2017 highlighting some of the discussion. The minutes were noted.

14. Work Plan

The work plan and the addition Minutes 8 and 10 were noted.

The Chief Officer Communities and Business advised Members that the Kent & Medway Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan was looking at how local health would be provided. This was an important area of work as it would affect local health services. There was a public event in Sevenoaks on 8 August 2017, venue yet to be confirmed.

An update on emergency housing at the meeting in November was requested, as well as an update on the implementation of the Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy.

ACTION SINCE GRENFELL TOWER DISASTER

Members queried what the Council was doing with regards to checking properties for flammable cladding, in light of the recent disaster and named some building

they had concerns with. The Chief Officer Communities and Business gave an update about the information the Council had been asked to provide to DCLG and said that that Officers were also working with Kent Fire & Rescue Service. Kent Fire & Rescue Service had asked if there were any sites where there were community concerns and where they could provide reassurance. She took note of the buildings Members were concerned about and requested Members to inform Officers of any others they knew of. There would be a written update for Members shortly.

The Chairman said that, with the Advisory Committee's consent he would write to the Portfolio Holders, requesting assurances. This was agreed.

The Chief Officer Communities and Business also took the opportunity to update Members on a recent fire at Emily Court, Wilmington. There had been one fatality, and six displaced residents mainly as a result of smoke and water damage KCC Officers were working closely with Kent Fire Service, who had fed back that it was a well built and maintained building and had behaved as it should have during a fire.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.28 PM

CHAIRMAN

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Housing & Health Advisory Committee

10 October 2017

Portfolio Holders Report

Housing

The Council supported the National Housing Federation's Starts at Home day again on Friday 1 September at Wellfield Community Centre in Hartley with West Kent Housing Association and Gary Johnson MP. The Council's Chairman was in attendance which was extra special as he is also the local member.

There was a turnout of more than 50 residents to celebrate how supported housing enables people to live independent lives and helps to reduce hospital admissions and homelessness. Most supported housing schemes are for older people but some are for young people leaving the care system, people with learning difficulties or armed forces adjusting to civilian life.

The week commencing 18 September was national housing week and the council took part in this by promoting shared ownership re-sales which have proven to be a little known, but very affordable option for people in this district.

On 6 October I visited the Abbeyfield Extra Care Scheme in Tonbridge and presented the new housing strategy to Tom Tugendhat MP.

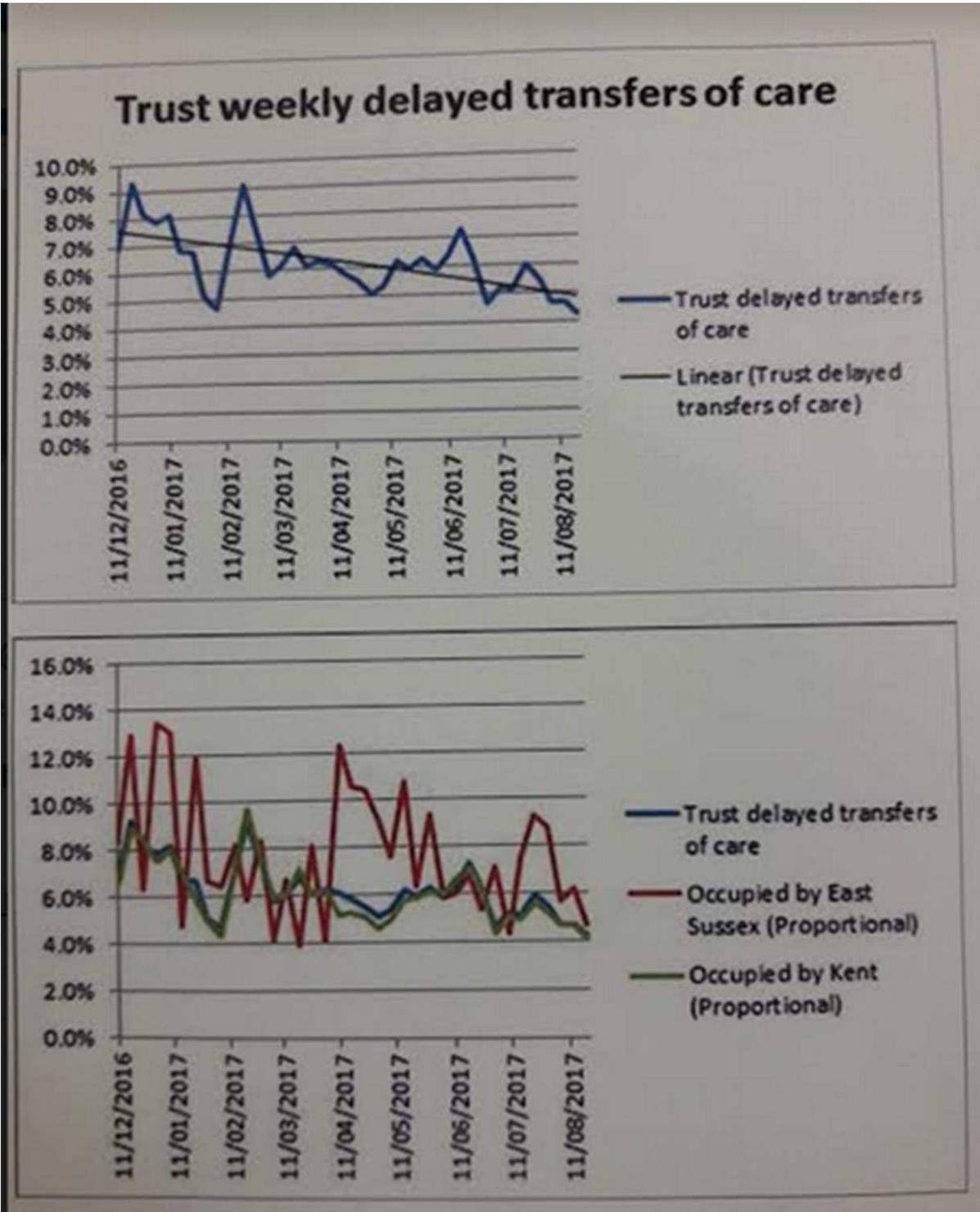
The Council will be promoting the new housing strategy: 'Wellbeing starts at Home' on Friday 3 November. All councillors have been invited as well as parish councillors, Housing Associations, developers, neighbouring councils, CCGs and others with an interest in housing and health. The event is being sponsored by Paramount, a private company that provides temporary housing.

The Tunbridge Wells Hospital based Health and Housing Co-ordinator, whose principle role is to reduce delayed hospital discharge has been nominated for a Kent Housing group excellence award which it won. The scheme was also nominated for a national HIA award for collaboration with the outcome being the partnership was commended. Two new Maintenance Operatives are now employed by the council and are an integral part of the Health and Housing Co-ordinators role as they undertake works to facilitate patients to return home. Work undertaken to facilitate a hospital discharge is funded via the Disabled Facility Grant.

A Housing a Health Co-Ordinator is now in place at Darenth Valley Hospital, this in collaboration with Dartford Borough Council and Family Mosaic.

The graphs overleaf show some of the impact that the reduced delayed hospital discharge scheme is having on patients and the hospital, comparing Kent with East Sussex where such a scheme does not exist.

The West Kent Housing Association Board have agreed to introduce fixed term tenancies from April 2018 for all tenancies; except some supported housing schemes where residents are already on fixed term tenancies and Emerald residents who are over 55.



Health & Leisure

Met with Phil Veasey, Public Health and sports professional, to discuss public health and hard to reach groups on 1 August. Looking forward to working with members and officers on how some of his community ideas can be taken forward.

On 8 August I attended the West Kent STP Meeting in Sevenoaks, who have been invited to this advisory meeting on 10 October to update members on their plans.

Working with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development to ensure housing and health are fed into the new Economic Development Plan.

On 21st September I attended the LGA's Housing & Health Conference. On 28 September I attended the STP Board meeting.

To mark mental health week on the week commencing 9 October, Sevenoaks District Council will be working with the Orchards Academy Secondary School and music with SupaJam and Swanley Youth Centre – both in Swanley. To build on this work SDC is considering working with partners to open a mental health café in the district along the lines of the one in Dartford, as suggested in a previous advisory committee brainstorming session. It would work like a Dementia Café and be open for people to visit if they need moral support and some professional advice.

Sevenoaks District Council is signing up to the 'Time for Change: Employer Pledge Action Plan' to help end mental health discrimination starting at home with own employees. The pledge is funded by the Department of Health, Comic Relief and the Lottery Fund and is supported by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness.

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KENT AND MEDWAY SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLAN

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017

Report of Chief Officer - Communities & Business

Status: For information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report introduces the Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). The presentation will outline how NHS organisations and local authorities are working together to transform health and Social Care in Kent and Medway.

This report supports the key aims of the Community Plan for Caring Communities and Healthy Environment

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee Meeting:

That members note the contents of the report.

Reason for recommendation: To provide Members with an update on progress about the Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP).

Introduction and Background

- 1 Organisations responsible for health and care services in England are now required to produce a multi-year Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), showing how local services will evolve and become sustainable over the next five years, ultimately delivering the Five Year Forward View vision of better health, better patient care and improving NHS efficiency (NHS England, 2016).
- 2 In Kent and Medway, an STP footprint has been established covering all eight Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Groups over a population of 1.8 million (NHS England, 2016). NHS organisations are working with local authorities and organisations to deliver the Kent and Medway STP.

Agenda Item 7

Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan

- 3 The Chief Executive of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust is the Senior Responsible Officer for the Kent and Medway SPT.
- 4 The outline Kent and Medway STP sets out the key themes for transformation of health and care services as follows:
 - Care Transformation: preventing ill health, intervening earlier and bringing excellent care closer to home.
 - Productivity: Maximising synergies and efficiencies in shared services, procurement and prescribing.
 - Enablers: Investing in estates, digital infrastructure and the workforce needed to underpin a high-performing system.
 - System Leadership: Developing the commissioner and provider structures which will unlock greater scale and impact.
- 5 Further information on this work will be presented to Members by Ian Ayres, Accountable Officer for West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal or human rights issues relating to this report.

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.

Resource (non-financial)

Sevenoaks District Council is a key partner in developing the Kent and Medway STP. Support for this work will be picked up within existing staffing resources.

Conclusions

The Accountable Officer for West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group will attend Housing and Housing Advisory Committee to inform Members about the Kent and Medway STP.

