

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
7TH SEPTEMBER 2022**

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)
Board Members Ali, Davis, Mason, Wright,
Capleton, Draycott and Seaton

Director of Housing and Wellbeing
Landlord Services Manager
Repairs and Investment Manager
Customer Engagement Officer (HK)
Customer Engagement Officer (A E-S)
Democratic Services Officer (EB)

APOLOGIES: Board Members Hudson and Riley

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.

12. CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF BOARD 2022/23 COUNCIL YEAR

The Board was asked for nominations for a Chair and Vice-chair for the Council year 2022/23.

RESOLVED

1. that Mrs T. Edwardes be elected as Chair of the Board for the 2022/23 Council year;
2. that Miss T. Riley be elected as Vice-chair of the Board for the 2022/23 Council year

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 6th July 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- (i) The possibility was raised that voids in sheltered accommodation were due to a lack of functioning lifeline equipment. **Action: Landlord Services Manager to look into whether non-functioning lifeline equipment was preventing re-let.**
- (ii) The Director of Housing and Wellbeing was aware of an outstanding action regarding Anti-Social Behaviour and would follow it up.
- (iii) A new Housing Strategy and Support Manager had started on 5th September 2022. Opportunities for empty properties would be considered.

- (iv) There would be an appraisal of options for St Michael's and tenants would be updated with relevant information. **Action: Sheltered Housing Update to be given at the next meeting of the Board.**
- (v) Around 700 applicants for housing had been written to asking for more information to inform assessments. The system worked by people applying to join the register, expressing preferences for locations, with Council staff determining eligibility to join the housing waiting list and determining need.
- (vi) Ward Councillors were being informed on the Thurmaston site for sheltered accommodation. **Action: Update on Thurmaston site to be given at the next meeting of the Board.**

14. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS, AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

15. SELF-ASSESSMENT OF OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES AGAINST THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN'S COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing (formerly Head of Landlord Services) submitted a report presenting with the outcome of the landlord service's self-assessment of its complaints policy and procedures against the Housing Ombudsman's requirements and criteria as set out in its complaints handling code. (Item 5 on the agenda).

The Landlord Services Manager attended the meeting to assist with the discussion of this item and gave an update as follows:

- (i) The self-assessment was required by the Ombudsman. It was very prescriptive and the Council was obliged to comply with its requirements.
- (ii) This was the first assessment done against this code and the report presented the outcome.
- (iii) Each section of the report was in turn divided into subsections, one containing elements that must be fulfilled and another that contained elements that were highly recommended to be fulfilled (not mandatory, but expected). These would be taken into account.
- (iv) 93.1% of requirements were fully compliant and very few elements needed work to fulfil their obligations. The report expanded on elements partially fulfilled or not fulfilled. Only one requirement had not been complied with. The report gave an explanation of what would be done to fulfil requirements.
- (v) This was an annual self-assessment and the code may be subject to change in the future.
- (vi) The report outlined how the Council was benchmarked against other similar organisations. In terms of formal complaints received per 1,000 units the Council were below the others in the peer-group.
- (vii) The Council had three stages in its internal complaints process whereas the Ombudsman recommended only two stages and required participating organisations to justify their having more than two. This complaint stage was known as 'stage 0'. Over 90% of complaints were resolved at stage 0. This fulfilled the requirement for speedy resolutions and as such there were

strong grounds to retain stage 0. The Ombudsman had since accepted this justification and so our three-stage process will be retained.

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

- (i) The report and its consideration by the board acted as an external audit process, this was acceptable to the Ombudsman. The report was also publicly available.
- (ii) The Council had a procedure for dealing with vexatious complaints. The complaints policy would be reviewed next year.
- (iii) Options for resolving complaints were limited when the complaint was made anonymously as the individual who made the complaint could not be responded to. However, if the information in the complaint was considered important, the issue may be investigated.
- (iv) The non-compliant matter referred to the discretionary criteria that where agreement over an extension period could not be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident could challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response. As part of the complaints process, the Council informed tenants of the right to take a complaint to the Ombudsman. The timescales would be built in to the process.
- (v) There was currently no information to explain the big drop in complaints from May to June 2022. **Action: Landlord Services Manager to analyse to see if there was a trend or a reason and send and conclusions to the Board.**

Councillor Seaton noted that the Council went above and beyond regarding the discretionary criteria.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Boards consideration of the matter.

16. CURRENT STRUCTURES

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing gave a verbal report on the current structures of the Charnwood Borough Council Housing Service. (Item 6 on the agenda).

The Board were informed that under the new structure the Head of Landlord Services was now the Director of Housing and Wellbeing and was responsible for the following officers:

- (i) The Head of Strategic Housing, who was responsible for Housing Strategy and Support, Housing Needs and Allocations, Private Sector Housing and resettlement services.

