



HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

To: Board Members Davis, Edwardes (Chair), Riley (Vice-Chair), Wright, Radford, Seaton and Brennan (For attention)

All other members of the Council
(For information)

You are requested to attend the meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board to be held in Council Offices on Wednesday, 9th September 2020 at 4.30 pm for the following business.



Chief Executive

Southfields
Loughborough

28th August 2020

AGENDA

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2020/21

The Board's Terms of Reference state that the Chair of the Board will be appointed annually by the Board, from among the tenant/leaseholder members. The Board may also appoint a Vice-chair from among its members.

2. APOLOGIES

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3 - 7

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2020.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All members will make a declaration at each meeting if they have an interest in any item of business on the agenda which would affect them more than tenants or residents of the ward(s) affected generally.

5. LANDLORD SERVICES STATUS UPDATE

8 - 12

A report of the Head of Landlord Services to advise the Board of progress within the service since the last meeting.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

In accordance with the Board's decision members of the Board were asked in advance of this agenda being published whether they had any questions on matters within the remit of the Board that they wished to ask, for response at this meeting.

On this occasion no questions were submitted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

13 - 15

A report of the Head of Landlord Services to enable the Board to review and agree its Work Programme.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD 15TH JANUARY 2020

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)
Councillors Davis, Wright, Draycott, Radford and
Tassell
Board Members Davis and Wright

Repairs and Investment Manager
Head of Landlord Services
Landlord Services Manager
Group Accountant (IA)
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

Andy Green (Fortem)
Glen Richamond (Fortem)

APOLOGIES: T. Riley

57. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 6th November 2019 were confirmed as an accurate record.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

59. AGENDA VARIANCE

At the approval of the Chair the following item was brought forward: Mobility Scooter Policy Update.

60. MOBILITY SCOOTER POLICY UPDATE

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report to the Board to provide an update on the implementation of the Mobility Scooter Policy since 2015 and to enable the Board to propose any necessary changes to the policy.

The Board was advised that two sites had been identified for the pilot scheme of building individual scooter storage. These schemes would be financed from the budget allocation in the HRA account.

The Board highlighted various issues with scooter storage in communal areas of communal housing blocks so were pleased to hear that the Council was looking at ways to improve the storage of individual scooters.

RESOLVED that the update be noted with no changes to the policy.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the item.

61. CAPITAL CONTRACT UPDATE

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report to the Board with an update on the progress of the decent homes contract with Fortem.

Andy Green and Glen Richmond from Fortem attended the meeting to provide an update to the Board. They provided an explanation for the red performance indicators in the list of contract commitments. They advised the Board that since the report had been published actions were in place to ensure that the commitments were completed or on track and expected to see more green indicators at the next meeting.

The Board was also advised that new contractors had been recruited to maximise direct delivery of the contract and a new additional site manager would be in place to provide further operational support. The team at Fortem felt that they were now adequately resourced to deliver the contract and that the Council could expect to see an improvement in the next few weeks.

The Board noted their concerns about the length of time it was still taking for work to be completed and felt that this was discouraging tenants from agreeing to works being completed in their property. The team from Fortem felt that progress could be made by early viewing of the Council's programme of upcoming work to allow them to schedule work by area, thus maximising resources and transport.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

62. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN REVIEW

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report to the Board with an update on the customer engagement strategy action plan.

The Landlord Services Manager attended the meeting and assisted with consideration of the item.

The Board was advised that the action plan was implemented last March with the principal aims and actions of the plan being targeted on the ways in which tenants could be involved and delivering a new menu of involvement.

The customer engagement strategy action plan was deemed successful as it had led to a successful tenant networking event and feedback from tenants regarding their level of involvement in events.

Work was now starting on the new strategy for 2021 - 2024 and all the feedback gained from tenants would be used to inform the new plan and create the focus for the next year.

The Board also raised the issue of tenant involvement in the review of the Council's new communal cleaning contract. There was some concern and disappointment from the Board that tenants who had volunteered to help with the review of the contract had received no acknowledgement from officers. It was felt that an update should have been provided to the tenants to keep them informed.

Action: The Landlord Services Manager would ensure that any interested tenants were responded to as soon as possible and provide the Board with an update report on progress with the contract to members at HMAB's March 2020 meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the item.

63. 2020/21 DRAFT BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report to the Board to advise of the projected draft budget and capital programme positions for 2020/21.

