



HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

To: Board Members Y. Ali, A. Davis, T. Edwardes (Chair), P. Hudson, T. Riley (Vice-Chair), D. Wright, J. Wright, Councillors Goode, Infield and Monk (For attention)

All other members of the Council
(For information)

You are requested to attend the meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board to be held in Committee Room 1, at the Council Offices, Southfields, Loughborough on Wednesday, 8th May 2024 at 4.30 pm for the following business.

Chief Executive

Southfields
Loughborough

29th April 2024

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3 - 11

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2024 as a correct record.

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

All members will make a declaration at each meeting if they have an interest in any item of business on the agenda which would affect them more than tenants or residents of the ward(s) affected generally.

For information, disclosable pecuniary interests and registrable interests relate to entries that are included, or should be included, on a councillor's register of interests. Non-registrable interests relate to any other matters.

4. INTRODUCTION TO NEW REGULATORY STANDARDS
Verbal report / presentation.
5. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN'S COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE - SELF-ASSESSMENT 12 - 30
Report attached.
6. GARAGE STRATEGY 31 - 41
Report attached.
7. REVIEW OF PETS POLICY 42 - 51
Report attached.
8. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD
On this occasion, no questions were submitted.
9. WORK PROGRAMME 52 - 55
Report attached.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD 20TH MARCH 2024

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)
The Vice Chair (T. Riley)
Board Members A. Davis, P. Hudson, D. Wright,
J. Wright, Councillors Goode, Infield and Monk

G. Asangwe (aAFD Services)
W. Pymm (Jeakins Weir Ltd)
A. Weir (Jeakins Weir Ltd)

Director Housing and Wellbeing
Head of Landlord Services
Landlord Services Manager
Strategic Housing Manager
Democratic Services Officer (RD)

APOLOGIES: Board Member Y. Ali

44. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 19th February 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes were as follows:

- (i) It was queried whether titles and forenames of Board members could be included on agendas and minutes going forward, as it was felt by a few members of the Board that using surnames only was too formal and not welcoming. The Democratic Services Officer would investigate further and circulate a response to the Board.
- (ii) Minute 42. Sheltered Accommodation Strategy – summary (iii) - It was confirmed that market valuations had not been circulated to the Board due to the information potentially being commercially sensitive in the future.
- (iii) Minute 43. Tenant Satisfaction Measures – It was confirmed that satisfaction with the complaints process would be reported to the Board in the quarterly performance information pack going forward and would include the number of complaints and response times.

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

No declarations of interest were made.

46. INTRODUCTION TO AAFD SERVICES LTD (NEW COMMUNAL CLEANING CONTRACTOR)

The Operations Director, Mr Asangwe, of aAFD Services Ltd (Communal Cleaning Contractor) was in attendance at the meeting. He thanked the Board for his invitation to attend the meeting and provided a presentation to introduce the service.

Summary of presentation and responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) The communal cleaning contract had commenced with the Council on 1st March 2024. Based in Coalville, the company was family owned with more than 90 employees and experienced in communal cleaning contracts for housing associations and local authorities. 90% of their remit was with local authorities, including portfolios of properties for Blaby District Council and Melton Borough Council.
- (ii) aAFD Services had various accreditations including health and safety and environment and were audited externally on an annual basis.
- (iii) Pre-contract aAFD Services had spent considerable time liaising with the previous contractor and requesting TUPE rights (Transfer of Undertaking of Protection of Employees) ensuring that employee rights were kept and contractual obligations transferred. One communal cleaning employee transferred from the previous employer and two new employees were recruited at late notice due to a change of mind of two previous employees.
- (iv) A structure chart was presented to the Board outlining key staff and the Board was reassured that effective contingencies were in place and so far there had been no operational issues with meeting staffing requirements.
- (v) Operational times were 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday and excluded bank holidays. The contract supervisor was the main contact for queries.
- (vi) The cleaning products used were eco-friendly and the packaging material fully recyclable. Stronger products and heavy duty hard-surface cleaners would be used initially, particularly on voids, and would be assessed going forward.
- (vii) Water, hot water and electricity needed to be accounted for and a portable generator would be used for floor cleaners. Staff were trained in equipment use and the equipment would be returned to the office base every Friday for maintenance. aAFD Services had a subscription with 'Spotless Water' to ensure hot water would be provided for window cleaning. Confirmed there was no provision for tap water.
- (viii) In terms of historical issues raised with non-attendance of cleaners, or cleaning quality not to standard, the Board were reassured that contingencies were in place for staff shortages and that the company's ethos was to provide good communication with the Council and residents.
- (ix) Confirmed that all staff were DBS checked.
- (x) Schedules for monthly communal cleans would be displayed on noticeboards for tenants and would state the usual cleaning day for that area.
- (xi) Stairway cleaning was challenging and at present small manual buffers were being used. Scrubber/dryer back-packs were being investigated as a possible solution.

