

ACTION SHEET FROM HOUSING (SUPPLY, DEMAND AND AFFORDABILITY) TASK GROUP

Approved by Cabinet 10 May 2016

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
	<p><i>Recognising that the Council, as a regeneration authority, will wish to continue to use its best endeavours to meet its objectively assessed housing needs, Cabinet is recommended to make representations to the Government that the Council should not be penalised as a result of developers failing to deliver housing, particularly where planning permission has been granted.</i></p>	<p>The Cabinet has approved for consultation the spatial options report on the next stage of the Local Plan. This will be subject to public consultation through January and February 2017 and sets out options that show how the Council could meet its objectively assessed needs.</p> <p>The Council is in regular contact with the DCLG on progress of the Local Plan and have had good indication that while the Council is on the list of those Councils who will not have a Local Plan ready for spring 2017, it is not on the list for intervention provided that it continues to progress the Local Plan positively in line with Government guidance and follows the current trajectory.</p> <p>The Council has made representation to the Government about the need to ensure that developers get on and implement the planning permissions that have been granted. The Government has indicated that it recognises this and is looking at what action could be taken to encourage developers to implement quickly their permissions.</p>
	<p><i>Given the importance of building enough homes to meet the increasing need for housing, Cabinet is asked to lobby the Government to introduce measures to encourage developers and land owners to develop sites for housing which have the benefit of planning permission or are</i></p>	<p>As above the Council , along with other Councils, have made representations to the Government and we are expecting the Government to make a formal response on this matter in the new year.</p>

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	<i>allocated for housing development, within the relevant timeframe, in the Development Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.</i>	
	<p><i>In relation to sites identified in recommendation 2 above, Cabinet is requested to ask the Government to consider introducing a national scheme for a local tax on undeveloped (land banked) land in order to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>incentivise developers and/or landowners not to sit on sites they have acquired and have either planning permission or are allocated for housing development, within the relevant timeframe, in the Development Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, and;</i> • <i>to build out more quickly where planning permission has been given.</i> 	<p>The Council has made this response formally to the Government in its response to recent consultations. It is expected that the Government will make announcements in the Spring.</p>
	<p><i>The Director of Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation is asked to agree that developers be offered at the pre-application stage, as a matter of course, the opportunity to commission services needed before development on sites</i></p>	<p>This action has been implemented. Discussions have taken place with KCC ecology and archaeology, the Environment Agency and the Council's own EHO team and this has been agreed in principle. Medway Council and KCC are signatories to the Kent and Medway planning protocol which promotes partnership working with the development industry. Discussions are now ongoing with statutory</p>

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	<i>can commence, for instance archaeology, ecology and contamination studies in order to allow schemes to start on site without further delay</i>	planning consultees such as the Environment Agency and Natural England to get them signed up to the protocol as well. This includes early engagement at the pre application stage.
	<i>Cabinet is asked to work with partners to identify suitable funding sources and opportunities in order to develop additional homes, including securing external funding to help meet the costs involved in getting sites ready for development.</i>	A recent resolution to approve planning permission has secured not only delivery of 44 executive houses on site but also £1,875,000 towards affordable housing provision by the Council within the borough.
	<i>Cabinet is requested to ask Council officers to identify opportunities to improve working relationships with developers (including sub contractors) in order to improve the supply of skilled labour to the industry and, further, to identify achievable targets to help alleviate the shortages in the industry, including working with local education, skills and training providers, such as the Medway University Technical College (UTC) and Mid Kent College (MKC).</i>	Through S106 agreements the Council is seeking to secure local workforce agreements that will help to secure apprenticeships as well as using and upskilling local people. Developers are being encouraged to liaise and work with MKC and the UTC.

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	<i>Cabinet is asked to review the scope to extend the use of home bonds to help tenants find alternative accommodation and work with the private rented sector to encourage landlords to let properties to residents in housing need and to those in receipt of Housing Benefit.</i>	Work has been undertaken to review the Council's offer for applicants in housing need looking to access the private sector. Consultation with the Private Landlords Forum has highlighted the need for a more flexible offer that suits the needs of the tenants and the demands of the prospective landlord. The Strategic Housing Service has trialled this new approach and will be looking to roll out the revised scheme to all applicants in the 2017/18 financial year.
	<i>In order to free up much needed social housing, Cabinet is asked to review, in relation to its housing stock, the incentives that are available to residents aimed at encouraging them to move into more suitable forms of affordable housing.</i>	The Councils Allocations Policy awards priority for all applicants in Medway who are under occupying social housing. Agreement is also in place for all social housing transfers to be held centrally to achieve one cross provider pool of properties for transfer applicants giving more choice and flexibility to tenants. A review of incentives available to current HRA tenants include £500 for each additional bedroom released by moving plus up to £500 for removal and disturbance costs. This compares favourably with other schemes from other Local Authorities during a recent review.
	<i>The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation is asked to continue to promote shared ownership products and similar available products that will support home ownership in Medway.</i>	Affordable home ownership options continue to be promoted by the strategic housing service amongst all applicants that may be eligible. Access to these products is managed on a regional basis by the designated zone agent. Information and signposting is in place on both Council and Kent Homechoice websites and tailored advice provided to applicants where appropriate.

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	<p><i>Given that 50% of supply is now concentrated in the eight largest private housebuilders, Cabinet is asked, with the aim of helping increase the supply and type of housing available, to:</i></p> <p><i>a) identify and assist with overcoming the barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) builders entering the market in Medway and</i></p> <p><i>b) consider what the Council can do to encourage SME builders to enter and remain in the market in Medway.</i></p>	<p>The Council has responded to recent Government consultations that there is a need to assist small and medium sized enterprises if the Government is to meet the Housing need within the country, the South East and Medway.</p> <p>The Council as Local Planning Authority is trying to assist SME's through its pre application and planning processes to make them smoother, quicker and easier to use to assist all applicants including SME's</p>
	<p><i>Cabinet is asked to ensure that there are appropriate resources in place to ensure that tenants in the private rented sector have sufficient protection with regard to minimum standards of accommodation, repair and good management.</i></p>	<p>The Private Sector Housing Team is in place to deal with enforcement of standards, repair and management of accommodation in the private rented sector. The resources in place have been reviewed and are appropriate for the current level of demand for service.</p>

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	<i>Subject to this being financially viable, Cabinet is asked to consider the potential of options to generate extra finance, for example prudentially borrowing and use the funds to build and operate housing across all tenures either by working in partnership with a local housing provider or by alternative means.</i>	A number of housing model options are currently being considered to determine if they are capable of delivering additional housing across all tenures.