

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD  
11TH JANUARY 2023**

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)

Board Members Ali, Davis, Hudson, Wright,  
Capleton, Draycott and Seaton

Director of Housing and Wellbeing  
Repairs and Investment Manager  
Landlord Services Manager  
Group Accountant  
Democratic Services Officer (EB)

APOLOGIES: T. Riley (Vice Chair)

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.

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes: Regarding the request for articles in the tenants' newsletter on both electric scooters and the Lightbulb Project, there had not been space for these in the Winter edition, but they would be published in the Spring edition.

*Post-meeting note: This was subject to a correction noted in Exempt Minute 40E.*

*Councillor Seaton joined the meeting during the consideration of this item.*

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

- (i) By Councillor Seaton – with regards to Item 4 on the Agenda – She was a County Councillor.
- (ii) By Councillor Seaton – with regards to Items 4 and 5 on the Agenda – She was the Ward Councillor for Thurmaston.

*Post-meeting note: These declarations were made during Item 4.*

### 35. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET CONSULTATION 2023/24

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report to enable members of the Board to consider the 2023/24 budget before the final budget report goes to Cabinet in February 2023. (Item 4 on the agenda).

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing and the Group Accountant attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item.

The Board were informed that:

- (i) The draft budget had gone to Cabinet in December 2022 and the final budget would go to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. This would then go to Full Council in February 2023.
- (ii) The report showed a surplus of £616k and a net increase of £12.9k in service pressures. This had since changed. The final position for the next financial year was not yet available. The figures would be affected by the work taking place on St Michael's Court as this would affect revenue contributions to capital. This had been profiled for the next financial year but could also affect the 2024/25 financial year. The cost of this work should be seen as an investment rather than a loss, however, it would mean that rent from the current tenants would not be collected whilst the work was taking place. £2m of capital investment was expected to be financed for this project in the upcoming financial year.
- (iii) There had been a proposal for a 7% increase in rent for the next financial year using the guidance of Consumer Price Inflation (CPI)+1% this was the highest that the Council were allowed to set the rate.
- (iv) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) service pressures totalled nearly £23k which included Housing Ombudsman fees and contract inflation which was in turn reduced by £10k due to car allowances. There was currently a review of the housing needs department that would impact on this which would come out of the financing fund, this would support the allocation of officers to support the re-letting of properties.
- (v) The general HRA balances were based on how many properties the Council would have at the year-end.
- (vi) The HRA Financing Fund was projected to be £13.2m, with £2m already allocated for the next financial year. This money was the surplus HRA fund that was not in working balances.
- (vii) There was £79m debt with the government that resulted from a financing scheme 12 years ago. The first payment was due soon after the next financial year. This money would need to be either re-borrowed or paid back. This would be an officer decision in terms of treasury management.
- (viii) A stock condition survey had been undertaken by Savill's and the Board would receive an updated asset management strategy. It was likely that there would be less money in the future which would add pressure on resources.

Councillor Draycott referred to the proposed rent increases and noted that whilst help was proposed for tenants on Universal Credit, tenants not on benefits could face increased pressures. She further noted that the cuts being made by Leicestershire

County Council, including to the Falcon Centre, would impact Charnwood Borough Council, particularly with regard to people without accommodation.

**Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to clarify how many tenants were on benefits.**

In response to questions the Board were informed that:

- (i) Tenants had not yet been informed of the rent increases as a final decision had not yet been made.
- (ii) Rents in Charnwood Council Housing were low compared to the Councils peer group. This affected the HRA business plan.
- (iii) It was possible that Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) may be increased on a temporary basis if there was a shortfall between benefits and rent levels. The period for DHP payments had been reduced to six months from 12 months. **Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to clarify the DHP budget for the next financial year and the criteria for those eligible.**

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

36. REVIEW OF SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION - ST MICHAEL'S COURT

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing submitted a report seeking endorsement of the proposed direction of travel in respect of the redevelopment of St Michael's Court in Thurmaston. (Item 5 on the agenda).

The Repairs and Investment Manager attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item.

The Board were informed that:

- (i) The direction of travel was informed by housing needs data.
- (ii) The demand for sheltered accommodation in the area was relatively low, however, there was a need for smaller properties and a need for level-access accommodation.
- (iii) A number of options were considered, however, it was recognised that similar development was happening elsewhere and it was preferable to avoid saturating the market.
- (iv) The possibility of a replacement sheltered accommodation scheme was considered, however, the data had not supported the need for this.
- (v) The close proximity of a church limited the scale of development.
- (vi) The possibility of remodelling the existing scheme was considered, however, this did not seem economically feasible.