Background Papers: NHS England (2016) '*Sustainability and Transformation Plans (01/05/2016)*'

Kent and Medway NHS, [The Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan submission](http://www.kentandmedway.nhs.uk/stp)
www.kentandmedway.nhs.uk/stp

Lesley Bowles
Chief Officer for Communities and Business

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BUDGET 2018/19: SERVICE DASHBOARDS AND SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (SCIAS)

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017

Report of	Chief Finance Officer
Status	For Decision
Also considered by	Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee - 3 October 2017
	Policy and Performance Advisory Committee - 5 October 2017
	Legal and Democratic Services Advisory Committee - 17 October 2017
	Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 2 November 2017
	Finance Advisory Committee - 14 November 2017
	Planning Advisory Committee - 23 November 2017
Key Decision	No

Executive Summary: This report sets out updates to the 2018/19 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presents proposals that have been identified which need to be considered, together with further suggestions made by the Advisory Committees, before finalising the budget for 2018/19.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it is proposed that the Council continues to set a revenue budget which assumes no funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This will result in the Council continuing to be financially self-sufficient as set out in its Corporate Plan.

To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period, whilst also increasing the Council's ability to be sustainable beyond that time, a savings requirement of £100,000 per annum is included.

Other pressures, such as the public sector pay award, may result in a requirement for further savings. Officers will continue to monitor these pressures and report the latest position to Cabinet in December.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. John Scholey

Agenda Item 8

Contact Officers Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

Veronica Wilson, Ext. 7436

Recommendation to each Advisory Committee:

- (a) Advise Cabinet with views on the growth and savings proposals identified in Appendix D applicable to this Advisory Committee.
 - (b) Advise Cabinet with further suggestions for growth and savings applicable to this Advisory Committee.
-

Reason for recommendation: It is important that the views of the Advisory Committees are taken into account in the budget process to ensure that the Council's resources are used in the most suitable manner.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council's financial strategy over the past thirteen years has worked towards increasing financial sustainability and it has been successful through the use of a number of strategies including:
 - implementing efficiency initiatives;
 - significantly reducing the back office function;
 - improved value for money;
 - maximising external income;
 - the movement of resources away from low priority services; and
 - an emphasis on statutory rather than non-statutory services.
- 2 Over this period, the Council has focused on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with residents and stakeholders. In financial terms, the adoption of this strategy has to date allowed the Council to move away from its reliance on general fund reserves.
- 3 Using the data sources available to the Council, this report sets out a budget over the 10-year period but recognises that it is likely that more accurate data will become available in future months and current assumptions may need to be updated.
- 4 In setting its budget for 2011/12 onwards, the Council recognised the need to address both the short-term reduction in Government funding as well as the longer-term need to reduce its reliance on reserves. The outcome was a 10-year budget, together with a four-year savings plan, that ensured the Council's finances were placed on a stable footing but that also allowed for flexibility between budget years.

- 5 With the amount of Revenue Support Grant provided by Government ceasing from 2017/18 it is important that the council remains financially self-sufficient by having a balanced economy and a financial strategy that is focused on local solutions. These solutions include:
- continuing to deliver financial savings and service efficiencies;
 - growing the council tax and business rate base; and
 - generating more income.
- 6 When the current Financial Strategy started in 2011/12, it was agreed that the balance in the Asset Maintenance Reserve would be moved to the Financial Plan Reserve and used over the initial 10-year period. Any asset maintenance expenditure is therefore now funded by the revenue budget each year. Asset maintenance expenditure can fluctuate as the demand for programmed and ad hoc work varies across sites and it should be recognised that expenditure is likely to increase over the next 10 years as properties age.
- 7 The intention of this report is to provide Members of each Advisory Committee an opportunity to give their views on potential growth and savings items that could be included in the updated 10-year budget that will be presented to Council on 20 February 2018.
- 8 The ‘Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2018/19 and Beyond’ report has been presented to Cabinet to start the budget setting process for 2018/19.

Financial Self-Sufficiency

- 9 The Council’s Corporate Plan, introduced in 2013, set out an ambition for the Council to become financially self-sufficient which was achieved in 2016/17. This means that the Council no longer requires direct funding from Government, through Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus, to deliver its services.
- 10 This approach was adopted in response to the financial challenges the Country is faced with in bringing its public spending down to ensure it is able to live within its means. In practice this has seen Government funding to local authorities dramatically reduced since 2010/11 with Sevenoaks District Council expecting to receive no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/8.
- 11 The decision to become financially self-sufficient is intended to give the Council greater control over its services, reducing the potential for decision making to be influenced by the level of funding provided by government to local authorities.
- 12 The Council’s decision to seek to become financially self-sufficient was subject to scrutiny by the Local Government Associations Peer Challenge of the District Council during December 2013. In their closing letter to the Council they concluded that they ‘fully support that aspiration and given the

Agenda Item 8

existing and anticipated squeeze upon public finances this makes much sense’.

- 13 With the Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18 and New Homes Bonus expected to reduce from 2018/19, this approach remains appropriate. The attached 10-year budget assumes no Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. Any funding received from these sources will be put into the Financial Plan Reserve which can be used to support the 10-year budget by funding invest to save initiatives and supporting the Property Investment Strategy. One of the aims of the Property Investment Strategy is to achieve returns of 5%+ when not borrowing or in excess of 3% for schemes that include some external borrowing; therefore using funding for this purpose will result in additional year on year income that is not impacted by Government decisions.
- 14 Cabinet are keen to remain financially self-sufficient and be ahead of the game. This will allow this Council to move ahead in the knowledge that this Council has the financial resources to provide the services that the district’s residents want into the future.

Service Dashboards

- 15 The intention of service dashboards is to provide Members with improved information during the budget setting process to provide context and inform any growth and savings ideas that Members may put forward.
- 16 The Service Dashboards cover a summary of the services provided, objectives, achievements and opportunities, challenges and risks and performance.
- 17 **Appendix A** contains the Service Dashboard for this Advisory Committee and **Appendix B** contains the budget for those services.

Savings Plan

- 18 **Appendix C** to this report sets out a summary of the savings and growth items approved by Council since the 10-year budget strategy was first used in 2011/12, which have allowed the Council to deliver a 10 year balanced budget.
- 19 The savings plan requires a total of over £6 million to be saved between 2011/12 and 2017/18 which is an average saving of nearly £900,000 per annum. In the thirteen years from 2005/06, over £10m of savings will then have been made.
- 20 The 10-year budget attached shows a net saving or additional income requirement of £100,000 per annum to deliver a long-term sustainable budget.

- 21 Other pressures, such as the public sector pay award, may result in a requirement for further savings. Officers will continue to monitor these pressures and report the latest position to Cabinet in December.

Proposed Growth and Savings Items

- 22 Growth items are items that are in addition to non-service issues and risks, such as grant settlements, impacts of economic change and other pressures highlighted in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2018/19 and Beyond' report considered by Cabinet on 14 September 2017.
- 23 A number of growth and savings items will be proposed at the seven Advisory Committees with the aim of achieving the £100,000 mentioned above. The £100,000 does not necessarily have to all be achieved in 2018/19 but the impact is required to be £1m (i.e. £100,000 x 10 years) over the 10-year budget period.
- 24 The proposed growth and savings items relating to this Advisory Committee are listed in **Appendix D**.
- 25 Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) contain further details for all proposed growth and savings items. SCIAs applicable to this Advisory Committee can be found in **Appendix E**.
- 26 During the budget process last year, each Advisory Committee was asked to provide further growth and savings suggestions to Cabinet. These were not approved as part of the 2017/18 budget but Cabinet indicated that some items would be worth bringing forward in future years. The suggestions previously proposed by this Advisory Committee are included in **Appendix F** and Members may wish to consider these ideas again when proposing growth and savings suggestions.

Financial Summary

- 27 The assumptions currently included take into account the latest information available but a number of assumptions may change before the final budget meeting in February 2018.
- 28 The 10-year budget attached at **Appendix G** includes the changes that were included in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2018/19'.

Role of the Advisory Committees

- 29 Training sessions on the budget process have been provided to Members in previous years to ensure that they have an understanding of the process and relevant issues to allow them to play an active part in the budget setting process. If Members require refresher training, please contact Adrian Rowbotham, Chief Finance Officer.

Agenda Item 8

- 30 Views of the Advisory Committees on the growth and savings items proposed together with any additional suggestions will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December 2017.

Process and Timetable

- 31 This report is the second stage of the budget process as shown in the Budget Timetable (**Appendix H**).
- 32 It is possible that Advisory Committees may have to re-address service budgets in January if significant changes have taken place leading to a large and unmanageable deficit.

Key Implications

Financial

All financial implications are covered elsewhere in this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications.

For the effective management of our resources and in order to achieve a sustainable budget it is essential that all service cost changes and risks are identified and considered.

Challenges and risks are included in the Service Dashboards and each Service Change Impact Assessment (SCIA) includes the likely impacts including a risk analysis.

Financial risks will be reviewed again when the Cabinet publishes its proposals for the annual budget.

Equality Assessment

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

Individual equality impact assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) to ensure the decision making process is fair and transparent.

Conclusions

The Strategic Financial and Business Planning process has ensured that the Council follows a logical and well considered process and approach in dealing with the many difficult financial challenges that it has faced. The 10-year budget has

further improved this process and helped to ensure that the Council is well placed in dealing with more immediate and longer-term financial challenges.

By becoming financially self-sufficient at an early stage, this Council has become much more in control of its own destiny as the Property Investment Strategy should provide a much more stable income stream than the reducing direct government funding streams.

The attached 10-year budget shows that this Council can continue to be financially stable going into the future with a level of assurance that any council would aspire to.

This budget process will once again be a major financial challenge for a Council that already provides value for money services to a high standard. In making any budget proposals, Members will need to consider the impact on service quality and staff well-being, to ensure that these proposals lead to an achievable 10-year budget that supports the Council's aspirations for customer-focused services.

Members' consideration and scrutiny of the relevant services is an essential and key element in the business and financial planning process. If the net total of growth and savings proposals identified by the Advisory Committees and approved by Cabinet does not reach the £100,000 savings target, additional savings will be required that may result in service changes, to ensure a balanced budget position.

Appendices

Appendix A - Service Dashboards relating to this Advisory Committee.

Appendix B - 2017/18 Budget by Service relating to this Advisory Committee.

Appendix C - Summary of the Council's agreed savings plan and growth items.

Appendix D - New growth and savings items proposed relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable).

Appendix E - Service Change Impact Assessment forms (SCIAs) for the new growth and savings items relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable).

Appendix F - Update on growth and savings suggestions made by this Advisory Committee last year (if applicable)

Appendix G - 10-year budget.

Agenda Item 8

Appendix H - Budget timetable.

