

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
12TH JANUARY 2022**

PRESENT: The Chair (Edwardes)
The Vice Chair (Riley)
Board Members Davis, Hudson, Mason,
Councillors Capleton, Draycott and Seaton

Councillor Poland – Cabinet Lead Member for
Public Housing

Head of Landlord Services
Group Accountant
Democratic Services Officer (NC)
Democratic Services Officer (EB)

APOLOGIES: Board Members Ali and Wright

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.

31. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10th November 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- (i) It was clarified that the reserve for financing major repairs still existed.
- (ii) The Sheltered Housing Review and the Asset Management Strategy had been added to the work plan.
- (iii) A covering note had been produced regarding the bulky waste collection and circulated to the Board. It was further clarified that collections were paid for out of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and there was a separate contract for the clearance of internal areas, also paid out of the HRA.
- (iv) The email containing information on bulky waste collection that was circulated following the previous meeting would be re-circulated to the new Board Members.
- (v) Regarding the report from Savill's that reported that rents in Charnwood Borough Council housing were lower than the peer group, it was clarified that this meant that the Council did not have as much surplus as other Councils in the peer group too. It was further clarified that since the rent formula was set by central government, it was difficult to increase rents. It was added that if a council property became void then rents could be increased when re-let to meet a formula rent. It was added that one year

there had not been any increase in rents or council tax and this had a knock-on effect.

- (vi) It was clarified that CPI was set each September for the following financial year. September 2021 CPI was 3.1%.

Mr Philip Hudson joined the meeting during the discussion of this item.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

33. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report for the Board to consider the housing capital programme for 2022-2023 (item 4 on the agenda).

The Head of Landlord Services gave an update as follows:

- (i) The report set out the approach to investment in the housing stock for the year.
- (ii) Under the Charnwood standard the Council replaces a kitchen every 20 years, a bathroom every 30 years, and a boiler every 15 years as a minimum. This approach would lead to peaks in the number of replacements needed each year as often replacements would be needed at the same time.
- (iii) There had been a backlog of work due to the impact of the national lockdowns, the high level of refusals for work, and the contract with Fortem Solutions Ltd concluding in 2021, limiting delivery. When this backlog was considered with the 2022/23 the programmes were too big to deliver within one year, as such there is a proposal to lower the delivery programme to the more manageable target of 200 kitchens and 200 bathrooms.
- (iv) Multiple contractors would be delivering the replacements. A tender had been put out for level access showers and adaptations and a tender for kitchens and bathrooms was being prepared to be put out.
- (v) In addition to improving existing homes, £1.5 million had been included in the programme to acquire more properties to meet housing need.
- (vi) Improvement of communal areas, installations of disabled adaptations and installation of fire-safety works were continuing.

The Head of Landlord Services noted a typographical error on page 13 of the report, the figure for the 2022/23 capital budget to deliver works should have read £9,244,000 rather than £9,214,200.

In response to questions the Board were informed that:

- (i). Bathrooms would be replaced every 30 years, whereas level-access showers would be replaced every 15 years typically due to degradation off the floor of the shower. If a shower over a bath broke, it would be replaced where necessary.
- (ii). It was clarified that the Stock Maximisation – Garages budget was to improve garage sites that were in poor condition i.e. re-roofing, in order to enable re-letting. Garages were under review regarding the use of the sites. Some sites

- were used well and unlikely suitable for development, however there were instances where issues such as replacement doors were needed. The sites would be subject to an assessment.
- (iii). An assessment on all doors was carried out by a contractor. Those in need of urgent replacement would be delivered first. It was expected that some doors that were functional but not to standard would be put into the programme down the line and approached on a priority basis.
 - (iv). Mobility scooter storage would be provided in general needs accommodation as well as sheltered accommodation.
 - (v). It was clarified that 'Water closet' referred to a toilet that was separate to a bathroom.
 - (vi). The Stock Condition Survey was planned for the coming year in order to update the system and to check the assumptions in the business plan. It was likely to be based on a 20% sample of properties, it was thought that a survey of around 1000 properties would be representative. When the survey was completed, the data would be fed into the systems. If the work needed was different to that in the 30-year plan then the plan would be amended.
 - (vii). It was possible that additional project management resources would be needed to coordinate the work of multiple contractors.