- (xii) Monthly contract meetings were now taking place and the Chair, who had been involved in the procurement process, would be invited to attend the meetings.

The Chair thanked Mr Asangwe for his presentation.

RESOLVED

1. That the Board noted the information presented.
2. That the cleaning contract be reviewed at the Housing Management and Advisory Board meeting on 10th July 2024.

Reasons

1. To enable the Board to consider and comment on the new cleaning contract.
2. To enable the Board to consider an update on the progress of the new cleaning contract.

47. INTRODUCTION TO JEAJKINS WEIR LTD (NEW MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR)

The Managing Director, Mr Weir, and the Contracts Manager, Mr Pymm, of Jeakins Weir Ltd (Maintenance Contractor) were in attendance at the meeting and introduced the service to the Board.

Summary of presentation and responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) The company had been founded in 1973 by Mr Weir's father and by the mid-1980's was providing responsive repairs contract services for organisations such as the RAF. They began providing responsive repairs services for local authorities such as Rutland, Melton and Market Harborough in the 1990's.
- (ii) This contract with the Council, which began late in 2023, included kitchens, bathrooms, voids and structural repairs, with site managers for each aspect. The company was currently in discussions with the Council regarding the setting up of the service, training of employees and the workload involved.
- (iii) The company was based at Travis Perkins which was also their materials supplier. The Contracts Manager, foremen and quantity surveyors were all based there and focused on this particular contract.
- (iv) The company was customer focussed and tenants would be actively encouraged to report problems. The company had a bespoke IT system which had increased efficiency and it was felt that good communication with tenants and the Council was important in order to build trust and solid working relationships.
- (v) Going forward on individual needs basis, the Customer Care Residents Liaison Officer would visit tenants to assess the work required, would introduce the service to the tenants providing an induction pack and would discuss the process, colour schemes if needed and timescales which would all be agreed with the tenants.

- (vi) The company had built a reliable team and currently employed 33 operatives, most of them local to the area. Trust in employees, training and ensuring the team had the skills needed and controlled growth of the company was important.
- (vii) Feedback from Council officers had been positive and delivery was reflected in the statistics so far. They were currently completing two kitchens and two bathrooms per week, plus work on voids and structural repairs. New voids would be dealt with immediately and they would also be working with the Council to gradually clear the backlog of voids.
- (viii) Staff were DBS checked and packs would be given to tenants with photographs of the operatives. The liaison officer would communicate with tenants if there were any changes with the assignment of operatives for their work.
- (ix) The bar had been raised in terms of standards across local authorities and the Council's specifications were on the higher side. There had been no issues with the standard from an operatives point of view.
- (x) Properties were not offered for handover until completion and therefore there did not tend to be many 'snags'. The Board were reassured that in the event of 'snags' they would be dealt with promptly.
- (xi) It was confirmed that the company would be working with local colleges in order to take on local apprentices. They could offer work experience and apprenticeships and also liaise with suppliers to provide gas engineering and electrician opportunities. This would be investigated further once the contract was further along.
- (xii) Career progression was already available within the company, with various school-leavers beginning to work on reception and then progressing to become quantity surveyors, estimators and accounts clerks. Staff were encouraged on an individual basis to progress based on their interests. It was also considered important for construction opportunities to be available for women.

The Chair reflected that the company's style of work was positive and thanked Mr Weir and Mr Pymm for their introduction.

RESOLVED that the Board noted the information presented.

Reason

To enable the Board to consider and comment on the new maintenance contract.

48. CLEANING CONTRACT - UPDATE

The meeting was adjourned for a short duration at 5.40pm at the beginning of this item.

The Board considered a report of the Landlord Services Manager providing an update on progress made in procuring a new communal cleaning contract (item 6 on the agenda).

A two-year contract with aAFD Services had commenced on 1st March 2024 and allowed for two further one-year extensions. Regular contract meetings would take place and the contract allowed for direct communication between tenants and the

contractor through a Liaison Officer, with any complaints coming to the Council. The Council website would be updated with contact information.

The specifications were considered to be clear and spot inspections would be carried out. The contract would be closely monitored and it was optimistic that initial problems had been solved quickly.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Frequency of cleans would remain unchanged and it was confirmed that all initial cleans would be carried out by the end of the month.
- (ii) In the event of problems, tenants would be able to contact the contractor directly and there was still also the option of contacting the Contact Centre at the Council.
- (iii) The inspection programme was to be re-configured and tenant sheets could be resurrected in the future.
- (iv) Cleaning and drying of external windows would be carried out and sills and frames would be included in the specifications, as would light-fittings, meter boxes and the cleaning of doors. Tenants would be encouraged to report broken electrical fittings.
- (v) Flyers/leaflets with contact details were currently being prepared and would be sent to tenants shortly.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

49. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION PACK Q3

The Board considered a report of the Landlord Services Manager and the Repairs and Investment Manager providing an update on performance at the end of quarter 3, 2023/24, October to December 2023 (item 7 on the agenda).