Background Papers

None

Adrian Rowbotham

Chief Finance Officer

Service Dashboard Portfolio for Housing & Health

The services we provide

Housing strategy & policy, housing standards, housing needs, empty homes, gypsy and traveller, disabled facilities grants, health, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, leisure

Service contribution

Statutory service



Income generating



Working in partnership



Corporate priorities

Self-sufficiency ✖

Value for Money ✓

Safe district ✓

Collect rubbish effectively ✖

Green Belt ✖

Local economy ✓

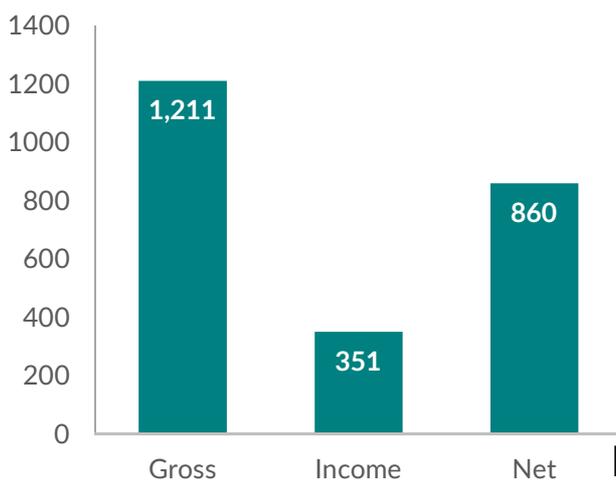
Performance



Achievements & Opportunities

- Launch of the 'One You' health service for West Kent formed from the Council's health devolution proposal to County Council
- Award winning early hospital discharge service launched through an extended Disabled Facilities Grant service
- New Housing Strategy prepared and set to be formally launched at the Council's Housing Forum

Portfolio Budget (£000)



Challenges & Risks

- Continuing to work to reduce health inequality across the District
- Seeking a creative solution to the Council's ageing leisure facilities
- To successfully deliver the 'One You' service and seek further opportunities for devolved responsibility
- Seek to provide more affordable homes across the District
- Successful delivery of the Housing Strategy

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Housing and Health Advisory Committee: 2017/18 Budget by Service

<u>Revenue</u>		2017/18	2017/18	2017/18
Chief Officer	Description	Expenditure	Income	Net
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Communities and Business	All Weather Pitch	0	(5)	(5)
Communities and Business	Choosing Health WK PCT*	88	(88)	0
Communities and Business	Community Sports Activation Fund*	15	(15)	0
Communities and Business	Health Improvements	42	0	42
Communities and Business	HERO	69	(34)	35
Communities and Business	Homeless	179	(27)	152
Communities and Business	Housing	191	0	191
Communities and Business	Housing Initiatives	52	0	52
Communities and Business	Leader Programme	5	0	5
Communities and Business	Leisure Contract	203	(20)	183
Communities and Business	Leisure Development	20	0	20
Communities and Business	Partnership - Home Office (Communities against Drugs)	32	(32)	0
Env & Op Svs	DFG Admin	0	(20)	(20)
Env & Op Svs	Energy Efficiency	30	(1)	29
Env & Op Svs	Gypsy Sites	45	(65)	(20)
Env & Op Svs	Private Sector Housing	240	(44)	196
		1,211	(351)	860
	* = externally funded			

<u>Capital</u>		2017/18
Chief Officer	Description	Expenditure
		£'000
Housing	Improvement Grants	889
		889

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SCIA		Description	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	Later Years £000	Total £000
Year	No.											
		Direct and Trading Advisory Committee										
2016/17	8	Playgrounds: Reduction in asset maintenance (reversal of temporary saving item)									7	
2016/17	9	Public Conveniences: Reduction in asset maintenance (reversal of temporary saving item)									8	
		Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee										
		No savings or growth agreed from 2018/19 onwards										
		Finance Advisory Committee										
2011/12	62,63	Staff terms and conditions - savings agreed by Council 18/10/11								(301)	(373)	
2015/16	10	External Audit fee reduction (reversal of temporary saving item)								30		
2017/18	25	Internal Enforcement Agents for Local Tax recovery								(104)		
		Housing and Health Advisory Committee										
		No savings or growth agreed from 2018/19 onwards										
		Legal and Democratic Services Advisory Committee										
		No savings or growth agreed from 2018/19 onwards										
		Planning Advisory Committee										
		No savings or growth agreed from 2018/19 onwards										
		Policy and Performance Advisory Committee										
2017/18	10	Apprenticeship Levy (reversal of temporary growth item)									(45)	
2017/18	11	Swanley contract								(25)		
2017/18	12	Customer Service resource								(25)		
		Minor movements between years								(2)	(1)	
		Total Savings	(2,984)	(841)	(314)	(479)	(533)	(721)	(372)	(427)	(359)	(7,030)
		Total Growth	371	45	50	327	177	309	359	0	(45)	1,593
		Net Savings	(2,613)	(796)	(264)	(152)	(356)	(412)	(13)	(427)	(404)	(5,437)

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New Growth and Savings Proposals: Housing and Health Advisory Committee

SCIA Year	No.	Description	Year	Ongoing	2018/19 Impact £000	Budget Impact £000
Growth		none				
		Sub Total			0	0
Savings		none				
		Sub Total			0	0
		Net Savings Total			0	0

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SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Not applicable for this Advisory Committee as there are no new growth and savings proposals.

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Update on Growth and Savings Suggestions made by this Advisory Committees last year

Cabinet 01/12/16:

Cabinet discussed the further growth and savings items suggested by Advisory Committees set out in Appendix F and indicated that some items would be worth bringing forward in future years.

A range of growth and savings ideas were discussed at the Housing and Health Advisory Committee but it was decided not to advise Cabinet with further suggestions.

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	Budget 2017/18	Plan 2018/19	Plan 2019/20	Plan 2020/21	Plan 2021/22	Plan 2022/23	Plan 2023/24	Plan 2024/25	Plan 2025/26	Plan 2026/27	Plan 2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure											
Net Service Expenditure c/f	13,689	14,470	14,528	14,654	15,166	15,541	15,910	16,286	16,667	17,052	17,443
Inflation	494	585	412	644	461	469	476	481	486	491	499
Superannuation Fund deficit and staff recruitment & retention	300	0	0	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net savings (approved in previous years)	(13)	(427)	(186)	(232)	14	0	0	0	(1)	0	1
New growth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New savings/Income	0	(100)	0								
Net Service Expenditure b/f	14,470	14,528	14,654	15,166	15,541	15,910	16,286	16,667	17,052	17,443	17,943
Financing Sources											
Government Support											
: Revenue Support Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	(10,013)	(10,333)	(10,661)	(10,998)	(11,345)	(11,701)	(12,066)	(12,442)	(12,828)	(13,224)	(13,607)
Locally Retained Business Rates	(1,990)	(2,055)	(2,128)	(2,171)	(2,214)	(2,258)	(2,303)	(2,349)	(2,396)	(2,444)	(2,493)
Collection Fund Surplus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Receipts	(130)	(130)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)
Property Investment Strategy Income	(500)	(735)	(1,185)	(1,185)	(1,185)	(1,185)	(1,285)	(1,329)	(1,329)	(1,529)	(1,529)
Contributions to/(from) Reserves	(353)	(353)	(353)	(353)	(353)	(179)	(179)	(635)	148	148	148
Total Financing	(12,986)	(13,606)	(14,577)	(14,957)	(15,347)	(15,573)	(16,083)	(17,005)	(16,655)	(17,299)	(17,731)
Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit	1,484	922	77	209	194	337	203	(338)	397	144	212
Contribution to/(from) Stabilisation Reserve	(1,484)	(922)	(77)	(209)	(194)	(337)	(203)	338	(397)	(144)	(212)
Unfunded Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Assumptions	
Revenue Support Grant:	nil all years
Locally Retained Business Rates:	2% all years
Council Tax:	2.5% in 17/18, 2% in later years
Interest Receipts:	£130,000 in 17/18 - 18/19, £250,000 in later years
Property Inv. Strategy:	£500,000 in 17/18, £735,000 from 18/19, £1.185m from 19/20, £1.285m from 23/24, £1.329m from 24/25, £1.529m from 26/27 onwards. Sennocke Hotel income included from 2019/20.
Pay award:	1% in 17/18 - 19/20, 2% in later years
Other costs:	2.25% in all years
Income:	2.5% in all years

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2018/19 Budget Setting Timetable

	Date	Committee
Stage 1		
Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2018/19 and Beyond	5 September	Finance AC
	14 September	Cabinet
↓		
Stage 2		
Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)	3 October	Economic & Comm. Dev. AC
	5 October	Policy & Performance AC
	10 October	Housing & Health AC
	17 October	Legal & Dem. Svs AC
	2 November	Direct & Trading AC
	14 November	Finance AC
	23 November	Planning AC
↓		
Stage 3		
Budget Update (incl. Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs), feedback from Advisory Committees)	7 December	Cabinet
↓		
Stage 4		
Budget Update (incl. Government Settlement information)	11 January	Cabinet
↓		
Stage 5		
<i>Budget Update and further review of Service Change Impact Assessments (if required)</i>	<i>January - February</i>	<i>Advisory Committees</i>
↓		
Stage 6		
Budget Setting Meeting (Recommendations to Council)	6 February	Cabinet
↓		
Stage 7		
Budget Setting Meeting (incl. Council Tax setting)	20 February	Council

Note: The Scrutiny Committee may 'call in' items concerning the budget setting process.

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Housing Assistance Policy

Health and Housing Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017

Report of Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services

Status For Decision

Also considered by Cabinet - 12th October 2017
Council - 21 November 2017

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: The Housing Assistance Policy sets out the way in which the funding provided by the Better Care Fund for mandatory disabled facilities grant and discretionary assistance for improved collaboration with Health and Social care services is administered; along with the Councils own discretionary assistance.

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

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer James Cox, Ext. 7312

Recommendation to Health and Housing Advisory Committee: To recommend to Cabinet to approve the proposed Housing Assistance Policy in order to ensure increased funding provided via the Better Care Fund is delivered to those who have not previously been able to obtain financial assistance; and to up date the criteria for the Councils own discretionary financial assistance.

Recommendation to Cabinet: To recommend to Council to approve the proposed Housing Assistance Policy in order to ensure increased funding provided via the Better Care Fund is delivered to those who have not previously been able to obtain financial assistance; and to up date the criteria for the Councils own discretionary financial assistance.

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

To continue to provide discretionary assistance for essential repairs although

additional qualifying criteria and conditions are being applied to an application

Introduction and Background

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

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

involved. This assistance allows applicants to relocate to a more appropriate dwelling either within SDC or outside.

7 Specific situation funding

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

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

8 Accelerated Facility Grant (AFG)

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

9 Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)

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

10 Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)

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

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

Agenda Item 9

being adhered to.

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

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

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

Certain specific types of dwellings

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

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

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

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

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

Key Implications

Financial

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

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

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

Equality Assessment

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

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

Conclusions

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

Appendices: (Private Sector) Housing Assistance Policy 2017

Background Papers

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

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

Richard Wilson Chief Officer

Environmental & Operational Services

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APPENDIX

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY 2017

Review date of December 2018

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file:///S:/SDC/Community Services/Housing/Housing - Private Sector
Housing/Coxjames/management/Housing renewal policy

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

1.0 Context

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

1.1 Background since 2008

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

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

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

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

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

2.0 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.0 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.0 GRANT ASSISTANCE

4.1 Mandatory Assistance

4.2 Disabled Facility Grant

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

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

Examples of common adaptations include:

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

4.3 Test of resources for owner occupiers and tenants

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

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

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

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

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

Agenda Item 9

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

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

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5.0 Better care fund sourced discretionary funding

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

5.1.1 Introduction

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

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

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

5.3 Collaborative Working

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

5.4 Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant (DDFG)

5.4.1 Introduction

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

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

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

Agenda Item 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.4.3 Relocation funding

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

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

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

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

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

5.4.5 Specific situation funding

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

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

Agenda Item 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.5 Accelerated Facility Grant (AFG)

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

AFG assistance will provide a quicker more streamlined service.