The Head of Landlord Services and the Group Accountant assisted with consideration of this item.

The Board was provided with an update on the budget process since the last meeting. The additional resource for the Universal Credit Officer was added to the draft budget, to be agreed by the Cabinet. There had also been a review of any work completed by other officers and services in regards to the function of the HRA, as requested by the new Chief Executive, which identified that there had been some under-charging which had resulted in an increase in re-charges to be applied to the HRA.

There had also been some changes to the capital programme amounts to reflect work programmed for the coming year. A substantial sum had been put aside to pay for new doors and fire safety work as required in the new guidance for local authorities. This raised a discussion over fly-tipping in communal areas as a result of the charge for bulky waste collections and how it could affect fire exits. The Board was advised that any instances of fly-tipping should be reported to the Council's Tenancy and Estate Management Team who could visit the property and investigate.

RESOLVED that the report be noted with agreement from the Board concerning the 2020-21 draft budget.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the item.

64. CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2020 - 2024

A report of the Head of Landlord Services was submitted to enable the Board to comment on the draft Corporate Business Plan for 2020 – 2024 and propose any additional actions.

The Head of Landlord Services assisted with consideration of the item.

The Board was given a detailed explanation of the proposed Corporate Business Plan actions relating to tenants and the Council's housing stock.

One of the actions was to introduce a new tenancy policy and tenancy agreement which would reflect recent changes. This led to a discussion about the quality of some properties due to neglect from tenants and how that was dealt with. The Board was advised that properties in poor condition due to neglect or tenant damage were often identified in the course of day to day repairs, gas servicing and housing management activity. The Council could take enforcement action against tenants if they have damaged their property as a breach of tenancy.

The Board noted that the Council's Scrutiny Commission had concerns that the Corporate Plan did not contain enough focus on people and the residents. There was an assurance that the focus on universal credit in the plan, and the review of the tenancy policy and tenancy agreement would reflect this aspiration, and that Landlord Services worked hard to ensure that tenants kept successful tenancies.

RESOLVED that the comments of the Board in relation to the new Corporate Business Plan be incorporated.

Reasons

To ensure that the needs of the tenants are being represented.

65. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

In accordance with the Board's decision at its meeting on 22nd March 2017 (HMAB Minute 24.1), members of the Board had been asked in advance of the agenda being published whether they had any questions on matters within the remit of the Board that they wished to ask, for response at this meeting.

On this occasion no questions had been submitted.

66. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report of the Head of Landlord Services to enable the Board to agree its Work Programme (item 10 on the agenda).

Members of the Board could identify matters that they considered required looking at over the next few meetings of the Board, including any already listed on the Work Programme but not yet scheduled. Officers present could provide advice as to whether items might be appropriately considered at the time proposed.

RESOLVED

1. that an update on the Council's general and major voids be added to the Board's Work Programme for its meeting in March 2020.
2. That the Council's new Corporate Plan be added to the Board's Work Programme for its meeting in May 2020.
3. that the Board's Work Programme be updated to reflect all decisions made above and earlier in the meeting.

Reasons

- 1&2. To enable the matter to be considered by the Board.
3. To ensure that the information in the Work Programme is up to date.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 24th February 2020 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 9th SEPTEMBER 2020

Report of the Head of Landlord Services

SERVICE STATUS UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

The Board considered a report on the 29th July 2020 which set out the Landlord Services response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This report provides an update on the current position.

2. Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the update.

3. Current Service Status

Services are now largely restored. A letter was sent to all tenants in late July 2020 to provide an update. The letter text can be found at Appendix 1.

New non-urgent repairs are being completed. External planned maintenance works have re-commenced, with internal works expected to commence in September 2019. The kitchen and bathroom replacement programmes are scheduled to start in quarter 4 (after Christmas) however we are in discussions with our capital contractor with a view to bringing internal work programmes forward where possible.

The level of face to face contact with tenants has been reduced, and new ways of working have been implemented. Some notable adjustments are as follows:

- Support plans and weekly welfare calls with elderly vulnerable customers are being completed over the phone rather than in person. Communal lounges and kitchens at sheltered accommodation remain closed, however a risk assessment is being undertaken at each location to see whether and how they can be opened safely.
- Non-urgent office interviews are not currently taking place. Generally, interactions are taking place by email or phone where possible.
- Lifeline demonstrations in vulnerable customers' homes are not currently being delivered (these would usually take an hour with the potential user in close proximity). A self-installation pack has been introduced and used successfully - allowing customers to set up their own lifeline where they are able, without our officer being present.
- A remote diagnostics tool has been introduced for our repairs team. Tenants are now able to use the video camera on their mobile phone to show us repair issues in real-time. This will support faster diagnosis of repair issues, increase

first time fixe rates, reduce car mileage, and the potential for transmission of Covid-19.