Also assisting with consideration of the matter: Director of Housing and Wellbeing.

Members of the Board were encouraged to scrutinise performance and the report.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Raised that performance had not been recorded in the report for percentage of residents satisfied with Decent Homes work and the percentage of tenants satisfied that the operative arrived on time.
- (ii) Members of the Board were in general not fully satisfied with the information provided in the performance pack and the Chair urged Board members to advise her if there were any alterations they would like to see or any ideas/suggestions.
- (iii) Performance of the in-house team tended to be higher, but when contractor figures were factored in this tended to pull all performance figures down. Steps

- were being taken to address this, such as setting the contractor up with an electronic portal to improve efficiency.
- (iv) It was recognised that it was early days for the new contractor and that a more balanced view and hopefully improvement of the figures would be taken at the next reporting period once the contract had settled.
 - (v) Raised that closer control would be needed around the responsive repair contracts.

RESOLVED that the Board noted the performance for the third quarter of the financial year, 2023/24.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

50. RE-DESIGNATION OF STOCK (DECLASSIFICATION OF 45+ PROPERTIES) - VERBAL UPDATE

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing provided the Board with a verbal update on the re-designation of stock (declassification of 45+ properties). He stated that a report to recommend the reduction of 45+ properties had been approved by Cabinet and that the next step was for work to be completed in phases.

The process of declassification would commence in the summer and would take place over a two-year period. Tenancies would be re-let after they had been vacated.

The Board was reassured that tenants would be communicated with in advance with articles to be placed in the tenant newsletter and also direct communication with the tenants directly affected. It was recognised that there was a high demand for properties in the Bellfoundry area and that communication to residents in that area could be effective through the Marios Tinenti Centre (MTC).

RESOLVED that the Board noted the update.

Reason

To ensure that the Board was kept informed of progress with the re-designation of stock.

51. PROPOSED CHANGES TO HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Board considered a report of the Head of Landlord Services presenting for approval revised Terms of Reference for the Housing Management Advisory Board, arising in response to the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards (item 9 on the agenda).

It was confirmed that the Board's Terms of Reference sat within the Council's Constitution and that therefore if the Board were in agreement with the proposed changes a recommendation would be made to Cabinet on 4th April 2024 and a final

decision to be made at Council on 22nd April 2024, with changes to be implemented in the next Council year (after annual Council on 13th May 2024).

The proposed changes were to further enable the Board to hold the landlord service to account and gain assurance that the Council was compliant with new regulations coming into place from 1st April 2024, the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023. The suggested change of title to 'Housing Management Assurance and Advisory Board' would reflect correct governance and robust challenge. The main changes to the Terms of Reference were within the 'Introduction and Purpose' with regard to the gain of assurance that the Council was listening to customers and within the 'Functions of the Board' with specific clarity on the role of the Board.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Officers reassured the Board that the change of name was intended to be accessible and understandable.
- (ii) Members of the Board had found it difficult to access the new Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 online. The Board requested a further update and explanation of the Act.
- (iii) It was considered that assurance was provided to the Board by the Council and the Board provided advice to the Council. Also considered that the Board was providing assurance to tenants and leaseholders that the landlord service was being scrutinised.
- (iv) Members of the Board were reminded and encouraged to contact the Chair if they had any comments/questions/ideas on what could be done differently in general in terms of the Board and the landlord service.
- (v) View that the new requirements ensured that customers' views were taken more seriously and supported the Board in holding the Council to account and that this could strengthen the bond between tenants and the Council.
- (vi) The proposed name of the Board was considered and there was a general consensus that the name was acceptable.
- (vii) Holding the Council to account in terms of Health and Safety to be added as a specific item under 'Functions of the Board'.

RESOLVED

1. That the Board be provided with more information/training on the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.
2. That the Terms of Reference and renaming of the Board be brought back to a future meeting for discussion.

Reasons

1. To ensure that the Board were clear on the expectations of Social Housing Landlords further to new consumer standards.
2. To enable the Board to further consider the Terms of Reference and name of the Board.

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 two questions had been submitted.

Question from J. Wright as follows:

"I would like to ask after the last meeting if there is a forward plan to make all sheltered housing habitable and update with proper facilities, so as older people can feel safe and secure in their own surroundings with no shared bathrooms?"

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing provided a response, summarised as follows:

The Housing Management and Advisory Board had considered a report on the Sheltered Accommodation Strategy at the previous meeting and the strategy had been approved by Cabinet on 7th March 2024. Therefore it was the plan to update the facilities going forward.

Question from P. Hudson as follows:

"In respect of the new cleaning contract, I have been informed the new time spent in Block 18-28 is the same 5 minute maximum [as the previous contract] with a swift brush of the stairs, quick mop down the middle and gone. Floors not dried, banisters and railings not wiped, step edges not swept, window ledges not wiped, inside front door window not cleaned etc. This is not acceptable, and I ask what steps are being put in place to achieve a standard of clean that is consistent with the specification?"

