
Housing Strategy 2022 - 2027

June 2022

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1 Housing Strategy 2022-2027

1. Introduction and vision

This Strategy sets out the Borough's plans for housing services for 2022-2027. The vision for the Strategy is for Tonbridge and Malling residents to have access to good quality and affordable homes that meet their needs, whether renting or buying. There are four priorities which are fundamental to providing good quality affordable housing.

To achieve this vision the Strategy has four priorities:

1. Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability
2. Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness
3. Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed
4. Working in partnership.

The Housing Strategy sits under the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council [Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2023](#) and works alongside other strategic plans such as the [Economic Recovery Strategy 2021 – 2023](#) and [Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2030](#). This Strategy encompasses an updated Tenancy Strategy.

The provision of quality, affordable homes contribute to delivering the ambitions of other adopted Borough strategies and priorities of the Corporate Plan.

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with stakeholders including residents and local partner organisations [reference to Appendix with consultation statement].

It's likely there will continue to be significant changes to the national policy, the housing market, local communities and the local government sector over the lifetime of the Housing Strategy, and it needs to be flexible to respond to changes. To enable this flexibility and responsiveness the action plans to deliver the Housing Strategy will be made annually. The action plan 2022 – 23 outlines delivery for year one.

Partnership working is vital to delivering the ambitions of this Strategy and the success of the annual action plans will be the result of joint efforts across statutory, voluntary and community agencies. Effective partnership working is key across all housing services and it is important we build on the success of existing partnerships as well as seeking to develop new ones.

2. Local context

Local policy context

Our [Corporate Strategy](#) includes the importance of embracing effective partnership working and funding, achieving efficiency and, valuing the environment and sustainable growth. Key outcomes of the corporate strategy include supporting those in need of housing support and delivering a new Local Plan to meet growth targets for new development to 2039.

The [Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030](#) sets out the Council's commitment to local action on climate change, biodiversity protection and enhancement and our approach to partnership working, driven forward through an annual climate change action plan. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of sustainable development through the planning process and national Building Regulations and forthcoming Future Homes Standard. The Strategy includes measures to reduce carbon emissions from residential homes, including

retrofitting insulation measures and efficient heating, and supporting the decarbonisation of energy supply through low carbon electricity.

The Council's focus is to improve existing housing condition ensuring homes are safe and warm by encouraging and supporting the installation of energy conservation and efficiency measures. Our housing improvement team adopt a whole house approach considering energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy options. By improving the energy efficiency of homes residents benefit from reduced energy consumption, with lower bills, and improved thermal comfort and well-being.

Tonbridge and Malling housing development policy and requirements

Tonbridge and Malling has a new homes delivery target of 839 homes per year set by the Standard Methodology, with an affordable housing policy CP17 in the [Core Strategy](#) setting out a policy requirement of 40% affordable housing for sites of 15 dwellings or above, or 0.5ha or above). Within affordable housing provision CP17 requires a 70/30 split of affordable homes for rent (which could be either social rents or affordable rents) and 30% intermediate tenures, such as shared ownership, in line with the definition of affordable housing in the NPPF.

Alongside this national and local policy context the Strategy is also informed by data and information about our local housing market, including the BRE Housing Stock Modelling 2020, Housing Register data, housing advice and private sector databases.

Additional evidence of housing need is shown through the 1279 households currently accepted onto our Housing Register for social housing, with average waiting times of between 15 months and 3 years for various property sizes (Source: Housing Register data for 2020-21, Locata) and the increasing number of people seeking housing advice. The continued high numbers on the Housing Register and increasing Housing advice and homeless prevention cases shows the pressing need for affordable housing in the Borough, reflective of the national situation with demand outstripping supply.

Key housing achievements



Local Housing context

Tonbridge and Malling Borough is in West Kent, covering an area of around 93 square miles from the North Downs at Burham and Snodland in the north to the town of Tonbridge in the south. The remainder of the borough is dotted with villages and smaller towns. Three motorways pass through the north of the Borough and there are good rail connections to London and the South East. Local employment and rail links to London combined with attractive countryside make West Kent a highly desirable place to live which influences the housing market.

Tonbridge and Malling has an estimated population of 132,571 (2020) (Source: ONS mid-2020 population estimates). The Borough is largely rural with Tonbridge in the south being the main town and home to around 40,000 residents.