- (ii) The Repairs and Investments Manager who was responsible for Investment and Programme delivery, Repairs and Maintenance, Health and Safety, Compliance and Business Support.
- (iii) The Landlord Services Manager, who was responsible for Customer Engagement and Older Persons Services, Tenancy and Income Management, Business Support and Rent Accounting and Leaseholders.
- (iv) Other Officers were the Neighbourhoods and Partnership Manager and the Sport and Active Recreation Manager.

The Board were further informed that there would likely be more involvement of teams on priority estates and that there would likely be further changes to the structure in future.

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

- (i) Housing Strategy and Support looked at where more public housing was needed. They worked with developers building properties and looked at affordable housing contributions. They also looked at development including on garage sites and would also work on sheltered accommodation. **Action: Housing Strategy and Support Officer to be invited to a future meeting to explain how new housing is delivered via the planning system.**
- (ii) Housing Needs and Allocations included Homelessness. Allocation involved nominations to housing associations or allocation of Council stock.
- (iii) Private Sector Housing undertook the duty to ensure that private sector housing was up to standard.
- (iv) Resettlement Services concerned Syrian refugees. This was outside of the Housing Revenue Account.
- (v) Older Persons' Services included sheltered accommodation, lifeline services and wardens.
- (vi) The Neighbourhoods and Partnership manager was responsible for community development.
- (vii) There was a process of acquisitions of stock. The Council had an asset management strategy. This looked at the amount of money invested in stock and at the investment capacity. **Action: Asset Management Strategy to be added to workplan for meeting on 11th January 2023.**
- (viii) The email address for member enquiries was Councillors.Enquiries@charnwood.gov.uk

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Boards consideration of the matter.

17. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION PACK - QUARTER 1 2022-23

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing (formerly Head of Landlord Services) submitted a report for the Board to consider performance at the end of Quarter 1, 2022-2023, April to June 2022. (Item 7 on the agenda).

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

The Board were advised that the data showed what performance indicators fell within tolerance and what fell outside with a commentary as to why. Criteria included Universal Credit, compliance and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

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

- (i) There was a backlog in repairs due to difficulty accessing properties during Covid-19 restrictions and a lack of staff. There were further issues caused by difficulty in retaining tradespeople due to competition from other employers. A recruitment drive was underway. Four applications from bricklayers had been received and the Council was close to starting with a new electrician. One more further electrician was needed and there was also a need for plasterers. If the recruitment drive was not successful then a market premium was undertaken whereby offering higher salaries would be considered. Performance was generally good but there was a backlog on non-urgent repairs. **Action: Repairs and Investment Manager to find out how many and the oldest planned repairs will take.**
- (ii) There was a legal obligation to undertake gas servicing. If someone refused entry to a property where this needed to be undertaken, a warrant would be needed. More gas engineers had been recruited by PH Jones to catch up on servicing. Court costs were claimed for action over gas issues. **Action: Repairs and Investment Manager to get up to date figures for gas compliance.**
- (iii) ASB cases were dealt with but not necessarily formally closed down. This affected the statistics. There was a rigorous recording method for ASB whereby each new incident was now required to be recorded as a separate report in the Sentinel system. This made it difficult to compare with previous statistics due to the change in recording method. Some ASB cases were dealt with through legal action and some through informal action.
- (iv) It was important that people reported crime to the police as statistics could be useful, for example when the police were obtaining a drugs warrant.
- (v) Regarding customer engagement, next year's planned tenant networking event would give tenants an opportunity to discuss anti-social behaviour with team members; this would include giving out information on how ASB could be reported.
- (vi) More staff were being recruited to the contact centre and resources had increased. Reports could also be made online.
- (vii) Regarding electricity, completions were increasing. The newly recruited electrician would be able to assist with completions.
- (viii) An additional and selective licensing scheme was being introduced.

Councillor Draycott informed those present that tenants could call Crimestoppers to report ASB if they wished to remain anonymous.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

18. 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.

19. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report of the The Director of Housing and Wellbeing (formerly Head of Landlord Services) to enable the Board to agree its Work Programme. (Item 9 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) It was requested that the Housing Strategy Manager be invited to a future meeting to discuss housing obtained through the planning system.
- (ii) Savills would provide an update on the Asset Management Strategy on 11th January 2022.

RESOLVED

1. that a Sheltered Housing Update be added to the Board's Work Programme.

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

Reasons

1. so that it can be considered by the Board.

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

20. 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 recording was stopped.

21. 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 11 on the agenda).

A summary of the Board's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Housing Management Advisory Board 21E. 2022/23).

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.