Mr Hudson confirmed that a response to his question was not now needed, since the problem had been resolved following a meeting with the contractor and he had been assured that it would not happen again and was satisfied with this response.

Mr Hudson asked a further question regarding turf and alterations to the curb at Fielding Court and it was confirmed that Fielding Court was being prioritised. A more in-depth conversation would be had after the meeting.

53. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report to enable it to agree its work programme (item 11 on the agenda).

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

RESOLVED

1. That the following items be added to the work programme:

Annual Self-Assessment – Consumer Standards (8th May 2024) (to then go to Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 2nd July 2024).

2. That the following already listed items be scheduled as follows:

Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code – Self-Assessment – annual item to be brought forward to meeting on 8th May 2024 (from September) in order to meet regulatory requirements to complete by June.

Garage Strategy – to be scheduled for meeting on 8th May 2024.

Review of Pets Policy – to be scheduled for meeting on 8th May 2024.

3. That the Board proceeds 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.

Reasons

1&2. It is appropriate and useful for the Board to consider these matters and to ensure that items already listed are suitably scheduled.

3. To ensure that the information in the Board’s work programme is up to date.

NOTES:

1. The Strategic Housing Manager attended the meeting virtually.
2. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next 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.
3. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 8 MAY 2024

Report of the landlord services manager

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the board with the outcome of the landlord service's annual self-assessment of its complaints policy and procedures against the Housing Ombudsman's requirements and criteria as set out in its complaints handling code.

2. ACTION REQUESTED

The board is requested to note and invited to comment upon the self-assessment.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2020 the Housing Ombudsman service published a code on how social housing landlords should handle complaints made about its services. All social housing landlords are now required to carry out and publish an annual self-assessment on how their complaints policy and procedures meet the code. A copy of the council's complaints policy can be found by following this link: [Complaints policy - Charnwood Borough Council](#) and [Complaints Process - Charnwood Borough Council](#) for its complaints process.

3.2 The creation of the complaints handling code was contained originally in the government's white paper on social housing, first published in November 2020. After a revision in the code early in 2022, social landlords had until October 2022 to become fully compliant.

3.3 While the code acted initially as a set of mandatory and advisory recommendations, the code was made statutory by virtue of it being incorporated into the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. There is no longer any distinction between requirements that are mandatory and advisory: landlords are expected to comply with all and fully.

3.4 The code sets out what tenants can expect from their landlord when they complain. It also provides tenants with information on how to make a complaint and how to, if desired, make progress with it through the landlord's internal complaints process.

3.5 The complaint handling code has in it a universal definition of a complaint, creating a positive complaint-handling culture, taking action to put things right and having appropriate remedies available. Its overall aims can be summarised thus:

- To create a national, standardised, uniform approach to complaints handling
- To ensure good complaint handling by:
 - having effective and fair procedures;
 - having well-trained staff;
 - having well-informed customers;

- aiming to offer early resolutions to put things right;
- having a willingness to learn from outcomes and improve; and
- fostering a positive complaints culture;
- providing a basis for effective scrutiny of the complaints-handling process

3.6 The code is now divided into nine sections as follows:

Section 1:	Definition of a complaint
Section 2:	Exclusions
Section 3:	Accessibility and awareness
Section 4:	Complaint-handling staff
Section 5:	The complaints-handling process
Section 6:	Complaints stages
Section 7:	Putting things right
Section 8:	Self-assessment, reporting and compliance
Section 9:	Scrutiny and oversight: continuous (sic) learning and development

3.7 Although the previous self-assessment was made in August 2024 we are required to complete subsequent self-assessments and submit them to the regulator by 30 June of each year, hence this report has been brought forward to this meeting.

3.8 Presenting this report to HMAB, publishing it on the council's website and putting an article about the self-assessment in the residents' magazine, *Your Homes Matter*, will fulfil our obligation to publish the self-assessment under this code.

3.9 A copy of the landlord service's self-assessment of the ombudsman's code is attached to this report as appendix A. A copy of the code itself can be found through this link: [The Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

4. CHANGES TO COMPLAINTS-HANDLING PROCESS

4.1 Recent changes to the code have required the council to amend its complaints policy. The changes made are as follows:

- Tenants now have up to twelve months rather than six in which to report a complaint;
- Complaints must be logged, defined and acknowledged formally within five working days of the complainant's receipt;
- The [unchanged] ten-day response time now starts from the date of formal acknowledgment, not of the date of receipt of the complaint;
- While one ten-day extension only is still permitted, agreement no longer has to be reached with the complainant to extend; but the extension has to be advised to the complainant in writing, along with an explanation as to why the extension is being applied and giving contact details of the ombudsman;
- The response must be given as soon as the outcome of the investigation has been determined rather than the respondent waiting until any required actions have been carried out.

The council's complaints policy and procedures have been amended to take account of these changes. Training for staff on the changes and general complaints handling has taken place.