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

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

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

Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)

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

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

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

Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)

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

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

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

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

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

Agenda Item 9

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

6.0 DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE

Housing Assistance Grant (HAG)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pre qualifying criteria

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

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

7.0 General Guidance on the operation of the Housing Assistance policy

7.1 Buildings Not Attracting Grant Assistance

The following dwellings will not qualify for grant assistance:

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

Eligibility Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Form of Application

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

All Grants

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

Agenda Item 9

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

Certificate of Future Occupation

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

Tenant's application

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

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

Amount of Assistance

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

Eligible Works

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

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

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

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

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

Fees & Other Ancillary Costs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Agenda Item 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

Supervision of Works

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

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

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

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

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

Assistance will only be paid if:

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

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

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

Grant and repayment Conditions

Agenda Item 9

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

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

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

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

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

Successive Assistance

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appeal Procedure

Representations can be made in the following cases:

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

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

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

DRAFT

Appendix A
Repayment Conditions - Disabled Facility Grant

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

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

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

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

NOTES:

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

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

Definitions

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

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

Insurance and compensation claims:

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B

Repayment Conditions - Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant

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

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

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

Insurance and compensation claims:

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES:

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

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

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

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

Definitions

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

2. Relocation Funding

No repayment conditions are applicable.

Insurance and compensation claims:

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

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

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

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

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

3. Specific situation funding

Repayment

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

Agenda Item 9

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

Insurance and compensation claims:

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES:

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

Definitions

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

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

4. Accelerated Facility Grant

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

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

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

NOTES:

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

Agenda Item 9

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

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

Definitions

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

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

Insurance and compensation claims:

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix C:

Housing Assistance Grant

Repayment

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

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

Insurance and compensation claims:

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

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

NOTES:

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

Agenda Item 9

Definitions

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

Appendix D DFG Specific operation Guidance

Change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant:

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

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

the Council may decide:

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

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

Carrying out and completion of works:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Agenda Item 9

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

Where this section applies—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BRE STOCK MODELLING

Health and Housing Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017

Report of Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services

Status For Comment

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: The Building Research establishment was been employed and has now undertaken a stock model assessment to identify the condition of the private housing stock within the District.

This report supports the Key Aim of reducing poverty and social exclusion; providing a healthy environment by reducing health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing for all.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer James Cox, Ext. 7312

Recommendation to Health and Housing Advisory Committee: Members are asked to note the report

Introduction and Background

- 1 Periodically the Council are required to undertake a housing condition survey, determining the condition of the Districts private sector housing stock. This information is then used to inform other housing related policies.
- 2 It was expected that the stock modelling information would be completed for this committee, however we are having problems accessing the final information recently sent by the BRE. This problem is currently being resolved by IT and the necessary information will be available shortly. Once available an over view of the findings will be presented to the advisory committee.

Key Implications

Financial

No financial implications are applicable

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

No legal implications and risk assessment are applicable.

Agenda Item 10

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.]

Conclusions

The information from the BRE stock survey is very near completion and the information made accessible to others within the Council

Richard Wilson Chief Officer

Environmental & Operational Services

WEST KENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 10 October 2017

Report of	Chief Officer, Communities & Business
Status	For Consideration
Also considered by	Cabinet - 9 November 2017 Council - 21 November 2017 (for decision)
Key Decision	No

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

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

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

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

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

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

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

Introduction and Background

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

Agenda Item 11

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

Summary of the Strategy

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

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

Agenda Item 11

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

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

Key Implications

Financial

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

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

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

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

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

Agenda Item 11

Equality Assessment

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

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

Resource (non financial)

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

Conclusions

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

Appendices

Appendix A - West Kent Homelessness Strategy

Appendix B -West Kent Homelessness Evidence Data

Appendix C - Consultation responses

Appendix D - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None

Lesley Bowles

Chief Officer Communities & Business

West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021

(Sevenoaks District Council version)



Final version 20/08/17

West Kent Homelessness Strategy

Contents	Page
Executive Summary	3
Section One: Introduction	5
Our Vision	5
About this strategy	5
How this strategy was developed	6
Section Two: Contexts	7
The National Policy Context	7
The Local Policy Context	11
Section Three: Our Achievements	14
Section Four: Key Challenges	15
Housing Demand	15
Housing Supply	16
Home ownership	17
Affordable housing.....	19
Homelessness	23
The Housing Register.....	25
Meeting the housing needs of specific groups	25
Housing standards	27
Partnerships.....	28
Section Five: Our Ambitions	29
Section Six: Delivering the Plan	33
Appendices	34
Appendix One - Project Team and Stakeholder Involvement.....	34
Appendix Two - Evidence Base	36
Appendix Three - Glossary of terms	36

Executive Summary

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

Recognising this, our vision is:

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

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

We are seeing:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ambition 2: Improving Supply

Ambition 3: Improving Standards

Ambition 4: Improving health and wellbeing

Agenda Item 11

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

Section One: Introduction

Our Vision

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

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

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

About this strategy

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

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

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

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

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

Who is this strategy for?

Agenda Item 11

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

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

How this strategy was developed

The strategy was developed between October 2015 and September 2017.

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

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

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

Section Two: Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

The National Policy Context

Reform of social housing

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

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

Agenda Item 11

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

Greater focus on home ownership

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

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

Welfare Reform

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

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

Planning policy

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

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

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

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

Other policies

Other recent national policy issues relevant to this strategy include:

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

Other national strategies and guidance

Other national strategies and guidance relevant to this strategy include:

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

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

The Kent Regional Context

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

Table I: Kent-wide plans and policies

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

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

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

The Local Policy Context

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

Table2: the Local Policy Context

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

WEST KENT: POPULATION AND HOUSING MARKET PROFILE

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

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

¹ Median house price (June 2017)

² Lowest quartile (entry level) house price

³ As at 31.3.17

⁴ During 2016/17

⁵ During 2016/17

Section Three: Our Achievements

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

Tonbridge and Malling:

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

Tunbridge Wells:

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

West Kent:

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

Sevenoaks:

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

Section Four: Key Challenges

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

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

Housing Demand

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

- the population is predicted to grow by 16 -19% by 2033³ with the trend being for more, smaller households.
- the greatest need will be for 2-3 bedroom market properties, and 1-2 bedroom affordable homes. Restrictions on benefit entitlements may further increase demand for smaller affordable homes and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- there are currently over 2,700 households on the three Housing Registers
- the housing market is once again buoyant and both house prices and private sector rents are rising faster than inflation.

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

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

Case Study: Reducing numbers in emergency housing

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

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

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

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

Housing Supply

The need for affordable housing is currently estimated at 422 homes/year in Sevenoaks, 341 homes in Tunbridge Wells and 277 homes in Tonbridge and Malling⁴. Supply has not kept pace with need. Over the last five years the average number of affordable homes developed each year has been 49, 100 and 113 respectively, meaning that there is a growing gap between supply and demand.

Challenges to our ability to deliver more housing include:

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

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

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

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

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

Case Study: bringing back empty homes into use

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

Case Study: bringing back empty homes into use

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

As a result of effective partnership working with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS), and Circle Housing Russet (now Clarion), five long term empty KFRS properties were returned to use as much needed affordable housing units. The properties near Larkfield had historically been used as day crew accommodation for the Fire Service. However, changes in service requirements meant they were 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 income⁵. The problem is even more severe in rural areas, where the average house costs 17 times the average income.

⁵ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015, TMBC SHMA Report 2014

Agenda Item 11

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

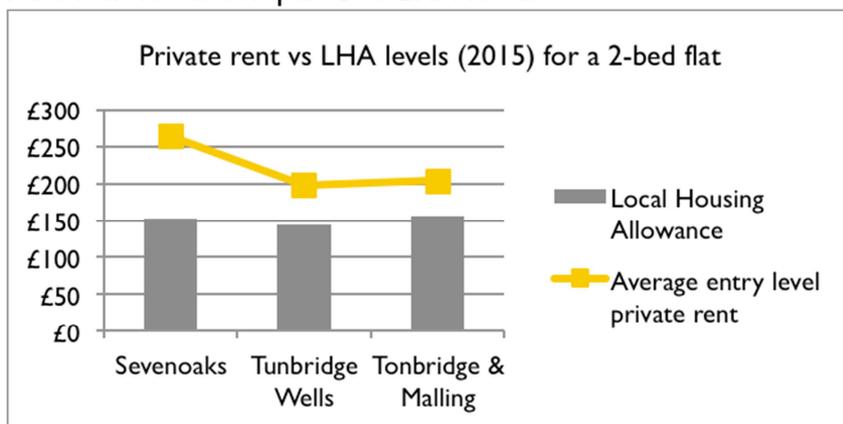
Starter Homes have been introduced by the Government to assist first time buyers under 40 to purchase a home. However, it has been estimated that in order to buy a home costing £250,000 (after the 20% discount has been applied) a household would have to earn £58,000/year plus put down a £47,000 deposit.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

The private rented sector

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

With LHA rates frozen, analysis⁷ has shown that, by 2020, private rents across four-fifths of the UK will be out of reach to households claiming welfare support for housing costs. In West Kent, entry-level private rents already exceed LHA levels (see Figure 1), putting the sector out of reach for households reliant on benefits: on one day in April 2016, Right Move (property website) had no 2-bedroom properties available in Tunbridge Wells district for private rent at rent levels below the LHA cap of £765/month.

Figure 1: private rent levels compared to LHA levels



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

Other barriers to private renting include: in Tunbridge Wells

⁶ figures based on Shelter, October 2015

⁷ Shelter, July 2015

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

Case study: the costs of securing a private rented home

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

Referencing fees : approximately £300

Deposit: 6 weeks' rent - £1100

Rent in advance : 1 month: £795

Total: £2095

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

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

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

Affordable housing

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

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

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

Agenda Item 11

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.