The Borough has an estimated total of 55,184 dwellings, with 71% owner occupied, 13% private rented and 16% social housing (2019 ONS estimates).

The majority of homes in the borough are warm and safe but a significant minority, 8%, have serious hazards including risk of falls and being cold and 2% of homes suffer from more general disrepair (Source: BRE Client Report, BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council 2020).

There are 29 Registered Providers (RP) with social stock in the area, providing 9,505 homes of a variety of tenures: 7,697 general needs, 1,070 low cost homes ownership (such as shared ownership), 604 older peoples housing and 134 supported housing (source: Regulator of Social Housing Statistical Data Return (SDR) 2020). The largest stock holding RP is Clarion Housing Association with 7,010 homes (74% of the total social housing stock).

There is a supported living scheme for residents with Learning disabilities in East Malling with Housing21 and two supported accommodation schemes provided by Look Ahead in Tonbridge (commissioned by Kent County Council (KCC)), New Wharf provides supported housing for young people and care leavers and another scheme in the Tonbridge area provides accommodation for those with complex needs. The West Kent YMCA have two properties in Tonbridge providing supported accommodation in share housing for single homeless adults with low to medium support needs. The Royal British Legion has homes in Aylesford and provides a range of support, employment and housing services.

There are three extra care schemes across the Borough in Tonbridge, Larkfield and Watlington provided by Rapport Housing and offering homes for rent and ownership (market sale and older persons shared ownership).

We want to ensure the assessed need for market and affordable homes is delivered while encouraging housing provision that contributes to the sustainability of communities and environmental sustainability.

Housing Strategy Priorities

3. Priority 1: Making best use of existing homes, improving housing quality and sustainability

Why this priority is important

- The quality and efficient use of existing homes is key to providing decent homes for residents in the borough.

- It's important existing social housing is used efficiently, with 1279 households currently on the housing register (Housing Register data September 2021).
- Improving the energy efficiency of existing homes will help reduce fuel bills and energy use
- Over 800 properties were registered as empty as at September 2021, and 383 have been empty for more than six months (TMBC Council Tax data records).
- 43% of the private sector stock in the borough could benefit from energy efficiency improvements with 21% having un-insulated cavity walls, 15% having less than 100mm loft insulation and 7% having no loft insulation (BRE Client Report 2020).
- An estimated 5.8% of private rented properties (508 homes) have an EPC below band E and so do not meet the minimum energy efficiency standard to be rented out (BRE Client Report 2020).
- An estimated 4424 (8%) of all homes have a serious health hazard in line with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) (BRE Client Report 2020).
- New licensing requirements means there are an estimated 171 licensable HMOs.
- Adaptations can enable people to continue to live independently in their own home.

Our objectives are to:

- Ensure efficient use of existing housing stock
- Improve property conditions to provide safe, healthy homes
- Improve energy efficiency of housing stock to alleviate fuel poverty and help address climate change
- Support residents to have a suitable home that meets their needs and where they can live independently.

What we will do to meet our objectives:

Ensure efficient use of existing housing stock:

- Continue our work to bring empty properties back into use: focussing our limited resources on problematic long term empty homes and liaising with Registered Providers about their empty homes
- Review our Housing Allocations Policy to ensure households in greatest need receive sufficient priority and to facilitate transfers (e.g. households who wish to downsize)
- Consider occupation levels of existing homes and options to address under-occupation, with particular focus on larger family homes with Registered Providers
- Outline our views on tenancy types and use of existing social housing stock for Registered Providers through our updated Tenancy Strategy – Appendix A
- Use Local Lettings Plans for affordable housing on new developments to reflect local needs and priorities
- Develop and implement a framework of engagement with Registered Provider partners to deliver and monitor use of existing social housing stock and the communities living in these homes
- Consider options to monitor and influence the sale of intermediate tenure homes in partnership with the Government's appointed Help to Buy zone agent and Registered Providers.

Improve property conditions to provide safe, healthy homes:

- Improve conditions in the private rented sector by implementing HMO licensing requirements, enforcement measures and assistance through grants and loan work as outlined in our housing assistance policy
- Take enforcement action where necessary.