5. SELF-ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

5.1 A summary of the outcome of our 2024 self-assessment is set out in the table below:

Section	No. criteria	Outcome	
		Compliant	Non-compliant
1	6	Compliant	5
		Non-compliant	1
2	5	Compliant	5
		Non-compliant	0
3	7	Compliant	7
		Non-compliant	0
4	3	Compliant	3
		Non-compliant	0
5	15	Compliant	15
		Non-compliant	0
6 (1)	9	Compliant	9
		Non-compliant	0
6 (2)	11	Compliant	11
		Non-compliant	0
7	4	Compliant	4
		Non-compliant	0
8	5	Compliant	5
		Non-compliant	0
9	8	Compliant	8
		Non-compliant	0

In conclusion, therefore:

All requirements

Compliant	72	98.6 %
Non-compliant	1	1.4 %

6. MONITORING AND BENCHMARKING OUR PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 In addition to the quarterly performance report to HMAB where complaints form part of the performance pack, managers within the landlord service receive monthly, more- detailed reports on complaints performance, including progress on action agreed in the wake of an upheld complaint and where practice or procedures will be reviewed.
- 6.2 As members of the national, sector-wide benchmarking organisation, HouseMark, we submit regular performance information on a very wide range of landlord service performance measures, including complaints handling. Performance summaries are released every month. Two complaints-handling measures are reported:

- Formal complaints received per 1,000 units; and
- Percentage of complaints resolved within timescale

7. CONCLUSION

Our self-assessment concludes that we are now at 97.26% compliance with the new code. Only two criteria are deemed to be non-compliant currently, of which one has already been dealt with and the other will be considered in the near future.

8. Recommendation

HMAB members are requested to note and are invited to comment upon this self-assessment.

Andrew Staton
Landlord Services Manager

17 April 2024

I. Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary, as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section I: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i>	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy updated in 2024 to reflect new code
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	Review of existing stage I complaints will evidence this https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Practice allows for this already Complaints can be submitted by a third party – policy

1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Complaints training and staff updates (team meetings)	Continues to form part of day to day business
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	No	Govmetric surveys should be able to accommodate this requirement	Request sent 18/4/24 to feedback provider to develop option. This has now been confirmed and will happen.

2. Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. 	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 			
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within twelve months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	Complaints training	Established practice
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Established practice

3. Section 3: Accessibility and awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/complaints_process	See how to complain, telephone, email, writing, staff will support.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	Complaints training	Established process
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low	Yes	End-of-year [March 2024] show that, compared to our peers through benchmarking information, we do not	Demonstrates we are comparable with peers.

	complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.		appear to be under-reporting complaints.	
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy is clear and available on the web
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	LGSCO and HO details are clear in the policy
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and established practice, also confirmed during complaints training.

Section 4: Complaint-handling staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	Staff structure	Link officer, service level, designated complaint handlers (team leader and above); customer experience team

4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes	Structure	Team leaders / managers have the authority to resolve stage 1 complaints and the customer experience manager has the authority at stage 2.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	Training covers this point	Learning points are a regular feature on team meetings and senior management team (landlord services).

Section 5: The complaint-handling process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Internal staff guidance	Established practice
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this

	the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.			
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and practice is to issue an acknowledgement and ask the resident to confirm they agree
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Internal staff guidance	Established practice
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 	Yes	A: Staff guidance and training B: Acknowledgement invites challenge on the landlords understanding of the complaint C: Established practice, if complaint handler has been involved with or continues to be involved with the resident on day to day basis, they would not be involved in the complaint handling. D: All complaint handlers manage complaints fairly and without bias	Established practice
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this, internal guidance and training
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this

	a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.			
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this – where an exclusion is to be used, it is established practice to notify the customer of this decision.
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Lagan – complaints database	Established practice
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this – and the vexatious policy can be invoked
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Vexatious Policy confirms this

Section 6: Complaints stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this – practice dictates that early resolution of the complaint is always sought as the first option.
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within ten working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than ten working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and internal complaints handling training

				confirms this to enable this to become established practice
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and internal complaints handling training confirms this to enable this to become established practice
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Yes	A: Staff guidance and training B, C, D, E, F & G: Staff training and corporate letter templates ensure this is established practice	Internal complaints handling training confirms this to enable this to become established practice

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this – residents may be asked to provide clarification of

				reasons where the complaint is of a complex nature
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and this is established practice
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and this is established practice
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and this is established practice
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and this is established practice
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied. 	Yes	A: Staff guidance and training B, C, D, E, F & G: Staff training and corporate letter templates ensure this is established practice	Internal complaints-handling training confirms this to enable this to become established practice
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and this is established practice

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy confirms this and this is established practice
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and internal guidance confirms this and this is established practice
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and internal guidance confirms this and this is established practice
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and internal guidance confirms this and this is established practice

