

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
24TH MARCH 2021**

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)
The Vice Chair (T. Riley)

Councillors Davis, Radford, Seaton and Brennan
Board Members Y. Ali and A. Davis.

Head of Landlord Services
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Landlord Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (LS)
Democratic Services Officer (EB)

APOLOGIES: None

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 4th February 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brennan declared that whilst she was not a social tenant, she was a pet owner but that she approached the Pets Policy with an open mind.

Board member Mr Davis declared that he was a pet owner but that he approached the Pets Policy with an open mind.

34. PETS POLICY

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report presenting the Board with the Council's Draft Pets Policy (item 4 on the agenda).

The Landlord Services Manager attended the meeting to assist with the discussion of this item.

The Board were advised that:

- (i) The Council did not have an existing policy on pet-ownership in Council Housing and there was a lack of sufficient detail in the tenancy agreement regarding pets and as such the tenancy agreement was open to interpretation in this regard. This policy was designed to increase

consistency in the Council's approach to pet ownership in Council properties in conjunction with the tenancy agreement.

- (ii) The policy had been put before Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum (CHRF) and changes had been made as a result.
- (iii) Under the policy social tenants must seek and obtain written permission to keep a pet.
- (iv) Some pets would not obtain permission such as dogs covered by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and cockerels (the latter due to noise disruption). Additionally, pets used for commercial breeding purposes would not be allowed. Certain other pets would attract restricted pet permissions.
- (v) There was contention over pet ownership in sheltered accommodation between the benefits of those in sheltered accommodation having pets and their ability to look after them. Pets would not be allowed in sheltered accommodation unless there was direct access to open space.
- (vi) Existing pet owners would be allowed to keep their pets as long as they declared them to the Council, and they did not broadly violate the existing terms of the pets policy.

The board asked in regard to the exceptions to the limit of two pets whether the term 'aquarium' could be broadened to 'vivarium' so that small animals, particularly reptiles, that fared better in groups of larger than two, could be kept.

Action: The Landlord Services Manager would consider accommodating pets of that nature in the policy.

In response to questions from the board it was explained that:

- (i) Tenants were required to undertake conditions including cleaning up after pets and eliminating offensive smells. Action could be taken against tenants who failed to do this including community protection notices.
- (ii) Dangerous venomous animals were prohibited.

The board sought clarification on pets in non-sheltered accommodation that needed to go through communal areas to get outside.

Action: The Landlord Services Manager would provide clarification.

The Board raised concern that the policy could be changed without extensive consultation.

Further concern was raised that the two-pet limit was too restrictive and that often more than two pets could be kept without problems. It was further suggested that

having a blanket policy regarding existing pets had the potential to generate upset and concern and decrease trust in Landlord Services.

With regards to consultation, the Board were assured that any policy revision would go through a formal consultation process, first with officers, then with the CHRF, then with the Board and then with Cabinet. This policy would not eliminate consultation, but it would make consultation easier than it would have with the existing tenancy agreement.

The Board were further assured that a pragmatic approach was suggested in regard to existing pets and whilst action would be taken against those who wilfully breached the policy, action may not be taken against a tenant who owned more than two pets but in circumstances where there were no other causes for concern.

The Board raised concern that this approach may lead to anxiety amongst pet owners and accusations of double-standards. It was requested that the policy be worded in such a way that tenants were aware that the policy may be applied in cases where problems arose from pet ownership.

Action: The Landlord Services Manager would consider the wording of the policy.

The Chair requested that further queries and comments be sent to the Landlord Services Manager and considered at the next meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board.

RESOLVED that the policy be further discussed at the meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board on 12th May 2021

Reason

To allow the Board more time to consider and comment on the policy.

35. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW UPDATE

The Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing gave a verbal report updating the Board on the Sheltered Housing Review (item 5 on the agenda).