- Tenant meetings and estate walkabouts are not taking place. We are exploring options around the provision of electronic tablets or equivalent to support customer engagement.
- Victory in Europe Day 75 took place whilst coronavirus restrictions were in place. To mark the event, some plaques have been produced and benches will be installed at sheltered accommodation. The Mayor has recently met with residents and has presented the plaques. An article will appear in the next issue of the tenant magazine Your Homes Matter.

4. Performance

Rent Arrears

Rent arrears have increased by £138,591 since the end of July 2019. Former tenant arrears have reduced by £15,193 over the same period.

A three month freeze on possession claims was introduced by the government in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In line with government guidance the Council did not serve any notices of seeking possession over this period. As expected, and in line with the experience of other landlords rent arrears have increased.

On the 21st August 2020 government issued a press release, the headlines of which are as follows:

- Ban on evictions continues for 4 weeks taking the total ban to 6 months
- New 6 month notice periods to be in place until at least 31 March 2021
- Once eviction hearings restart, the judiciary will carefully prioritise the most serious cases including those involving anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse

Whilst we are awaiting clarity on the mechanics of this, it is likely that rent collection will be negatively affected.

The numbers of tenants receiving universal credit (UC) continues to rise. At the end of July 2020 1,224 tenants were receiving universal credit compared to 752 at the end of the same period in 2019.

Anti-Social Behaviour

In line with a national increase in reported ASB, the Landlord Services ASB Team has seen an increase in caseload. June 2020 accounted for most of this increase, with a 68% increase in ASB reporting (an extra 51 cases) received that month. In total we received 452 reports over the period April to July. Cases have been prioritised on a risk basis, and where we have not been able to meet target response times on cases assessed as low risk holding letters have been sent.

Repairs

In June work started on the backlog of non-urgent repairs put on hold in March. Therefore, the volume of repairs has increased, and there was a small reduction in performance on target repair times. This is shown in the below table.

	May	Jun	Jul
Monthly performance	98.11%	98.46%	93.82%
YTD	97.57%	97.90%	96.64%
Repairs in timescale	312	768	638
Number of responsive repairs	318	780	680

Table 1. % Responsive repairs completed within timescales (24 hr, 5 day and 28 day work orders).

Gas Safety Checks

The position continues to improve with around 30 checks behind schedule, largely due to the courts not hearing applications for warrants of entry and Covid-19 related access issues.

Officer to contact:

Peter Oliver
Head of Landlord Services
Peter.oliver@charnwood.gov.uk
01509 634666

An update for all residents in Charnwood Borough Council accommodation

We hope that you and any family you may have stayed safe over this period. We are writing to provide an update on our services, the steps the Council is taking to keep tenants and their families safe, and the support that is available.

Repairs and Maintenance

Over the last few months, in line with government guidance, we have prioritised our repairs service, only carrying out those repairs which are most urgent. We are currently working on the backlog of repairs that were put on hold just before the national lockdown.

From Tuesday August 4 2020 we will be able to log new non-urgent repairs. Going forward, it will take us longer than normal to complete repairs. We may also have longer call waiting times at our contact centre, so if you wish to log a repair, and you are able to, I would strongly encourage you to do so online at the following webpage:

www.charnwood.gov.uk/repairs

Alternatively, you can contact us on 01509 634 666. If you have a housing repair or gas emergency outside council opening hours (Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5.00 pm and Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm) please call 0333 200 8811.

Operatives entering your home will attempt to notify you in advance of arrival, maintain a safe distance and follow hygiene procedures, and may ask you, where possible, to move into a different room from where the works are taking place.

No visits will be undertaken to any household that is self-isolating due to confirmed or suspected coronavirus, and / or where the government has advised someone in the household shield (note that from 1st August 2020 it is expected the government will pause shielding), unless it is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household.

Gas safety checks

Every year, people die and are seriously injured by poorly maintained gas appliances. We will make every effort to abide by our statutory safety obligation to undertake an annual gas safety check in your home. For more information about your gas safety check, please contact our contractor Sure Group on 0800 840 8021 or 01509 634 666.

