

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
22ND MARCH 2023**

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

Councillor Poland (Cabinet Lead Member for
Public Housing)

M. Wilkinson, T. Walker (J. Tomlinson)

Director Housing and Wellbeing
Repairs and Investment Manager
Landlord Services Manager
Customer Engagement Officer (AE-S)
Customer Engagement Officer (HK)
Democratic Services Officer (RD) and Democratic
Services Officer (LS)

APOLOGIES: Board Members Edwardes and Seaton

46. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 1st February 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.

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

No disclosures were made.

48. INTRODUCTION TO J. TOMLINSON

The Board received an introduction to representatives of J. Tomlinson, appointed contractor for kitchen and bathroom installations, structural works and voids works.

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Director Housing and Wellbeing, the Repairs and Investment Manager and representatives of J. Tomlinson listed as present.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) The positive start to the contract was outlined. Noted that early days, required improvements were being identified and addressed, in particular time being taken to complete installations and customer liaison/satisfaction. High priority being given to this. Work to deliver social value elements outlined, including school visits and volunteering communal gardens. Aware of impact of voids on revenue, working to accelerate that work, also surveying of structural works underway.

- (ii) Contract had been operating for three months. Some work slowed to sort problems before continuing, effective approach.
- (iii) View that useful if, in addition to tenant, adjoining neighbours were informed of planned work, so that aware there may be some disturbance.
- (iv) The contractor currently had a temporary base in Loughborough (Russell Street), but that was not sufficient and a larger facility would shortly be secured (Festival Drive). View that practical location.
- (v) Re: customer liaison/contact. This was via mobile telephone number, landline for out of hours, also email. Visits also undertaken. Checked whether additional support required by tenants.
- (vi) Time taken to complete installations. Target was kitchens 12 days, bathrooms 10 days. Current performance was kitchens 16 days average, bathrooms 13 days average, not significant concern but improvement needed, contractor working on.
- (vii) Contractor was aware communication with tenants not always right, taking action to address. View that important to manage expectation and communicate effectively with tenants from the beginning of process, every tenant different. Useful to include in correspondence to tenants that work “may take longer”.
- (viii) Representatives of J. Tomlinson were thanked for attending and left the meeting.
- (ix) View that it was important that performance on the contract was regularly and effectively monitored. Stated that volumes were beginning to be completed, new base/depot in Loughborough should assist. In response to a question, work being completed by mix of J. Tomlinson operatives and sub-contractors. View that tenants should be made aware of that.

RESOLVED

1. that the introduction to J. Tomlinson and discussion at this meeting be noted;
2. that representatives of J. Tomlinson and the Repairs and Investment Manager consider appropriate neighbour notification letter as suggested in (iii) above;
3. that it be noted that the Board may ask representatives of J. Tomlinson to attend a further meeting later in 2023 once the contract has been operating for longer.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the Board’s consideration of the matter.
2. The suggestion was supported at the meeting and it would be helpful to neighbours of properties where work was due to take place.
3. To enable the Board to be updated on how the contract was progressing.

49. SERVICE STANDARDS (REPAIR OPERATIVES), PLUS REPAIR GUIDE

The Board considered a report of the Director Housing and Wellbeing setting out a revised suite of service standards for the landlord service and its rented and leasehold council homes (item 5 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Director Housing and Wellbeing.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Noted, standards all measurable, reflected in performance information submitted to Board.
- (ii) Concern, based on experience as ward councillor, that standards set out in section Anti-social Behaviour Service Standards, agenda page 9 not being met in practice. In particular, that complainants now being advised to complete online form rather than speaking to a contact, not appropriate for difficult situation complainants in. Also, that there was no reference to the requirement on tenants to comply with tenancy conditions, this and the associated warnings and actions should be stated before reference to signposting to community trigger process.
- (iii) In response to above, all those identified as high risk automatically referred through system. Important to set out commitments. Re: reporting online, other mechanisms to report still existed. There was a requirement on the Council to inform complainants of the community trigger option, the mechanism assisted an effective response. The Council's Anti-social Behaviour Policy set out the requirement to comply with tenancy conditions and the associated warnings and actions. Reference to case closure by disposal (action status at point of closure) data in performance information report, agenda page 34, also ASB complainant satisfaction data, agenda page 26. Concern that residents were not always receiving the help they should be. Acknowledged that survey response rate too low, could be improved. Stated that Council as landlord must comply with law.
- (iv) The Charnwood Standard and the Government's Decent Homes Standard related to component replacement requirements, briefly discussed.

RESOLVED

1. that the service standards and discussion at this meeting be noted, and that the service standards be endorsed, subject to the following suggested amendment:

inclusion of a further commitment under Anti-social Behaviour Service Standards to indicate that the Council will require tenants to comply with their tenancy agreement/conditions in respect of anti-social behaviour.
2. that the Director Housing and Wellbeing check that a flexible approach was being taken to how anti-social behaviour could be reported to the Council.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter. The Board considered that the suggested amendment would ensure that the Council's expectation regarding this was clearly stated in the standards.
2. Following a concern expressed at this meeting, to ensure that complainants were not being required to report via online form only.