Improve energy efficiency of housing stock to alleviate fuel poverty and help address climate change:

- Work in partnership to support the delivery of objectives in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent and take actions to increase energy efficiency and assist those in fuel poverty
- Continue to seek funding opportunities to enable energy efficiency improvements to properties of different tenures, working with Registered Providers and landlords and residents
- Assist at least ten households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes towards meeting our Climate Change Strategy commitments

- Encourage the use of energy efficiency measures in new build homes, including a fabric first approach and the passivhaus standard
- Explore options to improve the energy efficiency of Council owned temporary accommodation.

Support residents to have a suitable home where they can live independently:

- Continue to support and meet the demand for adaptations using mandatory DFGs to help older and disabled people to live independently and remain in their homes
- Continue to fund the Health & Housing Coordinators within hospital settings to facilitate discharge to a safe and suitable home
- Actively engage and contribute to partnerships with Health and Care services, including through the West Kent Health and Care Partnership
- Work with Kent County Council and use insight from the housing needs research to understand any gaps in existing provision in services and housing development and explore options to address identified needs (this links to Priority 3)
- Encourage and influence housebuilders and Registered Providers to account for accessibility in new build homes and consider accessibility when developing planning policies.

4. Priority 2: Improving housing options and opportunities to prevent homelessness

Why this priority is important

- This Strategy sets out how we will continue to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, addressing the long-term housing challenges households face in securing a home.
- We are required to have a homelessness strategy & rough sleeping strategy: the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their district and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results every five years. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 delivery plan requires a rough sleeping element to be included in local authority homelessness strategies, with annual action plans.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 strengthened the duty for local authorities to prevent homelessness.
- Our focus is on prevention and early intervention providing advice and access to a range of housing solutions as well as emergency assistance and accommodation.
- Housing costs and house prices are high, meaning many local households face affordability issues: median house prices are 11.3 times the median earnings (ONS 2020).
- Affordable private rented accommodation is in short supply in the borough. The 'LHA gap' which is shortfall between market rents and Local Housing Allowance adds to affordability issues for some households, ranging from 10% to 50% (source: analysis of 2020 Local Housing Allowance rates and average market rents ONS private rental market data 2019-2020).
- Demand for affordable housing outstrips supply – with approximately 16% of housing stock being social housing, low turnover combined with the number of households waiting for social housing shows unmet need. Within social housing provision new build delivery has focussed on social homes at Affordable Rents over recent years rather than social rents.
- Partnership working and the importance of the links between housing and wellbeing have been highlighted further through the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and implementing the 'Everyone In' initiative.
- The Housing Solutions Team are dealing with an increase in cases from a wide range of customers, all in need of housing advice: 1267 cases were opened during 2020-21, 23% increase from 1029 in the previous year (source: internal housing advice data records, Locata).
- The three most frequent reasons households become homeless or are threatened with homelessness in 2020-21 were a private rented tenancy being ended (22.7% of prevention duties owed) and family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (33% of prevention duties owed) and non-violent

relationship breakdown with partner (10.3% of prevention duties owed) (source: MHCLG Live tables on homelessness online at www.gov.uk).

- Rough sleeping – although we have low numbers of rough sleepers it is vital to continue with proactive prevention and support measures. There were an estimated 6 rough sleepers in the borough at the annual estimate in November 2020, with outreach work bringing this down further since the estimate.
- Ongoing impact of welfare reform and benefit claim levels – the number of new claims for Universal Credit increased during 2020 – 2021 linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in income and employment status are likely to effect local households and may impact on their wellbeing and ability to meet housing costs.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has increased from an average of 29 placements in 2017/18 to 119 for 2020/21 and 150 so far for 2021/22, leading to a significant increase in costs.
- Over half of homeless acceptances were deemed to be in priority need because the household included dependent children (64.8%) in 2020-21 and priority need because of vulnerability due to physical disability or ill health was the second most common reason at 14.1%. The number of acceptances with priority need due to vulnerability due to mental health has increased, from 5.2% in 2018-19 to 12.7% in 2020-21 (source: MHCLG Live tables on homelessness online at www.gov.uk, priority need of households owed a main duty).

