

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES**

Decision Made: 16 September 2011

#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE - TEENAGE PARENTS SUPPORTED HOUSING SCHEME**

##### **Issue for Decision**

To consider approving a capital allocation of £63k towards the proposed teenage parents supported housing scheme, on the former Council depot site at Armstrong Road, Maidstone, that will deliver six self contained units and communal facilities, in partnership with Golding Homes, noting that this funding proposal forms part of the overall proposed revisions to the programme of investment with Golding Homes as set out in the Council's Agreement with Golding Homes. Golding Homes are seeking the Council's agreement to this scheme in advance of the proposed changes which are currently under consideration, and will be the subject of a future Cabinet Member report.

##### **Decision Made**

1. That the allocation of £63k towards the cost of the proposed teenage parents supported housing scheme at Armstrong Road, Maidstone, to provide six self-contained units and communal facilities for teenage parents, in partnership with Golding Homes be agreed.
2. That the £63k be taken from the overall budget agreed as part of the revisions to the agreement with Golding Homes.

##### **Reasons for Decision**

###### Background

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) set up a working group to tackle the high instances of teenage pregnancy in certain Wards within Maidstone Borough. As part of this working group, the Housing Service has been looking into the feasibility of providing a purpose built supported housing scheme for teenage parents, and have actively been looking for appropriate sites to facilitate development.

Golding Homes expressed an interest in working in partnership with the Council on this project, due to their recent involvement in providing a floating support service to teenage parents, through a Supporting People contract with Kent County Council (KCC). Maidstone Borough Council's Housing department have therefore been in discussion with Golding

Homes on the provision of a teenage pregnancy supported housing unit at the former Council depot site at Armstrong Road, Maidstone, by converting a small standalone apartment block on site. The overall site benefits from existing planning consent for residential development and is in a good sustainable location, in close proximity to the town centre, local parks/play areas and public transport. Start on site was achieved early 2011.

A re-design of the apartment block, which is to the rear of the site, has been undertaken in accordance with the council's design brief and feedback from KCC's Supporting People Team. To help inform the brief, a visit was arranged to a working scheme in practice, namely Jubilee Court, Gravesend, which is a supported housing scheme managed by In-Touch (part of the Hyde Group) for teenage mothers. The visit included talking to both residents and staff about their experiences. The scheme has been running since April 2003. The design brief for this proposed supported housing scheme is also based on research and good practice recommendations for schemes of this nature identified within DCLG's: *Good Practice in Supported Housing for Young Mothers*.

Golding Homes submitted an application for non-material amendments following the grant of planning permission for Armstrong Road, which included the proposal to change block b to provide specialist accommodation for single mothers (5 x 1-bed and 1 x 2-bed flats) and ancillary accommodation comprising office space, communal kitchen and lounge and space for training and outdoor play. The general architecture remains consistent with the original design. This was determined and granted consent on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

The design of the scheme has allowed for easy conversion to general needs, if in the future the need for supported housing for teenage parents reduces to the extent that a supported housing scheme is no longer required.

The aim of the project is to provide a purpose designed supported housing scheme, which comprises six units of high quality, self-contained accommodation, with support for young women who are pregnant or have young children. The age range for schemes of this nature are normally 16 to 25 years of age (with a priority on 16-19 year olds).

Residents stay for up to two years. At the end of the two years people are helped to make the move into independent accommodation in the local area. They can be referred to other services to receive resettlement support in order to help with this transition.

The proposed scheme was recently promoted at the hugely successful LSP Tackling Teenage Conception Event on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011. The event brought together key stakeholders and gave the opportunity to network with peers and colleagues from across the region to examine how to maximise the effectiveness of multi-agency working and services provided. Links will continue to be developed and maintained with specialist services in the area such as sexual health advisors, specialist education support, health visitors & midwives in order to provide extra, more specialist support to young parents.

The main features and services being provided to residents are:

- High quality self contained temporary accommodation;
- Staff available to offer guidance and support to residents;
- Individual care packages of support to meet the needs of the residents;
- A comprehensive re-settlement and move on service;
- On site training kitchen, IT suite/communal lounge and meeting room;
- Nursery/indoor play space;
- Quiet counselling room;
- External garden/play area;
- Pram/general storage/changing room;
- Safety and security (CCTV/video phone entry system/fencing/fire alarm control system).

It is envisaged that the scheme would provide temporary accommodation for residents, with a view to teaching the teenage parents the necessary life skills to enable them to sustain a tenancy and move on to more permanent accommodation in the future. In addition the project aims to tackle the issue of young mothers having a second child whilst still in their teen years.

The KCC Supporting People Team will arrange and carry out the tender process for interested providers to apply to provide the housing related support for this scheme. The team does not run or deliver any housing related support services itself. Instead it has contracts with other organisations including other council departments, voluntary and community sector organizations, registered social landlords and private companies who deliver services to vulnerable people. Golding Homes have already expressed an interest in submitting a tender for consideration. The tender process should take 3 to 4 months. As the scheme is forecast for completion in March 2012, the process has been timetabled for a start no later than November 2011.

### Funding

The council was successful in acquiring significant revenue resources for this project some 18 months ago from the Kent Supporting People Commissioning Board and retained a commitment from the Board to retain the revenue funding whilst a suitable site was identified.

The Council and Golding Homes (formerly known as Maidstone Housing Trust) entered into an agreement on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010, to agree to vary the terms of a number of agreements relating to the Trust's purchase of the council's housing stock, back in February 2004.

The agreement also set out a proposed funding programme with Golding Homes, where the council would contribute payments in respect of certain affordable housing schemes, within given timescales. The former council depot site at Armstrong Road was one such scheme where a contribution of £855k for 96 affordable housing units was envisaged at £9k per unit.

The overall scheme at Armstrong Road has subsequently been altered to include 21 private sale units, which has led to a reduced scheme of 75 affordable housing units, and the contribution has therefore subsequently been reduced accordingly by £189k, from £855k to £666k. The scheme is also in receipt of £4.6m of grant from the Homes and Communities Agency.

Additional grant is being sought due to the additional costs incurred associated with the redesign of block b. The original design cost was £506,370. The revised cost, due to the redesign and additional items, is now £577,171, resulting in a net difference of £70,801. However the additional grant being asked for is only £63k. The shortfall of £7,801 will be made up by Golding Homes.

The additional £63k will be found from the overall budget as part of any revisions to the agreement with Golding Homes which may be agreed. The overall proposed changes keep to the originally agreed total investment and the changes sought are primarily matters of timing and tenure.

In terms of timescales for delivery on Armstrong Road, the overall site was originally planned for completion by the end of March 2012. The forecast for overall site completion is now June 2012. However the teenage parents' scheme within block b, is scheduled within the first phase of the development and is on course for completion by March 2012.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

The Council could choose not to agree to re-allocate the funds. However, the issue of teenage pregnancy has been a priority to tackle in Maidstone and not agreeing the transfer of funds could result in the loss of this unique, high quality supported housing scheme.

A lack of investment from the Council would place the scheme at severe risk in terms of delivery and financial viability. This in turn would place the council at risk of losing the revenue funding commitment from KCC's Supporting People team, which has already been placed under pressure due to the cut in funds within the Supporting People programme. Slippage would be increased in the capital programme, and could lead to the council being criticised for not fulfilling its key objective of enabling the delivery of quality, decent affordable housing.

### **Background Papers**

Housing Strategy 2011-15.

Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) 2009-12.

DCLG's: Good Practice in Supported Housing for Young Mothers

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: <b>23 September 2011</b>
--