- (vii) The options for the scheme were laid out in the Appendix 1 to the report. Option A – Version 2 (bungalows) was considered by officers to be the preferred option.
- (viii) Appendix 2 of the report laid out a financial comparison of the options. Each scheme were compared against the same criteria.
- (ix) All options had a cost associated with them. The best financially performing options were thought to be bungalow schemes as they had similar rent to a house but were cheaper to build.
- (x) Flats were considered to be in between bungalows and houses in terms of financial efficiency.
- (xi) It was possible that the Council could obtain money from Homes England.
- (xii) Option A – Version 2 met the housing need and was projected to perform well financially. They were also likely to be acceptable from a planning perspective and could potentially provide accommodation to existing residents.
- (xiii) There were very few tenants remaining in the existing scheme. These had each been visited and supported in getting alternative accommodation. Relatives and carers had been involved where relevant.
- (xiv) There would be further consultation in Spring 2023. Residents in the vicinity would be invited.

The following summarises the discussion:

- (i) Board Member Philip Hudson expressed a preference that similar age groups live in the scheme, and as such would support either bungalows or flats, but not the two together.
- (ii) Councillor Seaton suggested that flats could house more people than bungalows, and that suggested that there might be a housing need for flats. However, she had been told that flats could only be mixed tenure and that Option A – Version 2 was more level and would not affect the street scene dramatically.
- (iii) A request was made for clarification on how many of those who had expressed interested in living in the scheme were under the age of 50.  
**Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to establish this figure.**
- (iv) From an architectural point of view, a ‘start-again’ project would be more feasible than a refurbishment. Remodelling on a large scale would be very complex and as such it was better to start from the ‘ground-up’ rather than rearranging, for example, to include individual bathrooms in each unit. There would also be a cost for ancillary work in a refurbishment.
- (v) The indicative price of the scheme included demolition. There would also need to be ground works as the site was on a slope.
- (vi) As the position had changed since the initial estimates, the budget was indicative. Contracts would be tendered out on a fixed price for the work.
- (vii) The bungalows would accommodate one or two people in each one.
- (viii) Option A – Version 2 provided a scheme whereby existing residents could move back in, however, an overall review of housing need in the Borough would be undertaken. This option appeared best for the current situation at this location.
- (ix) General needs accommodation would be subject to the Right to Buy (RTB), however, support could be attached to bungalows (i.e. the installation of

- lifelines etc.) which could limit the possibility of RTB. Sheltered accommodation was not subject to RTB.
- (x) Councillor Draycott suggested that bungalows housing those with the relevant housing need could free up 2-3 bedroom properties across the borough and thus increase capacity. She further added that whilst full disabled adaptations may not be required to begin with, it may be preferable to have wet rooms installed from the outset as this would save in the long-term. She stressed the need for a decision to be taken quickly as costings for materials was increasing and there was a need to avoid the site becoming derelict.
  - (xi) The Chair added that many people in the borough wished to downsize and there was not a large amount of ground-floor accommodation in Charnwood. Therefore this supported the construction of bungalows.
  - (xii) The Director of Housing and Wellbeing had requested that the item go to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, taking the comments of the Board into account.
  - (xiii) It had previously been requested that a glossary of acronyms be attached to reports. This was not present in the report for this item. **Action: Officers to include a glossary of acronyms in future reports.**
  - (xiv) Councillor Seaton relayed that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, it had been suggested to residents that the scheme would be self-contained flats that they could move back into. She added that there here had previously been more tenants in St Michael's Court but they had needed to move out due to problems with the building and were subsequently re-housed in other sheltered accommodation. As such she regretted the loss of sheltered accommodation in Thurmaston.

**RESOLVED** that the proposed direction of travel (Option A – Version 2) be endorsed by the Board, which in summary was:

To construct eight new bungalows at the location to develop a high-quality accommodation scheme in the borough which met housing need, performed well financially, was considered an attractive layout with convenient parking for residents with mobility issues, was likely to be acceptable from a planning perspective bearing in mind the adjacent listed church, and provided accommodation that current tenants of St Michael's Court could move back in to.

#### Reason

So that the proposed direction of travel could be proceeded on with the Board's endorsement and taking into account their comments.

### 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 no questions had been submitted.

### 38. 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 Landlord Services Manager requested that the draft new decant and disturbance policy be added to the work programme for the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- (ii) Meetings of the Board would continue in the pre-election period.
- (iii) The next Performance Information Pack would come to the meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.
- (iv) The Housing Strategy Manager was working on the report on the Re-designation of stock. It was suggested that the item be added to the workplan for 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- (v) The Housing Strategy would be part of the Corporate Business Plan.
- (vi) The next report on sheltered accommodation would be an overall approach to the issue. There was not yet a target date for this. **Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to inform Democratic Services when target date is known.**
- (vii) Garage reviews would come to the Board in the next financial year. **Action: Director of Housing and Wellbeing to inform Democratic Services when target date is known.**

### **RESOLVED**

1. that the Decant and disturbance policy be added to the Board's Work Programme for the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
2. that Re-designation of Stock be added to the Board's Work Programme for the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
3. that the Board's Work Programme be updated to reflect all decisions made above and earlier in the meeting.

### Reasons

1&2. So that they can be considered by the Board.

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

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 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.*

40. 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 40E. 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.