The Board were advised that:

- (i) The Council had completed a review of the sheltered housing schemes, a Project Initiation Document was agreed, a Project Board set up. Consultation was held with residents of all the schemes to agree a Sheltered housing standard, which was approved by the Board. All schemes were assessed against the standard and the schemes prioritised.
- (ii) The review identified St Michaels Court as the Councils first priority, and after reviewing all options available concluded that refurbishment work alone could not deliver a scheme that met all the requirements of the Sheltered Housing Standard

- (iii) In March 2020 the Council held a meeting with residents of St Michaels Court to discuss the outcome of the review of their scheme.
- (iv) A timetable for the next steps was provided in the newsletter. Unfortunately, Covid-19 had impacted on these plans, making certain aspects of the project, such as surveys, impossible to undertake while maintaining social distancing requirements
- (v) However, during this time the Council had continued to work on the parts of the review that could be taken forward and had met with Planning colleagues to discuss the potential designs for the scheme. The plans being developed had considered the approved Sheltered Housing Standards and the significantly higher space and amenity standards required from a replacement scheme.
- (vi) A letter had been sent to residents to apologise for the delays in the works.
- (vii) Final plans have been submitted for planning advice, after which these would be taken to the Project Board for consideration. A meeting would then be held with residents to discuss the designs. It was hoped that this could be done face-to-face, but this would be dependent on Covid-19 restrictions.

The Board raised the importance of having a contingency plan given the uncertainty on when certain Covid-19 restrictions would be lifted and the need to find ways to work around restrictions should they continue. The Board further asked if there was a plan on when building work would start.

The Board were advised that a timeframe could not be provided until planning comments received and these had been presented to the Board. In regard to Covid-19 restrictions it was advised that the situation would need to be assessed as it unfolded, and it would need to be considered as to how best to provide information to residents.

Action: Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing would circulate the Sheltered Housing Standard to the Board.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

36. THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGE IN THE COUNCIL'S POLICY ON BULK WASTE COLLECTION ON COUNCIL DWELLINGS

At the request of the Chair, this item was deferred to the meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board on 12th May 2021.

The Board requested that should any more information on the issue become known during that time that it be supplemented to the report, particularly with respect to the 4-month implementation policy.

RESOLVED

1. that the item be deferred the meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board on 12th May 2021.
2. That any new information be supplemented to the report.

Reason

1. To enable Board members who needed to leave the meeting early to have time to consider all items.
2. So that any new information could be considered by the Board.

Councillor Poland left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

37. 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 the Chair asked the following:

"Could the Board please consider which items within the Performance Pack they consider to be most relevant".

Action: The Board would consider the relevance of the individual items within the Performance Pack.

38. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report of the Head of Landlord Services to enable the Board to agree its Work Programme (item 8 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.

Meeting dates for the remainder of the 2020/21 Council Year and for the 2021/22 Council Year were proposed to the Board.

RESOLVED

1. that the Board's Work Programme be updated to reflect all decisions made above and earlier in the meeting.
2. that the Board agree the following date for a meeting of the Board during the remainder of the 2020/21 Council Year (at 4.30pm):

Wednesday, 12th May 2021.

3. that the Board agree the following dates for meetings of the Board for the 2021/22 Council Year (all at 4.30pm):

Wednesday, 14th July 2021
Wednesday, 8th September 2021
Wednesday, 10th November 2021
Wednesday 12th January 2022
Wednesday 23rd March 2022
Wednesday 11th May 2022

4. that the Board reviews the information it wishes to receive in the Performance Information Pack.

Reasons

1. So that these items be considered by the Board.
2. To ensure that the information in the Work Programme is up to date.
3. The Terms of Reference of the Board state that the Board will agree a programme of meetings for the forthcoming year annually, on the basis of meetings taking place every two months.
4. A review of this matter has been requested by the Chair.

39. EXEMPT INFORMATION

It was resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

At this point in the meeting the livestream was switched off.

40. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PLANNED WORKS, VOIDS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Landlord Services was considered (Exempt item 10 on the Agenda).

The Head of Landlord Services attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item.

A summary of the Board's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Housing Management Advisory Board 40E. 2020/21).

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next meeting of Full Council meeting 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.