

REPORT

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To: Supporting People in Kent Commissioning Body

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Subject: Report on Housing Conditions and Neighbourhood Deprivation in Thanet

Classification: Unrestricted

For Information

Summary: The report sets out to evaluate the interconnected issues of neighbourhood deprivation and the housing market in the two most deprived wards in Thanet. It details how these challenges could be tackled by a multi-agency partnership and how the Supporting People Programme can contribute to the overall strategy to regenerate these areas.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Thanet District Council has two wards called Margate Central and Cliftonville West. These wards have attracted the attention of central and local government as well as the South East Development Agency (SEEDA), and the Homes and Communities Agency (formerly known as the Housing Corporation). There have also been multi-agency concerns expressed about the housing of vulnerable people in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Vulnerable children and young people at risk are known to have been living in close proximity to vulnerable adults with complex needs. The HMOs in the district are concentrated in these two particular wards. The concern about vulnerable people has led to attention being focussed on housing issues in Thanet in their entirety.

1.2 Margate Central and Cliftonville West in particular experience concentrations of deprivation. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 indicates that these areas include the five most deprived neighbourhoods in Kent. They are also in the top 3% of the most deprived wards nationally.

1.3 There is an obvious role for the Supporting People Programme in working within a multi-agency context to assist in trying to resolve the issues that relate to Margate Central, and Cliftonville West. The Programme is part of a solution to the problem, but cannot resolve the problems relating to Thanet by itself. The Supporting People Programme will of course be evaluating investment within the County as part of the Five Year Strategy and Strategic Review of Investment, and will be looking at whether or not existing services should continue to be invested in, and if there are new services which are required where there are deficits in provision. The East Kent and Coastal Primary Care Trust also has a valuable role to play in working within a strategic partnership to try and turn the two wards around.

1.4 There are two appendices to this report which go into more detail about the housing situation in Thanet in general, and allied issues. They are Appendix 1 Margate Renewal Study, Shared Intelligence, 2008 and Appendix 2 Margate Central and Cliftonville West; The Key Issues Affecting The Two Wards.

2.0 Context

2.1 There is a complex interrelationship between the nature of the housing market in the two wards and the high levels of deprivation experienced within them.

2.2 These socio-economic conditions are a product of the housing market in these areas. The majority of properties are Victorian and too large for retention as a family home. Many have been converted into care homes for children or vulnerable adults. Opportunistic landlords have purchased others and sub divided them, creating additional flats and HMOs and thus creating a greater percentage overall of privately rented accommodation.

2.3 These properties have become easily accessible for housing for benefit dependent individuals and less attractive to home owners. The transient nature of single person benefit dependent households has led to a high turnover, both within, and into and out of, these neighbourhoods and there is little social cohesion.

2.4 People without employment are unable to access the housing market and are often unable to access social housing in their areas of origin. They are then forced to move to areas such as Cliftonville to secure accommodation.

The situation is made worse by statutory agencies or voluntary organizations placing vulnerable adults and homeless people in the area.

2.5 The availability of cheap rented property has led to the concentration of some of the most vulnerable people in the two wards requiring a high level of support by public agencies.

3.0 Housing Renewal Delivery Plan 2004/2008.

There have been previous approaches to try and resolve the issues relating to housing. In particular the Housing Renewal Delivery Plan 2004/2008 identified particular actions that would contribute to turning the area around.

3.1 The Housing Renewal Delivery Plan 2004/2008 has prioritised the following actions;

- A targeted approach to tackle the worst privately rented accommodation, in particular the high number of poor condition HMOs.
- Creating conditions that make the area more attractive to home ownership through increased environmental enforcement and improved refuse collection services.
- Providing grants to property owners to improve the external appearance of their properties.
- Targeted action against empty properties and other derelict sites.
- Improving poor quality homes occupied by vulnerable residents.

3.2 Despite some successes, these interventions and other high levels of activity within the area have had no major impact on the housing situation and the poor quality of life of its residents. Indeed, deprivation levels have worsened and over the last 3 years the two wards have moved up the national deprivation rankings.

3.3 It is felt that further interventions are required to turn the tide. The scale and nature of the deprivation and associated poor housing is leading to a cycle of residualisation and it is felt that a greater effort is needed to extract these wards from the situation they find themselves in.

4.0 The Communities and Local Government (CLG) Mixed Communities initiative.

4.1 Due to the existing complex housing challenges the two wards have been chosen as a pilot area for the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Mixed Communities initiative which requires a multi-agency approach to tackle neighbourhood deprivation. The Supporting People Programme could make a valuable contribution.

5.0 Future Interventions

5.1 An alternative form of public intervention is required and Kent County Council and Thanet District Council are committed to leading a new and innovative multi-agency approach to establish a comprehensive programme to tackle the issues over the next 5 year. The objectives include to;

- Transform housing and the environment through targeting HMOs and reducing the levels of private rented housing.
- Providing tailored support to individuals and families.
- Reduce the flow of vulnerable people moving or being placed into the wards.
- Delivering an integrated approach to skills and employment opportunities.
- Engage local residents in the renewal programme.
- Reducing crime and creating strong community cohesion.
- Regeneration with the cooperation of the Homes and Communities Agency, Communities and Local Government Department, and the South east Development Agency.

5.2 Currently, effort is concentrated on establishing an operational model based on using a multi-agency task force to tackle social conditions.

5.3 With the support of the Government's Mixed Communities Initiative and through the Margate Renewal Partnership, a multi-agency approach should lead to a transformation of the area.

6.0 Potential Supporting People Programme Interventions

6.1 Clearly, the aims of the envisaged interventions are shared with the cross-cutting objectives of the Supporting People partnership. Supporting People has a valuable role to play in delivering services on the ground that provide vulnerable people with housing-related support as well as contributing to develop communities.