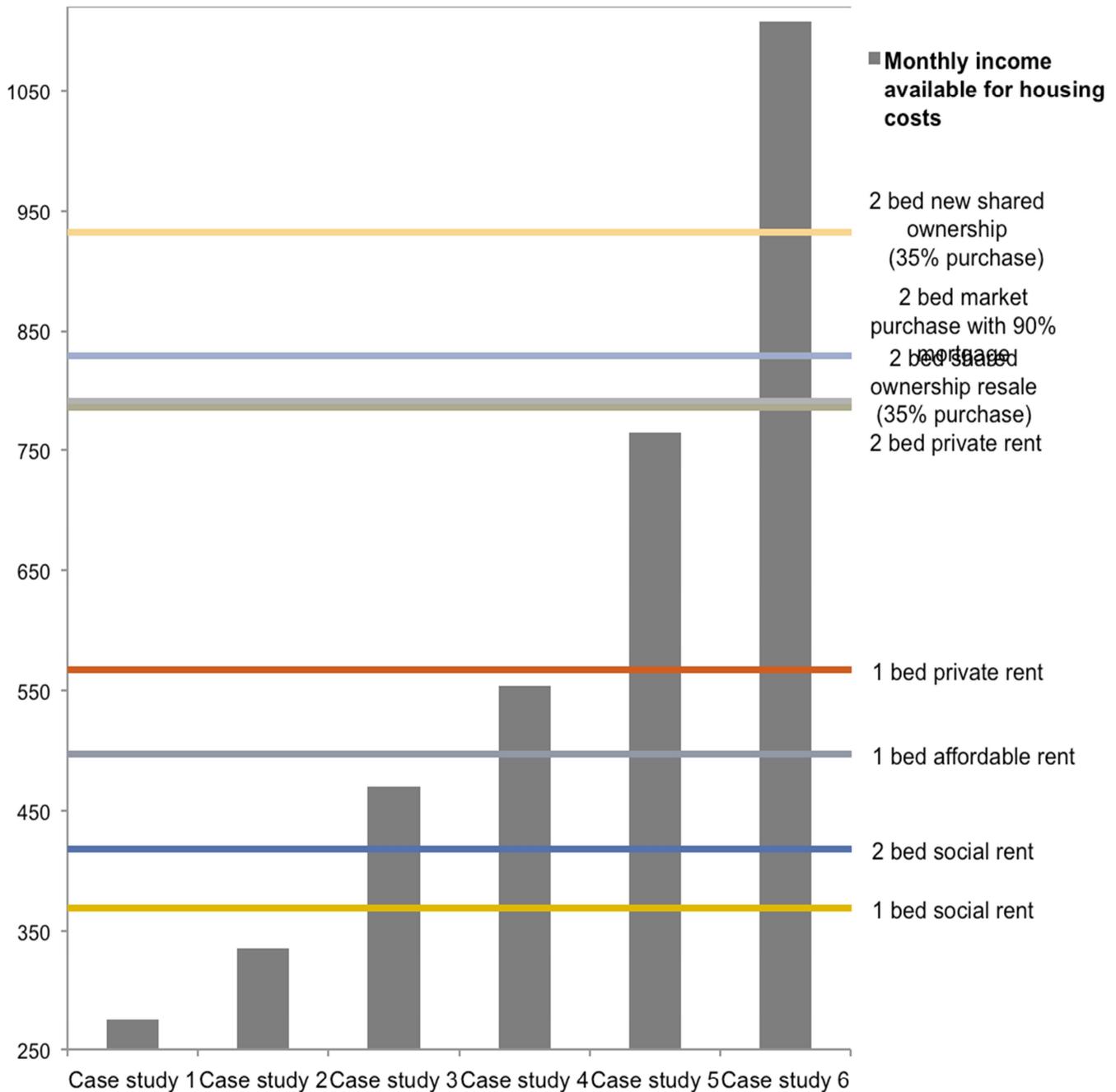
Figure 2: Accessing affordable housing in West Kent

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

£ / month



Case study 1

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

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

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

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

Homelessness

Advice and support

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

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

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

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

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

Preventing homelessness

Where possible, the councils work with individuals and households to prevent homelessness. In 2016/17 they achieved this for over 500 households. With the cost to the public pursue of providing temporary accommodation and subsequent re-housing amounting to at least £5,300 per case per year, prevention is clearly cost effective⁸. Homeless prevention tools included providing support to sustain existing tenancies, providing employment advice and assistance and working with migrant communities at risk of sleeping rough.

Flying Start - Helping to bring families back together

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

⁸ Heriot Watt University 2007: Demonstrating the cost effectiveness of homelessness

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

Case Study: using rent deposits to prevent homelessness

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

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

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

Homeless acceptances

After a prolonged period of declining homelessness⁹, the number of households presenting themselves as homeless and the numbers accepted as homeless have doubled over the last three years across the three authorities. There were 299 homelessness applications made in 2016/17 and 156 households were accepted as homeless.

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

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

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

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

The Housing Register

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meeting the housing needs of specific groups

Housing for young people

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

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

Agenda Item 11

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

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

Older people

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

Further specialist accommodation will be required to meet the needs of this growing community, with an estimated 250 places for older people needed across West Kent each year plus a further 26-40 residential care places¹⁰.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells SHMA 2015, TMBC SHMA Report 2014

Case study: Disabled Facilities Grant

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

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

Case study: providing Housing Assistance

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

Housing standards

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

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

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

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

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

Partnerships

Registered providers

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

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

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

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

Health & wellbeing

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

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

Case Study – Reducing delayed hospital discharge

This closer joint working has already started across West Kent.

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

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

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

In summary

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

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

Faced with diminishing resources, we will need to:

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

Section Five: Our Ambitions

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

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

Ambition 2 Improving housing supply

Ambition 3 Improving the standard of housing

Ambition 4 Improving the health and wellbeing of our residents

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

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

Agenda Item 11

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

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

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

Ambition 3 – Improving the standard of housing

To deliver this objective, we will:

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

Ambition 4 – Improving health and wellbeing

To deliver this objective, we will:

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

Agenda Item 11

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

Section Six: Delivering the Plan

Monitoring progress

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

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

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

Appendices

Appendix One - Project Team and Stakeholder Involvement

1. Homelessness Strategy Project Team

Sevenoaks District Council

Lesley Bowles – Chief Officer Communities and Business
Hayley Brooks – Head of Housing and Health
Andrew Kefford – Housing Advice Team Leader
Gavin Missons – Housing Policy Manager

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Linda Hibbs – Private Sector Housing Manager
Satnam Kaur – Chief Housing Officer
Chris Knowles – Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager
Jane Smither – Housing Options Team Manager
Lynn Wilders – Housing Needs Manager

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Janice Greenwood – Private Sector Housing Manager
Jane Lang – Housing Services Manager
Sarah Lewis – Housing Register and Development Manager

2. Organisations attending stakeholder events and other housing partners

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)
Bridge Trust
Change Grow Live Recovery Service (CGL)
Chapter One
Clarion Housing Group
Citizens Advice (CAB)
Golding Homes
Hyde Housing
Homegroup
KCC - Troubled Families Education and Young Persons Services - Preventative Services
KCC Children's Commissioning
KCC Commissioning Team
Kent County Council (Children and Families)
Kenward Trust
Lookahead
Moat Homes
National Landlords Association
NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Orbit
Porchlight
Probation Service
Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI)
South West Kent Community Mental Health Team
SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association)

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

Appendix Two - Evidence Base

See separate attachment

Appendix Three - Glossary of terms

Affordable housing

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

Affordable Rent

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

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

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

Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)

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

Brownfield Sites

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

Buy To Let

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

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

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

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

Entry Level

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

Fuel poverty

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

Green Belt

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

Help To Buy

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

Homelessness acceptances

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

Homelessness duties

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

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

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

House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

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

Housing Allocations Scheme

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

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

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

Housing Need

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

Housing Register

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

Intermediate housing

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

Local Connection

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

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

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

Local Plan

Agenda Item 11

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

New Homes Bonus

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

Overcrowding

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

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

Housing Association

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

Right to Buy (RTB)

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

Rural Exception Housing

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

Section 106 agreements

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

Shared Ownership

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

Social housing

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

Social rented housing

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

Starter Homes

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

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

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

Supporting People

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

Temporary accommodation

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

Universal Credit

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

Unsuitable housing

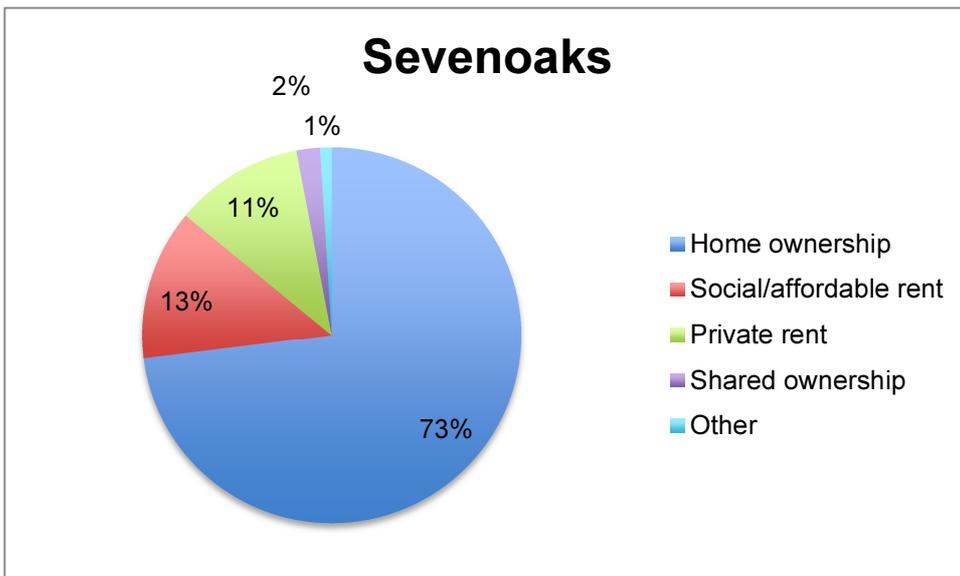
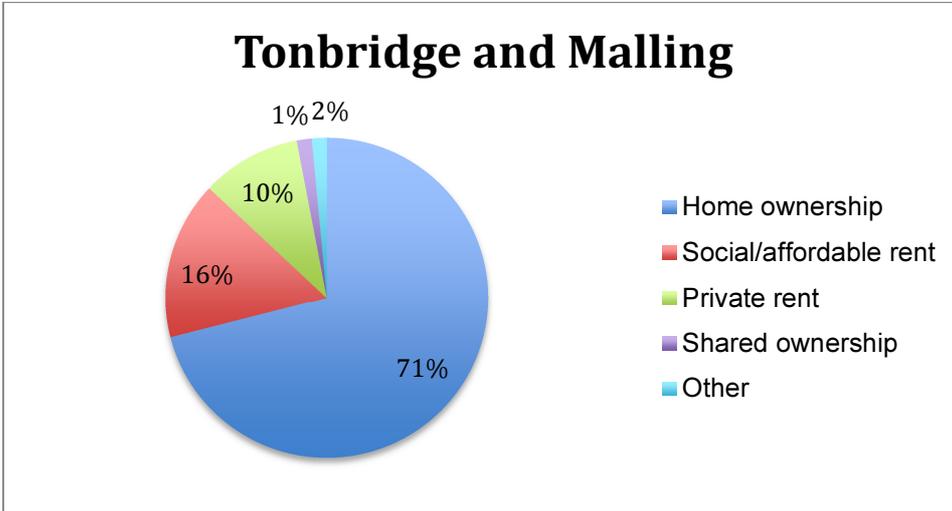
Housing which is in some way unsuitable for the needs of a household, whether because of its size, type, design, location, condition or cost.