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord’s complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord’s performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.	Yes	As this is a new requirement, the first annual report is due in April 2025 and will cover all of the required aspects listed at points a to f.	Not due until April 2025
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord’s governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body’s response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	As this is a new requirement, the first annual report is due in April 2025, it is due to be published and shared accordingly.	Not due until 04/2025
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Not applicable at present but should a restructure of the landlord service take place in the future then a further self-assessment of this code will take place.	Historical versions of the self-assessment
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	The landlord has a commitment to undertake actions requested by the ombudsman	Previous cases demonstrate this
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the code.	Yes	The landlord has a commitment to undertake actions requested by the ombudsman	Previous cases demonstrate this

Section 9: Scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply : Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Previous complaints / SMT reports	Complaint learning is an existing item on the landlords senior management meeting to ensure learning actions are carried forward to completion
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/page/corporate_complaints_policy	Policy and internal guidance confirms this and this is established practice
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Scrutiny minutes (Post April 2025)	Cllr Ashcroft to have elected member oversight and complaint report will go to Scrutiny Committee
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	Director of Customer Experience	Karey Summers will provide the senior oversight
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	Senior leader and elected cabinet member	Director of Customer Experience & Cabinet Lead member for

				Finance, Customer & Support Services, Revenues & Benefits
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	Cabinet lead member for Finance, Customer & Support Services, Revenues & Benefits	Cllr Ian Ashcroft – this is a new requirement, evidence will become available during 2024/25
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes	CLT minutes	A draft complaints report has been circulated at senior management level for discussion and refinement, this will be available every quarter
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body. 	Yes	A protocol and letter template exist for complaints that cut across council departments. The complaints guidance sets out an expectation that officers will look beyond the circumstances of individual complaints to identify underlying issues, and to use the data and learning from complaints to introduce positive changes and drive service improvements. This includes considering the wider outcomes and what can be done to reduce the likelihood of a similar situation arising in the future for other customers.	

			The council's code of conduct states that employees should deal with all matters with a level of competence appropriate to their role and in accordance with any professional codes of conduct which apply to them.	
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HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing Lead Member: Executive Member for Public and Private Sector Housing

GARAGE AND PARKING SITE STRATEGY 2024-2029

Purpose of Report

To provide the Garage and Parking Site Strategy 2024-2029 at Appendix 1 to the board for information, and to define the timescale for a future update to the board on its implementation.

Recommendations

1. The board is asked to note the strategy.
2. That the board receive an update on the implementation of the strategy at its meeting on 6th November 2024.

Reasons

1. To note the board has received a copy of the strategy for information.
2. To monitor the implementation of the strategy.

Background

On the 9th March 2023 Cabinet approved the Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy 2023-2028. That strategy sets out a commitment to undertake a review of garage sites.

A Garage and Parking Site Strategy has been developed and was approved by Cabinet on 7th March 2024.

Strategy Synopsis

The Council, like many other local authorities and registered social landlords, owns garage and parking sites, and the Council's 70 such sites are dispersed across the borough, typically near its social housing. Some sites have been re-developed over the years, however there are significant constraints which limit the development potential of those that remain.

The sites generate rental income from garages and parking spaces, however many of the garages and sites are old and require major investment. Some sites have been the location of crime and anti-social behaviour, complaints are regularly received around the condition of garages, and periodically enquiries are received from residents around plans for the sites.

Whilst there are generic site constraints, each of the sites is unique in some way. There is a need, therefore, to consider each site in a methodical way to determine

their future. This strategy sets out the wider context, and the mechanism by which this assessment will take place.

Over the life of the strategy, the Council will aim to achieve the following:

- Sustain and maximise garage and parking site rental income where economic to do so.
- Reduce the risk of harm and complaints arising because of garages and sites in poor condition.
- Make the best use of sites, considering both the financial and social aspect of the asset/s.
- An assessment of each site, considering its characteristics, and the available options, with specific consideration given to the potential for development of new social housing.

An organisational Garage and Parking Site Review Group will be established to consider the future of sites, producing an action plan to deliver the aims of this strategy.

The strategy recognises that capacity is needed to take this work forward. A new Housing Development Manager post has therefore been created and recruitment is in progress.

Background Papers:

Cabinet, 9th March 2023 Charnwood Borough
Council Asset Management Strategy 2023-2028

Cabinet, 16th November 2023, HRA Business Plan
and Capacity Update

Cabinet, 7th March 2024, Garage and Parking Site
Strategy 2024-2029

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Garage and Parking Site Strategy 2024-2029

Charnwood Borough Council

1. Introduction

The Council, like many other local authorities and registered social landlords, owns garage and parking sites, and the Council's 70 such sites are dispersed across the borough, typically near its social housing. Some sites have been re-developed over the years, however there are significant constraints which limit the development potential of those that remain.

The sites generate rental income from garages and parking spaces, however many of the garages and sites are old and require major investment. Some sites have been the location of crime and anti-social behaviour, complaints are regularly received around the condition of garages, and periodically enquiries are received from residents around plans for the sites.