Our objectives are to:

- Provide housing options advice focussing on homeless prevention through a personalised approach
- Work with voluntary and statutory partners to help rough sleepers off the streets and into settled accommodation and prevent people from rough sleeping
- Ensure vulnerable groups and those with complex needs have access to support to maintain their tenancy
- Improve links with landlords in the private rented sector to work together to prevent homelessness and increase housing options.
- Minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation to manage temporary accommodation costs and seek alternative provision including property purchase or development.

What we will do to meet our objectives

Provide housing options advice focussing on homeless prevention and intervention through a personalised approach:

- Develop a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan with relevant partner agencies
- Ensure personalised housing plans improve the resilience of customers and identify any support needed, to become more independent and resilient
- Improve the range of housing options and prevention interventions, including mediation services and accessing the private rented sector where possible
- Maximise use of funding options available to help households access the private rented sector
- Ensure agencies who have the duty to refer are aware of this and know how to refer those at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping
- Develop partnerships to enable new initiatives and longer-term housing solutions over the life of this strategy
- Engage with customers to learn from their experience and use feedback on services to shape provision.

Work with voluntary and statutory partners to help rough sleepers off the streets and into settled accommodation:

- Continue our strong partnership working approach to tackling rough sleeping in the Borough, through responsive outreach services and future initiatives
- Continue to seek funding available for homeless related services, including the current Next steps accommodation programme, Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding and any future initiatives of funding

streams to enable homeless prevention initiatives and support provision

- Continue our Housing First project as a housing led approach to tackling homelessness.

Ensure vulnerable groups and those with complex needs have access to support to maintain their tenancy:

- Work with partner agencies to address the support, education, training and employment needs of vulnerable people and continue collaborative working to secure resources and identify funding opportunities for new initiatives and projects
- Ensure vulnerable groups have access to support through tenancy sustainment services
- Continue our commitment to the UK resettlement schemes along with appropriate support provision in partnership with Kent County Council
- Keep protocols under review to enable efficient, safe and effective working, including 16-17 year old protocol, and those relating to complex needs, including mental health problems.

Improve links with landlords in the private rented sector and encourage them to work with us to prevent homelessness and increase housing options through developing our landlord offer:

- Continue to facilitate the West Kent Landlord Forum in partnership with neighbouring authorities and the NRLA, and develop local engagement options such as networking gatherings or workshops, to keep landlords informed of legislative changes and requirements, discuss particular topics and share our landlord offer
- Continue to review and develop our private landlord offer, including 'golden hello' incentive payments and rent guarantee and promote it through the Landlord Forum
- Engage with private landlords through the West Kent Landlord Forum partnership and seek to overcome any issues for existing tenancies and/or making them reluctant to let homes to households facing homelessness. We will work to improve perceptions of those in receipt of welfare benefits and promote awareness of duties under the Equalities Act 2010, including indirect discrimination if landlords refuse to let a home to those in receipt of welfare benefits.
- Investigate options to improve access to the private rented sector, including a social lettings agency or leasing scheme.

Minimise the use of nightly paid accommodation to manage temporary accommodation costs and seek alternative provision including property purchase or development:

- Explore alternatives to nightly paid temporary accommodation and ways to help households secure suitable alternative accommodation, for example purchasing property or developing provision, and leasing schemes
- Use Council and Registered Provider options for temporary accommodation where possible
- Improve the housing options for households at risk of homelessness and assist households to resolve their housing need before the crisis point of homelessness.

5. Priority 3: Delivering the homes our residents need in the places they are needed

Why this is important

- We need to respond to a wide range of housing needs from smaller homes for young people and people looking to downsize, to larger family homes
- 839 new homes are needed in Tonbridge and Malling per year, including 40% affordable homes
- Home ownership is out of reach for many average and low income households with median house prices 11.3 times the median earnings (ONS affordability ratio data 2020)
- Social rent is the only genuinely affordable housing option for many households and there is a lack of new

supply of homes for social rent

- Although housing delivery has met new build targets in recent years the affordable housing delivered as part of this isn't sufficient to meet affordable housing need alone; demand continues to outstrip supply with 1279 households currently on our Housing Register. The market on its own does not deliver the amount and range of affordable housing needed.
- It is important to understand the housing need of communities and areas in the Borough, including rural areas.