50. DECANT AND DISTURBANCE POLICY

The Board considered a report of the Landlord Services Manager setting out a proposed new policy on the Council's approach to the decanting of tenants to alternative properties in specific circumstances and the financial redress that will be paid in connection with that process (item 6 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Director Housing and Wellbeing and the Landlord Services Manager.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Noted, the policy was not applicable to tenants who had expressed a wish to move.
- (ii) The process of decanting sat outside the Council's allocations policy, but work was undertaken with housing needs to identify suitable properties to move to. If emergency situation, bed and breakfast accommodation sometimes used initially. Concern expressed that food expenses were usually higher when in such accommodation, response that likely to be very temporary use in this context and provision for this.
- (iii) Section 4F (agenda page 18) set out ex-gratia compensation provision.
- (iv) If adopted, the effect of the policy on the relevant budget would be monitored.
- (iv) The Charnwood Housing Residents Forum had considered the policy and made useful comments.
- (v) View that good to have a policy and it might be useful to receive an update on the operation of the policy in six months' time (agreed later in the meeting, work programme item). Also stated that there might be a peak in use as J. Tomlinson undertook structural works as required.
- (vi) Confirmed that there would be a requirement to redecorate a property if needed after necessary works undertaken, not a matter for this policy.
- (vii) Question, how many decant cases? In response, exact number not known at this meeting, but not regular occurrence, small numbers, usually planned.
- (viii) Re: Section 4F, ex-gratia compensation, was there guidance on how that might be calculated? In response, Housing Ombudsman guidance would be used, policy could include reference to that.
- (ix) Appropriate support would be provided to tenants who needed it, for example by the Council's tenancy or income teams.

RESOLVED that the Decant and Disturbance Policy and discussion at this meeting be noted, and that the policy be endorsed, subject to the inclusion of reference to Housing Ombudsman guidance as suggested in (viii) above.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter. The Board considered that the suggested inclusion would be useful to officers and to tenants to whom the policy applied.

51. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION PACK

The Board considered a performance information pack for Quarter 3 2022-23 (item 7 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Director Housing and Wellbeing and the Landlord Services Manager.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Void performance information now included following Board's discussion. Heading in right direction. Agenda page 28, peak on graph was Christmas period. In response to question, graph further explained. Additional allocations staff so voids expected to continue to fall, also sheltered accommodation work. Voids were properties that were empty and could not be let. Information provided next time would aim to indicate split between sheltered and general let.
- (ii) Confirmed that disabled adapted properties may take longer to let to ensure best use was made of those adaptations.
- (iii) Noted, very good performance in respect of rent collection/arrears, should be best since 2019/20.
- (iv) Reconciliation exercise currently being undertaken was affecting smoke alarm number data, related to change in requirement from one in each property to one on each floor. Explanation provided in information pack.
- (v) View that more operatives seemed to be visiting to test and check matters. Confirmed that electrics tested before tenant moved in even if in date electrical certificate existed.
- (vi) Discussed at close of meeting, but relevant to this item. Anti-social behaviour data at agenda page 33. Reference to some estates having high incidence of anti-social behaviour. Sometimes multiple reporting of one issue, commentary on the data would assist its correct interpretation. Also noted that this was often pockets within those estates, there were also good communities within them. Discussion regarding work being undertaken to address and to improve the areas concerned, including by manager of Marios Tinenti Centre who also worked on Warwick Way estate. View that it was important to direct resources to where they were needed most, this would be ensured in respect of work undertaken by J. Tomlinson.

RESOLVED that the performance information pack for Quarter 3 2022-23 and discussion at this meeting be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

52. 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.

53. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Director Housing and Wellbeing to enable the Board to agree its work programme (item 9 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Director Housing and Wellbeing and the Democratic Services Officer (LS).

RESOLVED

1. that the following items be added to the work programme:
 - (i) Damp and Mould Policy (12th July 2023 meeting);
 - (ii) Decant and Disturbance Policy Update (to be considered six months after the policy is implemented);and that the already listed item Redesignation of Stock be scheduled for 12th July 2023 meeting;
2. that the Board proceed on the basis of the submitted work programme, updated to reflect work undertaken at this meeting and any amendments or additions agreed above or earlier in the meeting;
3. that the Board's remaining 2022/23 meeting on 26th April 2023 be cancelled as there were no items scheduled for consideration;
4. that the Democratic Services Officer (LS) send to members of the Board the dates scheduled for meetings of the Board in 2023/24.

Reasons

1. It is appropriate and useful for the Board to consider these matters.
2. To ensure that the information in the Board's work programme is up to date.
3. Meetings should be held only when there is business that requires consideration.
4. So that members of the Board are aware of the dates on which meetings will be held.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next available Ordinary 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.