Whilst there are generic site constraints, each of the sites is unique in some way. There is a need, therefore, to consider each site in a methodical way to determine their future. This strategy sets out the wider context, and the mechanism by which this assessment will take place.

The Strategy has regard to the Council's new Corporate Strategy 2024-2028 which sets out an aim to *look for opportunities to build or acquire new homes and help tackle homelessness* alongside broader objectives around delivering excellent services, achieving value for money through reviewing how we work, and exploring all options for service delivery to achieve the best results for our communities.

2. Strategic Aims

Over the life of the strategy, the Council will aim to achieve the following:

- Sustain and maximise garage and parking site rental income where economic to do so.
- Reduce the risk of harm and complaints arising because of garages and sites in poor condition.
- Make the best use of sites, considering both the financial and social aspect of the asset/s.
- An assessment of each site, considering its characteristics, and the available options, with specific consideration given to the potential for development of new social housing.

3. Background

The Council owns 64 garage sites dispersed across the Borough. Sites are typically located in proximity to Council owned housing stock. The Council's housing management system shows a stock of 818 single domestic garages. Garages are generally of panel construction, arranged in terraced blocks, and of various ages: many were built in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Generally, garages are small at 8ft x 12ft (2.43m x 3.65m) with some variation across sites.

478 garages are currently let out to Council tenants and other members of the public.

The Council also owns 6 former garage sites where residents can rent a plot to park a vehicle. Several one-off isolated garages, and smaller sites are also present.

A summary of garage sites and relevant data is at Appendix 1.

4. Garage Voids

As the age of garages and sites has increased, their condition has deteriorated, and garages have not been let, therefore. In February 2024 there were 340 garages not let, which is 41.56% of the total stock of 818 garages identified on the housing management system. The percentage of void loss has increased over the years. This is shown in the below table.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	April to December 2023
Total Void Loss %	29	30	33	37	38	39.61

Figure 1 - % Void loss associated with garages showing on the housing management system that are not let by year.

5. Garage Rental Income

Despite the increase in garages not let out, the level of charged rent has remained relatively buoyant because of rent increases over the years.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	April to December 2023
Total Charged Rent (Non-Void Garages)	233,150.78	240,577.75	227,035.05	213,454.26	265,407.28	193,250.64

Figure 2 - Total rent Charged at non-void garages by year.

The vast majority of garage rental income is collected. Rent arrears are currently around £1000 for the entire garage stock.

Garage rents are set based on an assessment undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency. For 2024/2025 it has been recommended to Cabinet that garage rents increase from £10.84 to £11.50 per week on a 48-week rent year.

It is desirable to sustain and maximise this level of rental income as far as is economically and practicably possible.

6. Parking Sites

In addition to garage sites, there are 6 former garage sites, now categorised as parking sites. There are also several isolated garages and small plots scattered across the borough.

Plots on parking sites are rented out at £72.00 per year. This amount charged is low, with income generated amounting to around £6,000 per annum.

A summary of larger parking sites is at Appendix 2.

7. Use and Demand for Garages

Given their small size, it is thought many garages are used for storage of items other than a modern vehicle. The garage tenancy agreement states tenants must:

Use the said garage only for the storage of a motor vehicle used by the tenant or for the storage of outside goods that are not dependant on a completely weatherproof environment.

Of the 478 people that currently rent a garage from the Council:

- 44 people have more than 1 garage.
- 42 people have 2 garages.
- 2 people have 3 garages.
- 22 garages are rented to people living outside of the borough.

The housing management system shows there are 279 current applications for a garage. The tables below which show that 115 applications were received last year, and most applications were from non-Council tenants.

Date of Application	Number of Applications on the Waiting List
2019 or older	16
2020	11
2021	54
2022	83
2023	115
Total	279

Figure 3 - Number of garage applications per year

Tenure of Applicant	Number of Applications on the Waiting List
Not a Council Tenant	250
Council Tenant	29
Total	279

Figure 4 - Tenure of Garage Applicants

The data above and at Appendix 1 indicates there is a general demand for garages across the borough.

8. Development Potential of Garage / Parking Sites

In developing this strategy officers have reviewed the strategies of other local authorities, and have met with representatives from a large, registered provider of social housing dealing with the same issue but on a larger scale.

In the context of already high construction costs, experience from other developers indicates that development is more expensive at garage sites, due to their constraints, which include the following (but not exclusively).

- Sites are small, with limited development potential as isolated sites.
- Illegal accesses have developed over the years.
- Land has been encroached upon.
- Accesses to sites are often narrow and difficult.
- Sites are overlooked.
- Trees, including those with preservation orders on, may be present.
- Some garage sites have become unofficial parking sites.
- Development may be unpopular with residents.
- Rights of way may exist.
- Substations may be present.

Many sites are contained behind domestic dwellings, such as the example at Manor Road, below, which is adjacent to a Council owned shrubbed area.