Our objectives are to:

- Understand local housing need with up to date information on affordable and specialist housing need for a range of housing (including type, tenure and location) to inform decision making and housing priorities.
- Provide housing choice by encouraging housing of different types, size and tenure in suitable locations, at a range of prices to be within reach of different household financial capacities.
- Ensure a range of specialist and/or accessible housing to meet identified needs of vulnerable groups.
- Work in partnership with Registered Providers, private developers and Homes England to gain greater influence and control over affordable housing delivery and make best use of financial resources and assets.
- Consider options for the Council to influence and take a pro-active role in housing delivery, including through a Local Housing Company.

What we plan to do to meet our objectives

Understand local housing need, with up to date information on affordable and specialist housing need for a range of housing (including type, tenure and location) to inform decision making and housing priorities:

- Improve our understanding of housing needs through carrying out local housing needs research
- Improve our understanding of specific housing needs by capturing and analysing our own internal data and intelligence and information held by our partners
- Work with health partners and Kent County Council to understand and respond to current and future housing needs of older people and other vulnerable groups that require specialist housing.

Provide housing choice by encouraging housing of different types, size and tenure in suitable locations, at a range of prices to be within reach of different household financial capacities:

- Use findings and information from the Housing needs research to establish priorities for housing provision across the Borough for affordable homes for rent and intermediate housing, for example shared ownership and intermediate rent
- Work with landowners and developers to deliver affordable homes on allocated sites reflective of housing need in line with the Affordable Housing Statement
- Explore the viability of delivering more social rent homes within new developments
- Explore options to provide affordable housing for keyworkers
- Encourage adaptable and accessible housing that can respond to the changing needs of residents, supported by housing needs information and planning policy
- Diversify the provision of affordable housing through partnership working and innovation, such as community-led schemes and self-build.

Ensure a range of specialist and/or accessible housing to meet identified needs of vulnerable groups:

- Use findings and information from the Housing needs research to understand any gaps in provision and emerging need for specialist or accessible housing
- Formulate actions to address any need and work in partnership with developers, Homes England and Registered Providers to deliver required homes
- Explore opportunities to deliver required provision and seek to enable delivery, including re-provision of existing social housing stock, whole site affordable housing developments and consideration of the use of S106 contributions.

Consider options and work in partnership with registered providers, private developers and Homes England to gain greater influence/control and be involved in affordable housing delivery, making best use of financial resources and assets:

- Explore the options for the Council to take a more pro-active and direct approach to affordable housing delivery, such as a Local Housing Company
- Take a more proactive approach to working with Private Registered Providers to encourage them to come forward with land-led developments and consider joint initiatives
- Develop options and priorities for the use of S106 contributions to facilitate affordable housing provision
- Work closely with Homes England and other partners to identify and bring forward sites for development.

Consider options for the Council to influence and take a pro-active role in housing delivery, including through a Local Housing Company:

- Research options for the Council to take a pro-active approach to housing delivery through measures such as establishing a Local Housing Company, joint ventures with private developers, Registered Providers or long lease models.

6. Priority 4: Working in partnership

Why this priority is important

- Limited resources and budget restrictions mean partnership working is vital to delivering the aims of this Strategy and delivering well rounded services to residents
- We need to harness the expertise and experience of partners to deliver excellent services
- Joining up services and cross sector working is important to successful delivery of housing services shown through the hospital discharge co-ordinator role and delivery of the rough sleeper action plan
- Housing has an important role in health and delivering/facilitating integrated services. Integrated services which take account of individual needs are key to improving health needs; people with mental and physical disabilities, complex needs, long-term conditions and terminal illness need access to different health care, social care, housing and other services such as education
- Membership and active engagement in Kent Housing Group enables collaborative working; sharing learning, best practice and shared projects to make best use of limited resources.

Our objectives are to:

- Work in partnership with local authorities and partner organisations through active membership and engagement in Kent Housing Group to share best practice, learning and resources.
- Engage with Registered Providers and private developers through regular strategic and management/liaison meetings to ensure efficient and effective delivery of services.
- Work with health colleagues and organisations to ensure preventative focussed work and improve health through links between services
- Maximise our joint working with local commissioned organisations and third sector partners to add value to our housing services.