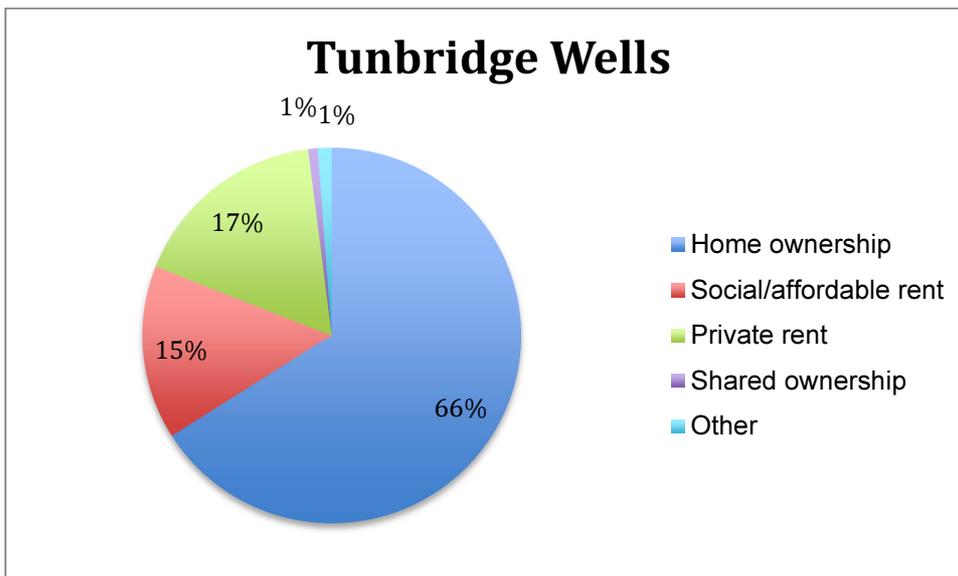
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West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy - Evidence Base
 (Strategy - Appendix 2)

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

1. Tenure of housing stock within each Local Authority





Source: 2011 Census

2. Social Housing Stock

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

Source: Local Authority data

3. Population

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

*Figures for 2011-2031

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

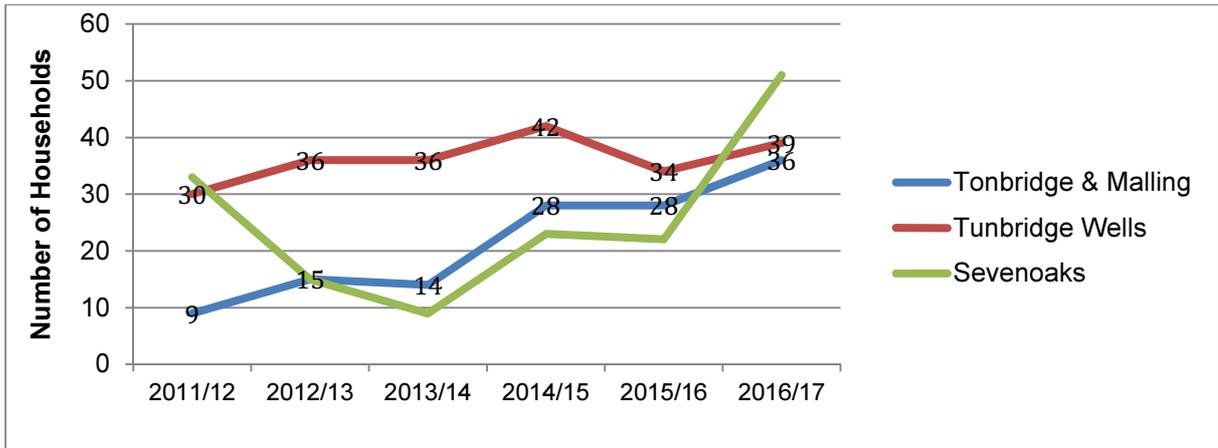
SHMA Update – Implications of 2012-Based Household Projections: Ashford, Maidstone, and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils, Final Report (June 2015)

4. Black and minority ethnic (BME) population

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

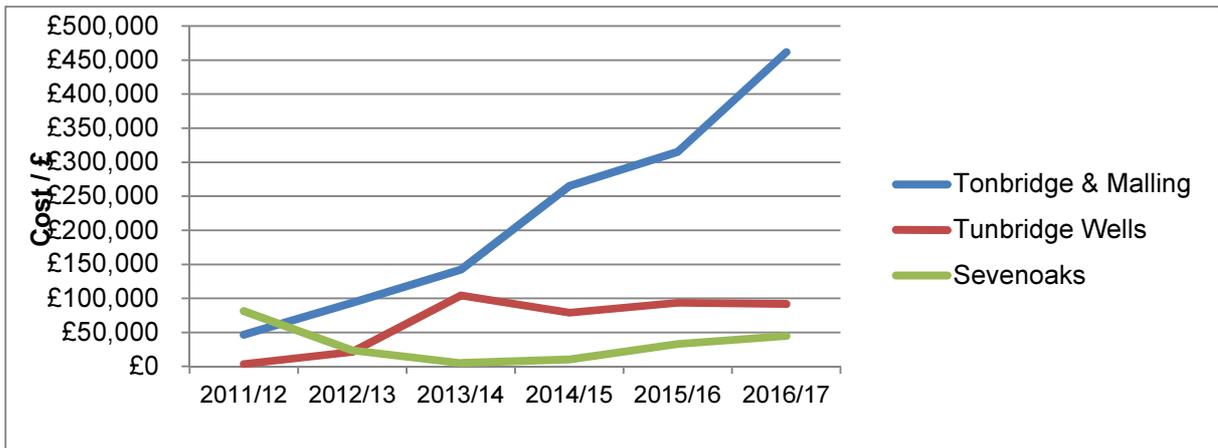
Source: ONS (2011 Census)

5. Use of temporary accommodation



Source: Local Authority data

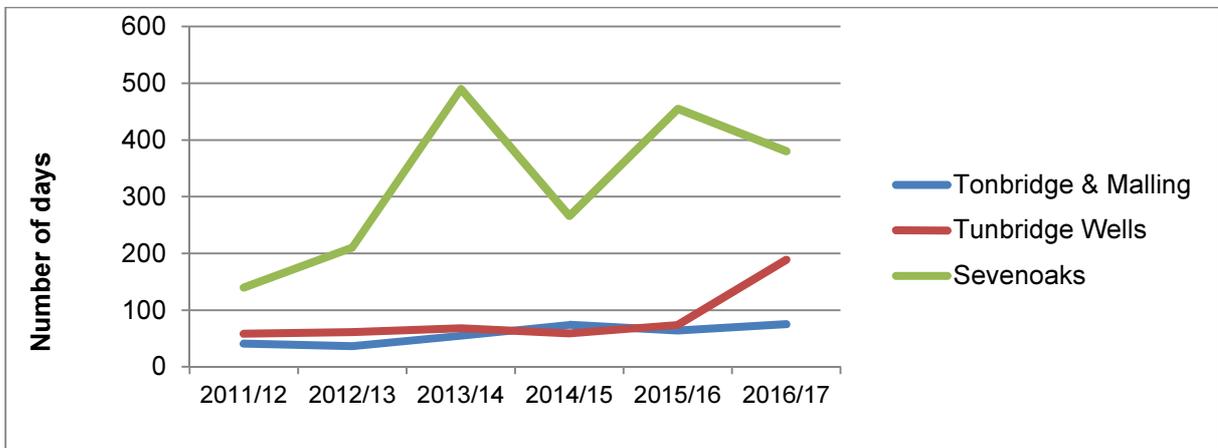
6. Cost of temporary accommodation



Source: Local Authority data

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

7. Average length of stay in temporary accommodation



Source: Local Authority data

8. Housing supply

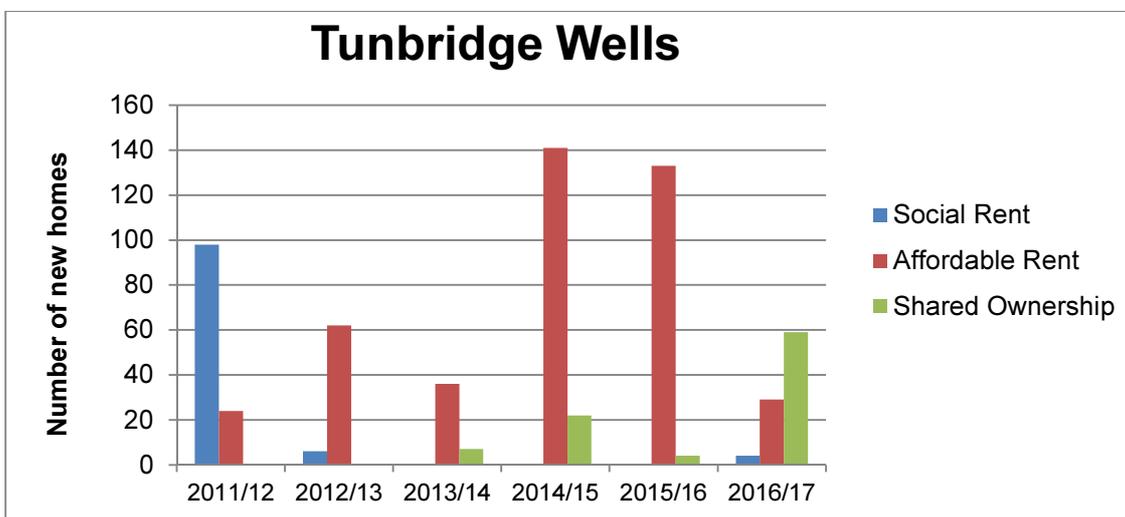
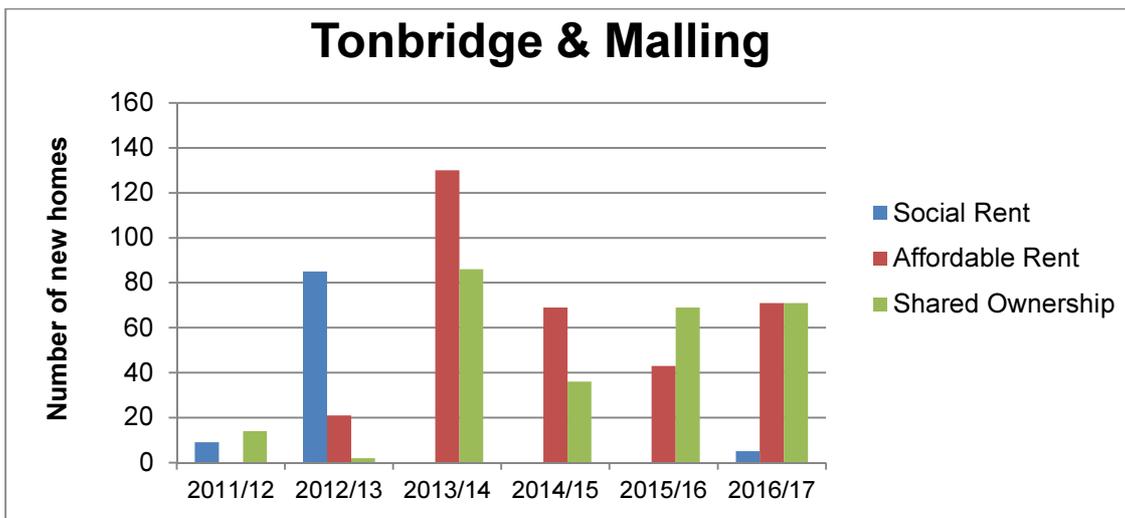
8.1 Estimate of affordable housing need

