

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
9TH NOVEMBER 2022**

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)
The Vice Chair (T. Riley)
Board Members Davis, Hudson, Wright, Capleton,
Draycott and Seaton

Director of Housing and Wellbeing
Landlord Services Manager
Project Building Surveying Team Leader
Customer Engagement Officer (HK)
Customer Engagement Officer (A E-S)
Democratic Services Officer (EB)
Neil Ward (CLC)
David Harrison (CLC)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Poland, Board Member Yasmin Ali

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He 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.

22. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7th September 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- (i) **Action: The Landlord Services Manager would respond to the Board over why complaints appeared to have reduced so significantly in Q1.**
- (ii) **Action: The Landlord Services Manager would double-check whether non-functioning lifeline equipment was preventing re-let.**
- (iii) The Director of Housing and Wellbeing clarified that regarding the 700 (approx.) applicants for housing had been written to asking for more information to inform assessments, these applications had already been registered and were up to date in terms of assessing the applications, however, some extra information had been requested and responses were being awaited.
- (iv) The Landlord services Manager had responded on why there had been a big drop in complaints from May to June 2022.
- (v) **Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to follow up on actions for the Repairs and Investments Manager from the last meeting.**

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

No declarations of interest were made.

24. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN POSITION 2021/22

The Group Accountant submitted a report detailing the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn for 2021/22 for revenue and capital expenditure. (Item 4 on the agenda).

The Board were informed that:

- (i) The figures were still being externally audited.
- (ii) The outturn was split into revenue and capital. The revenue report showed a surplus of £2.9m. This was largely because it didn't need to finance the Capital Programme.
- (iii) The report illustrated the various reserves that the HRA had.
- (iv) The HRA Financing Fund was now at £14.5m.
- (v) The Major Repairs Reserve was at £4.2m.
- (vi) The HRA owed £79m on loans. The first one would be repaid in 2024.
- (vii) Over tie the HRA Financing fund would come down and the HRA Business Plan would re-finance.
- (viii) Voids were higher than previously.
- (ix) Capital Outturn had been carried forward at the request of Cabinet.
- (x) It was noted that the table on the HRA Capital Programme was incorrect in the report. **Action: Democratic Services Officer to forward correct table to the Board.**
- (xi) There was an expenditure of £3.5m against a budget of £9.8m of the Capital Programme.

In response to questions the Board were informed that:

- (i) Figures had not been available until July 2022 as they had needed to go to Cabinet. Annual leave for officers had also delayed the production of the report. The Programme was reported each year.
- (ii) Slippage was money that was not spent in a financial year carried forward into the next financial year.
- (iii) Replacement of doors was being carried out on a planned basis as there had been a systemic issue with composite doors and less risk was associated with timber doors. **Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to check any reported issues of weather adversely affecting timber doors.**
- (iv) The underspend on legal costs was offset by a shortfall in legal costs.
- (v) Assisted transfers were where tenants had downsized. Payments were made on that basis to incentivise people to downsize. The amount spent on this each year was demand-led. **Action: Landlord Services Manager to advertise payments for assisted transfers.**
- (vi) The Council could grant Discretionary Housing Payments to those subject to the spare room subsidy while they were attempting to downsize.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

25. BUDGET SETTING AND PRIORITIES FOR NEXT YEAR

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing submitted a report providing an overview of the budget-setting process, and to enable members of the Board to comment on priorities for 2023/24, and the approach taken in respect of the identification of future priorities. (Item 5 on the agenda).

The Board were informed that:

- (i) The report gave information about the budget setting process and also set out the approach for spending priorities.
- (ii) The budget would be seen by Cabinet in December. This would include the Housing budget. The Housing Management Advisory Board would then get the opportunity to comment on the budget at their meeting on 11th January 2023. This would then be taken to Cabinet in February and then to Council for approval.
- (iii) Priorities included increasing capital works spend and progression of the review of sheltered accommodation.
- (iv) Future priorities identified would be defined in the new Asset Management Strategy and Savills would attend the meeting of the Board on 1st February to inform the Board.