What we plan to do to meet our objectives

Work in partnership with local authorities and partner organisations including active membership and engagement in Kent Housing Group to share best practice, learning and resources:

- Continue with our membership to Kent Housing Group and our active role in this partnership.
- Continue to work in partnership with other local authorities.

Engage with Registered Providers and private developers through regular strategic and management/liaison meetings to ensure efficient and effective delivery of services:

- Develop an approach to regular engagement with Registered providers and private developers to influence housing delivery in the borough
- Continue to meet with providers of social housing to monitor use and management homes after delivery, ensuring positive occupancy, customer service and neighbourhood management and foster positive working relationships with teams across partners, including Community Safety and Housing Benefits.

Work with health colleagues and organisations to ensure preventative focussed work and improve health through links between services:

- Continue to take an active role in cross sector initiatives and projects with Health Services
- Continue with partnership working with health and social care partners
- Work with health partners to ensure the Complex Care Nurse and the Mental Health services continue
- Work in partnership with Kent County Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Board to support delivery of the Better Care programme and priorities of the Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy developing preventative and integrated services to improve outcomes for residents by maximising people's independence and promoting personalisation.
- Continue to raise awareness of housing and the services we offer to ensure a joined-up approach to supporting residents especially vulnerable people.

Maximise our joint working with local commissioned organisations and third sector partners to add value to our housing services:

- Work with KCC commissioned services on wellbeing and older persons to ensure services link into the support available and share information
- Work with existing partners such as RBLI, Look Ahead, Porchlight and West Kent YMCA in relation to achieving aims and objectives outlined in the priorities of this Strategy. We will also work with new partners where there are opportunities to develop our work further.

2 Tenancy Strategy

1. Introduction

This Tenancy Strategy outlines Tonbridge and Malling's position on the types and use of tenancies for social housing in the Borough. Registered Providers must have regard to this Strategy when developing their policies and approach to the tenure and rents for stock in the Borough.

Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy setting out matters providers of social housing are to have regard in formulating policies relating to:

- The types of tenancy they will grant
- When a type of tenancy will be granted
- The length of fixed term tenancies
- The expectations about reviewing fixed term tenancies and the circumstances when another tenancy will be granted on the expiry of a fixed-term tenancy.

2. Aims

- Outline the Council's view on the types and use of tenancies for social housing, informing the approach of Registered Providers in the Borough.
- To ensure a consistent approach to the types of tenancies issued across all providers of social housing
- To ensure tenancies provide the right level of stability for households and support sustainable communities.

3. Tenancy types and length

Starter/introductory tenancies

Providers must be clear to prospective tenants about the type of tenancy they will be granted at the end of the Starter/Introductory period, their rights and responsibilities during the Starter/Introductory period, the process at the end of the period including reasons a tenancy may not be converted or issued.

Providers should use the starter/introductory period to identify any issues that affect tenancy sustainment and work with the tenant to resolve them.

Starter /Introductory tenancies may be extended if there are serious tenancy breaches during the starter period, for a maximum of 6 months. Providers need to ensure the tenant understands the reasons for an extension and agree a plan to resolve any issues, with a view to issuing a more secure tenancy at the end of the extension period to prevent homelessness.

Starter/Introductory tenancies should not be used for existing tenants, including tenants transferring from another social home or moving through a mutual exchange.

Lifetime tenancies: secure and periodic assured tenancies

The Council encourages all providers of social housing to use secure or assured tenancies to help build successful and sustainable communities through enabling residents to settle in their home and establish social networks.

Fixed term tenancies

The Council appreciates Registered Providers may choose to use fixed term tenancies. Where fixed term tenancies are used the primary objective should be to enable the best use of available housing in terms of under occupation and adaptations.

Fixed term tenancies should be for a minimum of five years, with longer fixed terms considered where a household's circumstances are unlikely to change over time, for example, households with young children or people with long term health conditions.

Shorter term tenancies, i.e. two years, should only be used in exceptional circumstances (for example when accommodation is linked to specific criteria or is planned for redevelopment) and should be discussed with the Council on a case by case basis.

All prospective tenants should be given clear information about the type of tenancy being offered, the reasons for this and how the tenancy will be reviewed, at the point of signing a tenancy agreement. Registered Providers need to include information explaining the review process for fixed term tenancies in their Tenancy Policy.