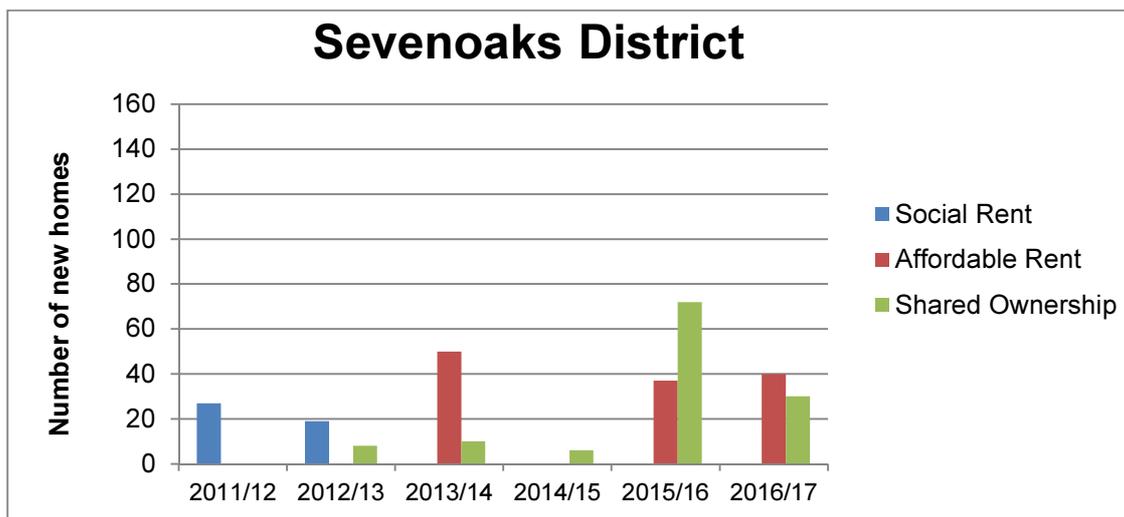
	Number of homes / year
Sevenoaks	422
Tunbridge Wells	341
Tonbridge and Malling	277

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

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

8.2 New affordable homes developed





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

9. Under occupation and empty homes

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

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

10. Income and Unemployment

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

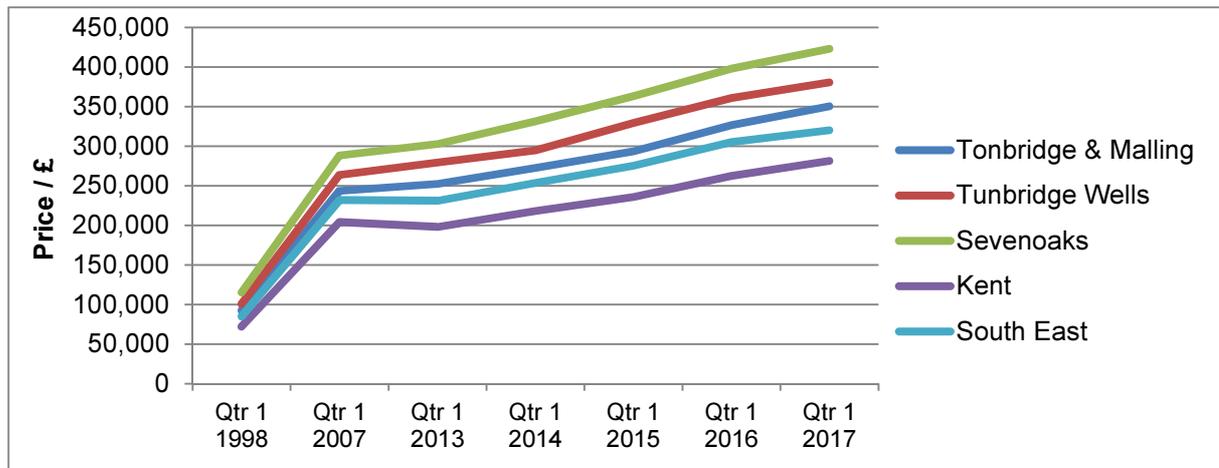
*Average for age 16-64 (2012)
 Source: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Councils Final Report (September 2015)
 Tonbridge & Malling Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (March 2014)
 SHMA Update – Implications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

11. House prices

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

*Figure for period: 2011-13

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

15. Growth of private rented sector

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

*West Kent Homelessness Strategy 2011-16

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

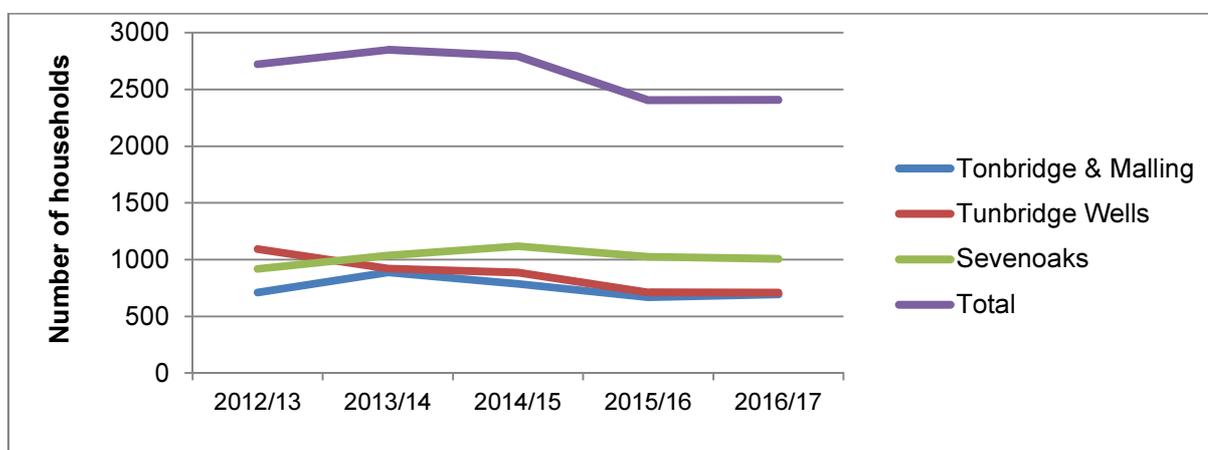
Annual household income	Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells	Tonbridge and Malling
Below £20,000	24%	22%
£20-40,000	33%	32%

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

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

17. Homelessness: Advice and support

17.1 Number of people approaching Council for housing advice and assistance



Source: Local Authority data

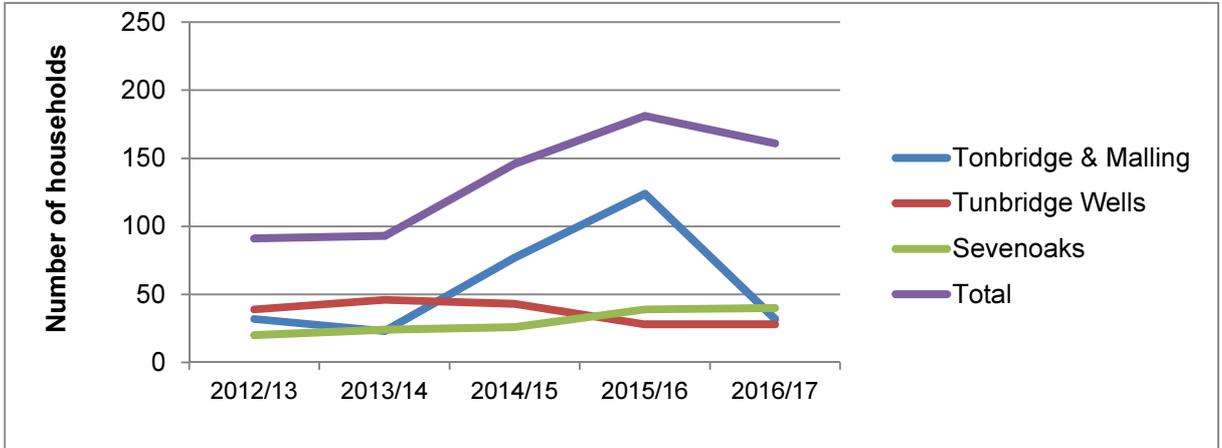
17.2 Number of cases where homelessness was prevented