Councillor Draycott noted a typographical error in the report. The reference to the Cabinet Meeting in December 2023 should have read December 2022.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

REASON

To acknowledge the comments of the Board on the priorities for 2023/24 identified, and the approach taken in respect of the identification of future priorities.

26. CONTRACTORS' PERFORMANCE

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing delivered a verbal report outlining the performance of contractors for the Council's Housing Service. (Item 6 on the agenda).

The Project Building Surveying Team Leader, and Neil Ward and David Harrison from the CLC Group were in attendance to assist with the consideration of the item.

The Board were informed by CLC that:

- (i) CLC had been appointed for major adaptations works such as level access showers for disabled people as well as general adaptations such as widening doorways, creating level access entrances and installing ramps.
- (ii) The contract would run until April 2024 with an option for a two-year extension.
- (iii) The budget was approximately £1.2m per annum, this was slightly flexible.
- (iv) Following a shaky start the pace of adaptations was picking up and they were now completing five properties per week.
- (v) Designs were coming through.
- (vi) 22 bathrooms had been completed and 24 were in progress.
- (vii) 15 ramps were ready for approval.
- (viii) Good feedback had been received from tenants.
- (ix) Key Performance Indicators were at 100% for 10 surveys.

Action: Visits to properties for Board to view adaptations to be arranged.

The Project Building Surveying Team Leader noted that whilst he had strict standards he was very happy with the workmanship of CLC.

In response to questions the Board were informed that:

- (i) Council standards were high but achievable.
- (ii) Anything missed would need to be fixed to an acceptable standard before properties were handed over to the Council.
- (iii) Level access showers were taking longer than expected, they should be completed in 10 days and 15 if walls needed to be taken out). Some were met on target but others were taking longer as there were sometimes issues in the final stages. The average completion time was 15 days.
- (iv) When adaptations to showers took place residents were without a shower for approximately 10 working days as tiling was completed and floors were installed.
- (v) CLC had liaison officers with the Council so that standards could be kept and the Council could be kept up to date of any issues that arose.
- (vi) CLC would not be paid until works were complete and there were penalties in the contract for omissions.
- (vii) The initial slow start had been due to CLC learning the Council standard and ways of working and insufficient resources on site. The standards expected were now being achieved.
- (viii) Companies brought in to assist were experienced with working on social housing. They were known to CLC and trusted.
- (ix) Apprentices had been advertised for. **Actions: CLC to check where apprentices were being advertised for. Director of Housing and Wellbeing to ask Charnwood Borough Council Communications if advertisements could go on the Council website and liaise with CLC.**

The Chair noted that she was pleased with the initial progress.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the issue.

27. SHELTERED HOUSING UPDATE

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing delivered a verbal report outlining the situation regarding the Council's sheltered housing stock. (Item 7 on the agenda).

The Board were informed that:

- (i) A more formal report would come to the Board at their meeting on 11th January 2023.
- (ii) The Sheltered Housing Board had met and options had been considered for St Michael's Court. The next step was to do communications with residents which would happen over the following weeks. Following this a paper would be produced setting out a recommended option and seeking an endorsement.
- (iii) The complexes were large and as such there was a lot to consider. It was foreseen that this would be a key piece of work going forward.

In response to questions the Board were informed that:

- (i) All options had been explored and it was likely that a sheltered accommodation asset strategy would be brought through setting out the priorities for each scheme.
- (ii) There were 13 schemes and approximately 335 tenants in the schemes (couples sharing a flat would count as one tenant).
- (iii) All bar one scheme was in need of improvement. Some schemes needed more improvement than others and there was a need to consider all options.
- (iv) Regarding housing need there was a need to understand demand.
- (v) There was a need to consider whether schemes could meet aspirations.
- (vi) It was necessary to consider all sheltered accommodation schemes as there was a range of options for different sites and lots of potential outcomes.
- (vii) In many instances accommodation was not suitable. Some bedsits were very small and there were also difficulties with levels and issues with steps across schemes. As such needs were not being met and accommodation was difficult to let. As such it was necessary to move forward with the strategy.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the issue.

28. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION PACK - QUARTER 2

The Landlord Services Manager and the Repairs and Investment Manager submitted a report for the Board to consider performance at the end of Quarter 2, 2022-2023, April to June 2022. (Item 8 on the agenda).

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

The Board were advised that anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents were reported by estate. They were further advised that the apparent significant increase in ASB on Warwick Way was due to multiple incidences of one particular ASB case.

A reduction of ASB was reported in the Bell Foundry estate.

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

- (i) An estate constituted council housing schemes within a locality.
- (ii) Incidences were cases that involved a council tenant as either the victim or perpetrator. Sometimes the perpetrator was also a victim.
- (iii) The ASB team was now at full strength as two new staff members had been recruited. Both new staff members were becoming integrated in the team and the impact was reflected in the number of open cases at the end of quarter 2. More cases had been closed due to increased resources in the team.
- (iv) Figures and information regarding how much council stock was in certain areas would be circulated to the Board. **Action: Democratic Services Officer to circulate link provided by Director of Housing and Wellbeing.**

The Board noted that certain issues may skew ASB figures. For example the fact that the Bell Foundry estate was a large estate of flats rather than houses on streets.

Councillor Seaton noted that the upcoming Thorpebury development that would become part of Thurmaston and as such percentage figures could be misleading.

The Chair and Vice-Chair proposed new categories for and information to be contained within the Performance Information Pack regarding voids as follows:

- The number of voids awaiting repairs.
- The number of voids being worked on/completed by the team.
- The length of time for each repair.
- The reasons behind any delays.
- The length of time properties were empty.
- The number of properties offered through choice-based lettings weekly and the properties added.
- The reasons for unsuitability given for properties deemed unsuitable.
- How much the Council was losing financially on voids.

Action: Future performance packs to include above information starting with financial loss figure as it would act as a driver and an indicator (loss would decrease as voids come down).

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing noted that there were a number of reasons for delays, however overall the position on standard voids in repair had improved and a general report on voids performance could be provided.

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing further added that issues surrounding void properties that were not cost-effective would be considered as part of the asset management strategy.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

29. 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 Councillor Draycott asked the following:

With the number of fires in residential properties especially blocks of flats, from electric bikes, usually by the batteries. Would the Housing Department consider introducing a policy for tenants on this matter to keep them safe?

The Board were directed to the response published on 8th November 2022.

[\(Public Pack\) Questions from Members of the Board Agenda Supplement for Housing Management Advisory Board, 09/11/2022 16:30 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

Councillor Draycott asked the supplementary question:

Could officers give thought to including electric bikes specifically and could an article raising awareness of the fire hazards caused by electric scooters be published in the newsletter.

The Landlord Services Manager responded that obligations for tenants on storage of items would be covered within the existing wording of the tenancy agreement. However, he agreed that it was a good idea to clarify this through other means such as an article in the tenants magazine.

Action: Landlord Services Manager to publish an article in the tenants magazine raising awareness of the fire hazards caused by electric scooters and clarifying obligations for storage of items.

In response to a question from the Chair the Landlord Services Manager reported that there had been an event held by a debt collection agency on getting agreements for monies owed to be paid by former tenants. He had not attended the event himself but understood that the response had not been good.

30. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing 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.

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing reported that when communications had been done with tenants regarding the Sheltered Housing at St Michaels, the recommended option could come to the Board.

RESOLVED

1. that the Sheltered Review – St Michael’s Court be added to the Board’s Work Programme for 11th January 2022.
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.

31. 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.

32. 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 12 on the agenda).

A summary of the Board's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Housing Management Advisory Board 32E. 2022/23).

NOTES:

1. The Democratic Services Officer joined the meeting remotely.
2. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next 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.
3. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board.