Action: Head of Landlord Services to confirm position on how to prevent issues on a property coinciding. Democratic Services Officer to send out note with minutes.

A query was raised by a tenant member of the Board regarding how the compatibility of the lifeline system would be affected by the replacement of front doors.

Action: Head of Landlord Services to discuss with member following the meeting.

The issue of the future of garages at Fielding Court was raised.

Action: Head of Landlord Services to consult with Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing on the issue and feed back to the Board.

RESOLVED that the Board endorse the approach to delivering the 2022-23 2022/23 capital programme as set out in the report.

Reason

To improve the Council's housing stock, in line with the Charnwood and Decent Homes Standards, thus delivering the priorities set out in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan approved by Cabinet in September 2014.

34. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET CONSULTATION 2022-2023

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report to enable members of the Board to consider the 2022/23 budget before the final budget report goes to Cabinet in February 2022 (item 5 on the agenda).

The Group Accountant attended the meeting to assist with the discussion of this item and gave an update as follows:

- (i) The consultation covered the budget for the next financial year and covered how the revenue funded the capital programme.
- (ii) Overall there were no service pressures compared with previous years.
- (iii) Rent increases would be increased in line with government guidance.
- (iv) Based on the draft budget, £1.9 million would be taken out of the HRA financing fund to help finance the capital programme.
- (v) Previous year's surpluses were put into a separate reserve.
- (vi) It had been recommended that £110 per property was put into the working balances as a minimum level of reserve.

It was suggested that funds could be transferred from the General Revenue Budget to the HRA due to the general revenue fund making a profit from bulk waste collection.

The Head of Landlord Services clarified that there had been an increased cost in terms of estate maintenance, however, there had been no causal link proven between the increase in bulky waste collection and the increased costs. It was also unsure as to whether it was legally viable for the General Revenue Budget to fund the HRA.

Action: Group Accountant and Head of Landlord Services to consult with the Accountancy and Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and report back to the Board.

It was clarified that four hours of bulky waste collection per week was paid for through the HRA in a contract with Serco.

Issues were raised by the Board concerning waste from Housing Association properties being dumped on Council land.

Action: Head of Landlord Services to contact Tenancy and Estates Manager to report on the issue.

Concern was raised about the impact of bulky waste charges on tenants on benefits and low incomes. It was noted that it was agreed by Cabinet that collection could be free in exceptional circumstances if the tenant could not afford it, however, concern was raised that this information was not readily available to tenants.

In response to a question from the Board it was clarified that:

- (i). The average weekly rent increase of 4.1% did not include service charges.
- (ii). Council tax recharged referred to tenants living in sheltered accommodation which were bed sits classed as one property rather than individual properties, as such one Council tax bill was paid, re-charged to those tenants only.
- (iii). The rates, rents and other charges referred largely to empty properties for which the HRA needed to pick up Council tax.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Boards consideration of the matter.

The Group Accountant left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

35. 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.

36. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report of the Head of Landlord Services to enable the Board to agree its Work Programme (item 7 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.

Summary of discussion:

- (i) The possibility of adjusting age limits on lettings in order to better use stock had been added to the Work Programme under 'Re-designation of Stock.
- (ii) The STAR Survey was conducted every two years.
- (iii) The Fencing Policy had been considered by CHRF and as such could now be considered by HMAB.
- (iv) It was noted that the Work Programme for March 2022 was heavy.

Action: Democratic Services Officer to arrange meeting with Chair, Vice-Chair and Head of Landlord Services to discuss Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Board's Work Programme be updated to reflect all decisions made above and earlier in the meeting.

Reasons

To ensure that the information in the Work Programme is up to date.

37. 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 Paragraph 3 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 stopped.

38. UPDATE ON FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PLANNED WORKS, VOIDS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

An exempt report of the Head of Landlord Services was considered (Exempt item 9 on the agenda).

A summary of the Board's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Housing Management Advisory Board 38E. 2021/22).

NOTES:

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