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

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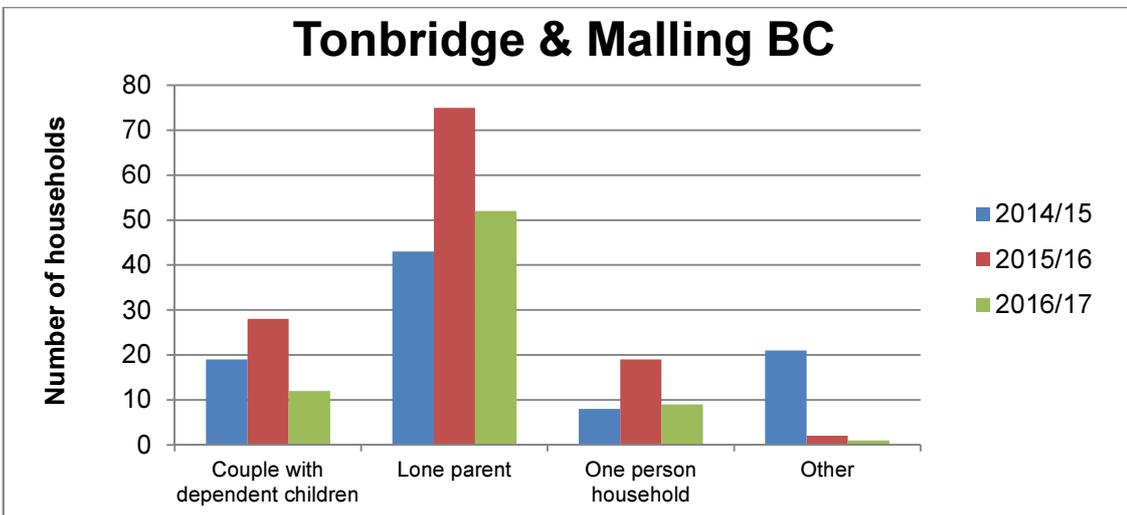
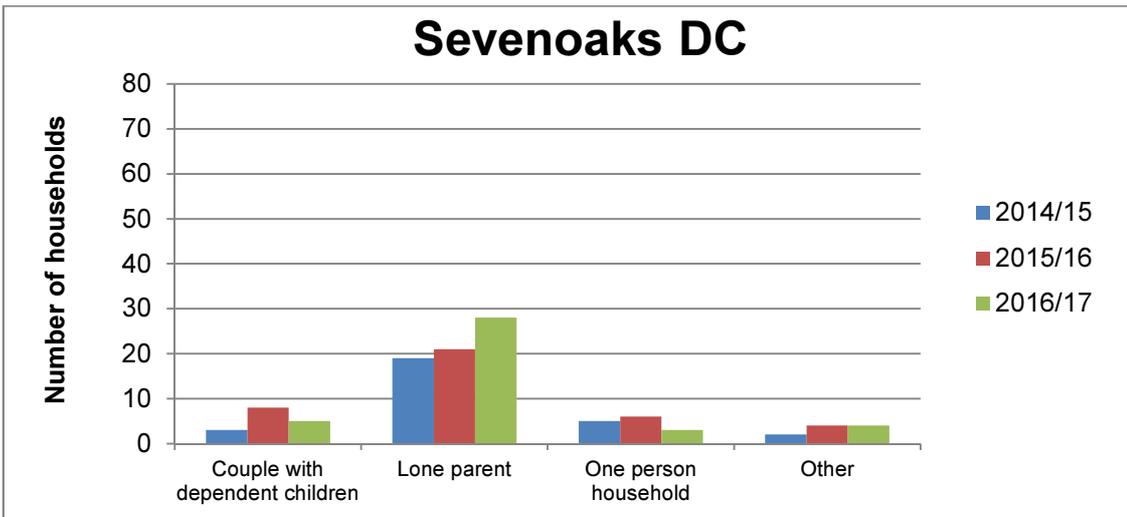
Source: Local Authority data

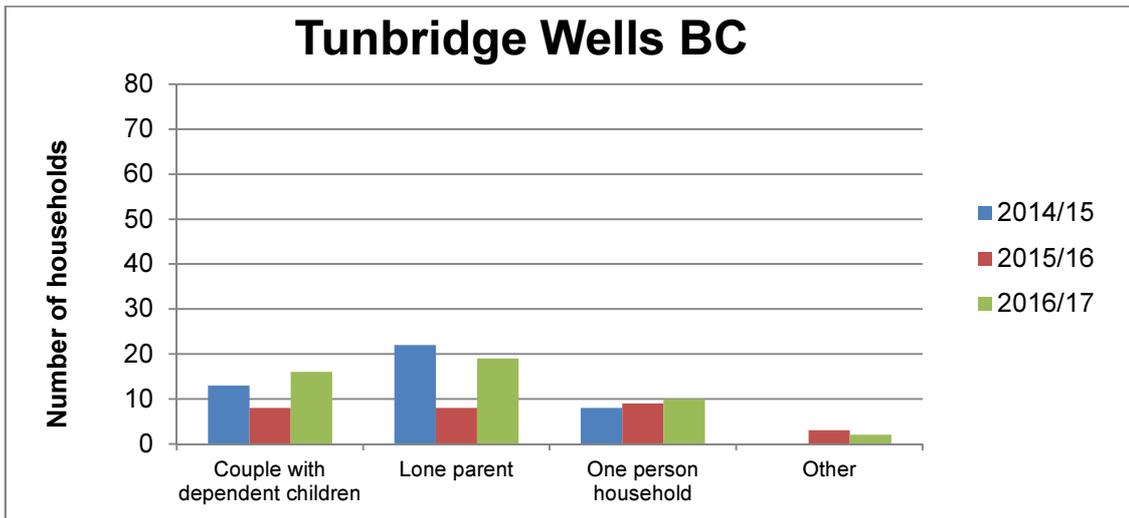
17.3 Households accepted as homeless



Source: Local Authority data

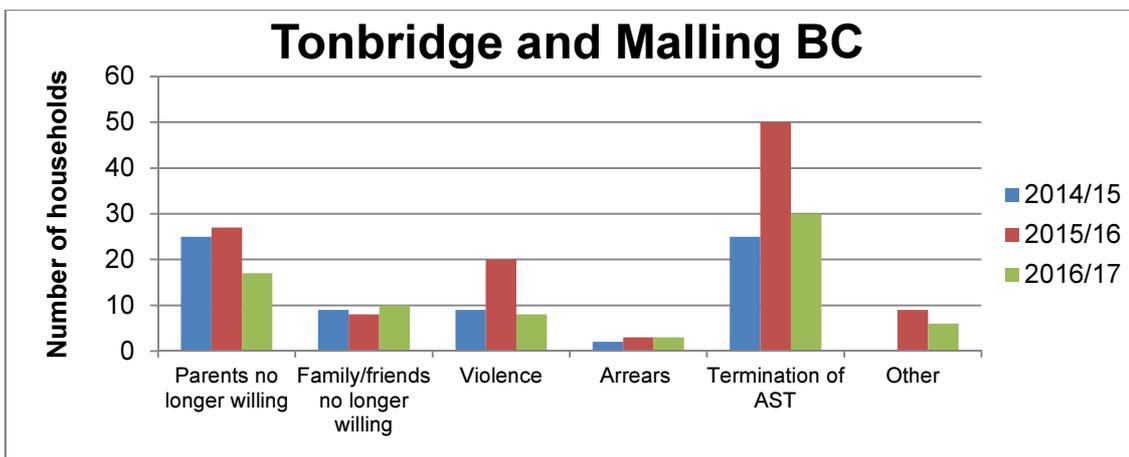
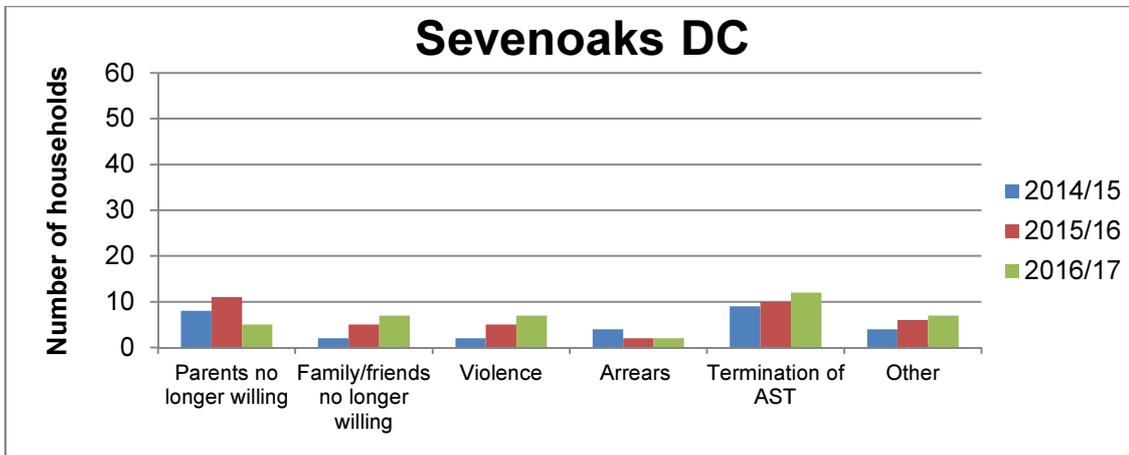
17.4 Types of household accepted as homeless

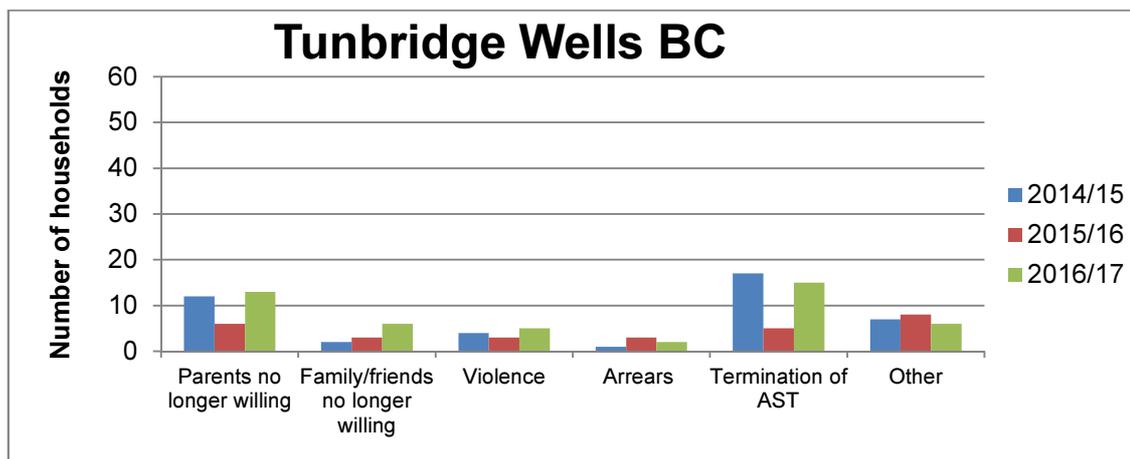




Source: Local Authority data

17.5 Reasons for homelessness





Source: Local Authority data

18 Rough Sleepers

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

Source: Local Authority data

19 Housing Register

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

Source: Local Authority data

20 Disabled Facilities Grant

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

Source: Local Authority data

21 Excess winter deaths

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

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

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

Sevenoaks	19
Tonbridge and Malling	19
Tunbridge Wells	80

Source: Local Authority data

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

Sevenoaks	8.7%
Tonbridge & Malling	7.5%
Tunbridge Wells	9.8%

Source: Local Authority data

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

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

Further Information:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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

EqlA – for DECISIONS

Appendix D

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:	No impact	Adjust the policy	Continue the policy
Date assessment will be reviewed:	11/05/2018		

Page 152

Agenda Item 11

Housing and Health Advisory Committee Work Plan 2017/18 (as at 11.09.17)

10 October 2017	28 November 2017	27 February 2018	Summer 2018
<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>West Kent Homelessness Strategy</p>	<p>Health Liaison Board update</p> <p>Update on emergency housing</p> <p>Update on implementation of the Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocations Scheme Policy</p>	<p>Health Liaison Board update</p> <p>Housing Allocation Policy</p>	<p>Health Liaison Board update</p>

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