Paying Your Rent

We understand this is a difficult time for many of our residents. If you are having difficulty paying your rent, I strongly encourage you to get in touch with your housing income officer. Help and advice about paying your rent and about benefits is available from our housing income and tenancy support teams by phoning 01509 634666. We would urge you to continue to pay your rent as a priority and keep to any agreement you have to clear any arrears.

If you pay your rent using a rent payment card at some outlets and you are finding these are closed, there are other and easier ways to pay your rent:

- by direct debit: through Allpay you can decide which day of the week you want to pay your rent and the frequency - weekly, fortnightly, four-weekly or monthly;
- by phoning 01509 634666 and making a debit card payment over the phone with a contact centre adviser;

- if you have your payment reference, by going on the council's website you can make a payment online
- by setting up a standing order with your bank. Ring the income team on 01509 634666 for details

Planned Maintenance

We are in discussions with our contractors around how works including new kitchens, and bathrooms can be undertaken safely. If you are due to have these works undertaken, we will contact you with an update over the coming months.

Warden and Tenancy Services

We are now able to deliver most of our warden and tenancy services. Whilst we can visit you at home if necessary, where reasonable and practicable to do so, we will aim to communicate by phone, letter, online, or by email, avoiding face-to-face contact where possible.

Helping the vulnerable and the community at large

The Council, working with John Storer Charnwood, has launched Charnwood Community Action - a campaign to help support, advise, guide and co-ordinate groups and people who are volunteering to help others in the borough. As part of the campaign, the Council is keen to support the community during this difficult time and has pledged £100,000 to help with any needs identified as part of this co-ordinated approach.

More information can be found at www.charnwood.gov.uk/cca.

More Help and Information about Coronavirus

We have created a webpage that contains all the latest updates on coronavirus, including changes to services, cancellations of events, and more. You can find it at www.charnwood.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Please find below several useful weblinks in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, including government and NHS advice:

- NHS advice for everyone www.nhs.uk/coronavirus
- NHS 111 coronavirus service: 111.nhs.uk/covid-19
- Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do: www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do
- Getting a Coronavirus test: www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test
- Getting financial help and staying safe at work: www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support
- Advice for people travelling abroad: www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus

We strongly encourage you to continue to follow the government's advice; and thank you in advance for your patience as we increase service delivery, whilst balancing the need to keep our staff and tenants safe.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 29TH JULY 2020

Report of the Head of Landlord Services

ITEM WORK PROGRAMME

Purpose of the Report

To enable the Board to agree its work programme. The current work programme, appended, sets out the position following the last meeting of the Board on 15th January 2020.

Recommendation

To agree that the Board's work programme be updated in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and any further decisions taken during the course of the meeting.

Reason

To ensure that the information contained within the work programme is up to date.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD - WORK PROGRAMME

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
SCHEDULED:			
Every meeting	Work programme		To review the Board's work programme.
Every meeting	Questions from members of the Board		<p>Questions on matters within the remit of the Board (if any), for response at the meeting.</p> <p>Members will be asked in advance of the agenda being published for each meeting whether they have any such questions, for listing on the agenda.</p>
Every meeting	Performance information – questions		<p>See HMAB minute 14.4, 9th November 2016.</p> <p>To enable the Board to ask questions, if any, on the performance information pack* sent out with the agenda for the meeting.</p> <p>To be last item on agenda.</p>
November 2020	Tenancy Policy	Head of Landlord Services	Review of the new policy will be brought to the Board once it has been published.
November 2020	Update on Voids	Head of Landlord Services	Requested by the Board at their meeting on 15 th January 2020.
November 2020	HRA Revenue and Capital Outturn (2019/20)	Head of Landlord Services	Annual report.
November 2020	Disabled Adaptations Policy	Head of Landlord Services	Annual report.
May 2021	Election of Chair and Vice-chair		Annual Item.

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
TO BE SCHEDULED:			
To be scheduled	Housing Strategy	Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing	Added to work programme 2nd April 2014.

Notes to work programme:

1. All reports must include an explanatory list of any acronyms used.
2. *Performance information pack will include (i) Decent Homes Contractor Performance; (ii) Landlord Services Performance; (iii) Compliance Performance (Fire Safety, etc.); (iv) Anti-social Behaviour (relating to Council's housing stock) Information and (v) Universal Credit Performance update.