The Council expects fixed term tenancies to be re-issued at the end of the term unless there is a change of circumstances or serious tenancy breach as defined in the relevant Registered Provider's Tenancy Policy.

Tenancy reviews and any related possession action need to include engagement with other agencies to meet the household's needs where appropriate, for example, social services.

Support, information, and advice must be provided to tenants to help them understand their housing options at the end of the fixed term and enable them to move on to suitable housing. Registered Providers should consider extending a tenancy until alternative suitable accommodation can be found if necessary.

Decisions to end a fixed term tenancy should be proportionate and tenants must be provided with clear, accessible information about the internal appeal process.

Registered Providers must inform the Council's Housing Solutions team when a decision has been taken to end a tenancy, in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). Early engagement with the Council and other agencies is important to enable joint working to prevent homelessness and any other negative outcomes.

Licences: non-secure tenancies and excluded licences

The Council has accommodation for use as Temporary Accommodation (TA) to accommodate households being assisted under Part 7 Housing Act 1996. The Council will only issue licences in relation to emergency or temporary accommodation.

Excluded licence agreements are issued to households accommodated while enquiries are made into what duty is owed under homelessness legislation. Where a main housing duty is owed weekly periodic non-secure tenancies are issued for temporary accommodation provided.

Existing and transferring tenants

Registered Providers must ensure existing tenants understand any changes to security of tenure, tenancy security and rights (such as RTB) and rent when they are moving to another property.

Registered providers should consider granting a tenancy with the same security of tenure and rent as the tenancy they are giving up through, even if they are not legally required to.

3 Consultation statement

1. Drafting

Workshops with housing staff to discuss the proposed priorities and objectives of the Housing Strategy were held in September 2021. Member engagement workshops were held on 28 and 29 September 2021 and 7 October 2021 to discuss the draft vision, priorities and objectives of the Strategy.

The member engagement workshops were led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Kim Tanner, and a total of 23 Members attended across the three workshops. Key matters highlighted included long term empty properties within Registered Provider housing stock, the importance of helping existing residents find homes local to them (for example, children being able to find a home of their own), importance of having strong relationships with Registered Providers and the delivery of services to their tenants, and interest in ways the Council could take a more pro-active role in relation to housing delivery such as a Local Housing Company.

2. Public consultation

Summary of responses to the Housing Strategy consultation online questionnaire

The consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 was open from 2 March to 13 April 2022. The consultation was available online and promoted on social media via the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Partner organisations and Stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation by email on 2 March (list of stakeholders contacted is at the end of this summary). 29 responses were submitted, of which 24 were complete and 5 incomplete. Incomplete survey responses mean that not all questions were answered. Responses generally expressed support for the priorities of the draft Housing Strategy.

The action plan sets out various projects and areas of work for the first year of the Strategy (2022-2023). Actions include a project to develop our approach to empty homes and enforcement, revision of the Housing Allocations Scheme, explore options to encourage downsizing and establishing engagement and monitoring with Registered Providers.

Some consultation comments related to the planning process and policies, while this strategy sets out our aims and objectives in relation to delivering additional homes in the Borough, including affordable housing for local people, any development will be subject to the planning process and policies. The [Local Plan](#) Regulation 18 consultation will take place in Autumn 2022.

Feedback referring to planning policy will be shared with the planning department for their consideration.

A summary of the responses to the consultation can be found in Appendix B to this Strategy.

3. Stakeholders contacted by email inviting them to respond to the consultation

The public consultation was open for responses from anyone who chose to complete the questionnaire. Parish Councils, Landlords (via the list held for our Private Landlord Forum) and stakeholders, across the following organisations and companies were invited to respond to the consultation:

- Registered Providers with stock in the Borough
- Kent Housing Group
- Local authorities – Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Gravesham and Medway
- West Kent YMCA
- Porchlight
- Age UK
- Crosslight
- Lookahead
- KSAS
- RBLI
- Peabody
- Rural Kent Action with Communities and Kent Community Housing Hub
- Developers
- Public sector bodies and organisations such as NHS, Kent Fire and Rescue, Ministry of Justice and KCC
- Hadlow college.

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Serving our community

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