6.2 The Commissioning Body has already agreed to the possibility of a Floating Support/Outreach Service being commissioned. It is suggested that the Supporting People Programme commissions a new and innovative type of floating support/outreach service. Rather than directing it at referred individuals, the support would be part of integrated social interventions developed in conjunction with the District Council, directed at an area. Support would include provision of housing-related support to vulnerable individuals identified by the task force as well as contribute to individuals acquiring social capital, and building socially cohesive communities.

6.3 The other potential intervention is an intensive accommodation-based short-term supported housing scheme. There is some supported housing within the renewal area. However this is for specific groups and cannot provide the high level of support for the more chaotic households with often complex needs. It is therefore proposed to develop specific, intensive supported housing for the most vulnerable adults that will be displaced by the housing renewal activity, outside of the two wards. Any financial contribution would need to be agreed by the Commissioning Body.

7.0 Financial Impact Assessment

7.1 The intensive accommodation-based supported housing scheme growth bid which is to be presented to the Commissioning Body is still being developed and have not yet been costed. It would be possible to scope the cost of the floating support based on recent tenders. It is also possible to base costings for the accommodation-based scheme on current funding of other comparable services once there is greater clarity about the number of bed-spaces required.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The report sets out the interconnected socio-economic issues affecting two wards in Margate characterised by high levels of multiple deprivation, polarisation of the housing market in private rented properties (often HMOs) and a concentration of often highly vulnerable populations.

8.2 Under the Mixed Communities initiative, a multi-agency approach is being developed to tackle neighbourhood deprivation in the above areas.

8.3 Supporting People can play a valuable role in contributing to the programme to be established for the next five years. This will involve growth bids to be made for a new type of floating support/outreach service to work within the Task Force, and an intensive supported housing scheme.

8.4 The Core Strategy Development Group noted the contents of the report and recommends it to the Commissioning Body. The members of the group asked to be kept updated about the Thanet initiative. Members expressed the view that other parts of the county may well be able to draw on some elements of the Thanet response. This was agreed and the governance bodies will be provided with regular updates.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1 The Commissioning Body is asked to note the contents of the report.

9.2 The Commissioning Body is asked to agree in principle to consider the commissioning of an intensive accommodation-based short-term supported housing scheme outwith of Margate Central and Cliftonville West when a business case is presented.

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Background Information:

- 1. Margate Draft Renewal Framework and Implementation Plan, 2007/08*
- 2. Thanet Inquiry: Report of the Kent Child Protection Committee Inquiry into the general concerns expressed by officers and politicians in the Thanet area*
- 3. Margate Renewal Study, Shared Intelligence 2008*

Appendix 1. Margate Central and Cliftonville West; The Key Issues Affecting the Two Wards

Appendix 2. Margate Renewal Study, Shared Intelligence, 2008

Appendix One

Margate Central and Cliftonville West; The Key Issues Affecting the Two Wards

Crime

1. High levels of crime recorded crime in Margate.
2. Crime levels in Margate Central are four times the Thanet average.

Economy

1. A fragile economic base.
2. Over one thousand jobs being lost in the two wards between 2003 and 2006.
3. Benefit-dependant households.
4. Entrenched and interlinked cycles of deprivation.
5. Worklessness.
6. Over a third of working age residents in the two wards are out of work and claiming benefit more than three times the regional rate.
7. 6% of 16 to 18 year olds are not in employment, education or training (2007 data from Department of Work and Pensions).

Health

1. Ill health.
2. Incapacity.
3. There are also high levels of drug and alcohol misuse.

Housing Market

1. A profoundly unbalanced housing market.
2. High and increasing numbers of private rented properties.
3. 55% of homes privately rented.
4. 84% of dwellings are flats.
5. 45% of households in the area are single persons.
6. Over 50 known licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and an indeterminate number that falls outside the requirement to be licensed.
7. 13% of dwellings have category one hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004).
8. 57% of dwellings don't meet the Decent Homes standard including 66% of properties in the private rented sector
9. A highly transitory population with an annual turn over of residents nearing 30%

Placements

1. Over the last three decades, there have been numerous placements of different groups of vulnerable benefit claimants including homeless people and ex-offenders, adults and children in care from out of the Thanet area.

2. Quantification is difficult because placing authorities are not required to notify Thanet District Council and therefore many of those who need support do not receive it.
3. Over the last three decades, there have been numerous placements of different groups of vulnerable benefit claimants including homeless people and ex-offenders, adults and children in care from out of the Thanet area.

Population

1. Migration of economic migrants
2. The placement of looked after children and other vulnerable groups.
3. The number of migrants in Thanet more than doubled between 2002/2003 and 2006/2007 with migrants from the 10 European Union accession countries making up almost two-thirds of all migrant workers locating in Thanet in 2006/2007.
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Residential Care

1. High numbers of single people, and people in residential establishments, compared to Kent, the south-east and the UK.
2. The Thanet Inquiry Report 2005 noted that in Thanet as a whole there were some 1,298 beds in residential care establishments for adults.
3. The County Council itself utilised just under 50% of the total beds for its residents, and the remainder were occupied by people referred by other local authorities or by self-funding individuals.
4. At the time of the report there were 35 children's homes in Thanet.
5. High numbers of single people, and people in residential establishments, compared to Kent, the south-east and the UK.

Social Cohesion

1. A lack of social cohesion within and between older and newer communities.

Tourism

1. Historic dependency on a declining tourism sector. This is a feature of coastal towns and has become a problem over the last one hundred years or so, as people have decided to travel abroad for their holidays.