Figure 5 - Site at Manor Road, Loughborough, with adjoining shrubbed area to the Southeast.

NB. Image not to be reproduced.

A desktop review considering the potential for building 4 or more properties on sites has been completed. An indication of the development potential at sites can be found in the data set at Appendix 1. An initial appraisal has indicated Manor Road as holding the potential for 6-8 x 3

bed houses. Further detailed consideration will be needed around issues such as site topography, constraints, and viability.



Figure 6 - Site at Manor Road, Loughborough

NB. Image not to be reproduced.

Potentially sites in close geographical proximity to each other could be grouped together to make them more attractive for development or sale.

9. Repairs

Door repairs and replacements are regularly undertaken following them being, for example, broken in to, damaged by vehicles, or the locking mechanism failing.

Many garages contain asbestos, and whilst the material risk is generally low or very low, the presence of asbestos adds cost on to works. This year £41k has been spent on demolishing garages that cannot be repaired and removing asbestos.

Roof replacements at some garages, where there is thought to be limited scope for redevelopment, are currently being undertaken. In addition to the relatively high cost, this work is challenging to co-ordinate as the contents of garages must be removed by all tenants in the block for works to take place.

Complaints about the condition of garages are frequently received.

10. Options, Review Mechanism, and Capacity

A range of options for garage and parking sites exist, including (not exclusively):

- Retain and invest in a site where economically feasible, taking in to account the condition of sites, repair costs, demand, and options.
- Disposal of a site (or package of sites) to enable re-investment in other sites or capital works elsewhere.
- Council led redevelopment of a site/s to provide new social housing where viable.
- Work with a registered provider or private developer to redevelop a site/s where viable.
- Alternative use, e.g. parking site, or lease arrangement to a third party.

Each site, or group of sites will need to be assessed on an individual basis. It is likely appropriate for schemes to be prioritised for assessment based on size and logical geography, with larger sites near one another prioritised first.

Some sites are adjacent to sheltered schemes, which combine to create a larger land package. It is appropriate for these to also be considered though the review of sheltered accommodation, which will take place in parallel over the period this strategy covers.



Figure 7 - Garages adjacent to at Fielding Court sheltered accommodation, Loughborough.

Where existing garage tenants are displaced, the Council will make efforts to assist tenants to be relocated to another available garage nearby where possible.

An organisational Garage and Parking Site Review Group will be established to consider the future of sites, producing an action plan to deliver the aims of this strategy.

The Council does not currently have a dedicated housing development function. An organisational change process is in progress to provide capacity to take this work forward.

Appendix 1 - Summary of Garage Sites

Garage Site	2018					2022					April to December 2023					Snapshot at February 2024			Indicative Development Potential
	No	Gross Rent	Charged Rent	Void Loss	% Void Loss	No	Gross Rent	Charged Rent	Void Loss	% Void Loss	No	Gross Rent	Charged Rent	Void Loss	% Void Loss	Voids Total	% of Site Void	Total number of Registered Applications	
Anstey, Ashfield Drive	33	13,273.92	12,092.34	1,181.58	9	33	17,170.56	15,295.24	1,875.32	11	33	12877.92	11219.40	1658.52	12.88	5	15.15%	27	4-6 x 2 bed houses
Anstey, Chamwood Road	37	14,882.88	9,653.76	5,229.12	35	37	19,251.84	11,512.08	7,739.76	40	37	14438.88	8303.44	6135.44	42.49	17	45.95%	29	
Anstey, Church Lane	5	2,011.20	1,608.96	402.24	20	5	2,601.60	1,560.96	1,040.64	40	5	1951.20	1,246.60	704.60	36.11	1	20.00%	27	
Anstey, Martin Court	2	804.48	402.24	402.24	50	2	1,040.64	1,040.64	-	-	2	780.48	715.44	65.04	8.33	1	50.00%	27	
Barrow, Bryan Close	14	5,631.36	5,028.00	603.36	11	14	7,284.48	6,243.84	1,040.64	14	14	5463.36	4574.48	888.88	16.27	3	21.43%	42	
Barrow, Grasmere Close	12	4,826.88	3,310.10	1,516.78	31	12	6,243.84	3,891.56	2,352.28	38	12	4682.88	2,449.84	2,233.04	47.69	6	50.00%	42	
Barrow, Grays Court	2	804.48	636.88	167.60	21	2	1,040.64	1,040.64	-	-	2	780.48	780.48	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	37	
Barrow, Huston Close	24	9,653.76	7,944.24	1,709.52	18	24	12,487.68	9,105.60	3,382.08	27	24	9365.76	6330.56	3035.20	32.41	8	33.33%	44	
Barrow, Newton Close	14	5,631.36	3,167.64	2,463.72	44	14	7,284.48	5,951.16	1,333.32	18	14	5463.36	3848.20	1615.16	29.56	5	35.71%	41	
Birstall, Wanlip Lane	47	18,905.28	10,776.68	8,128.60	43	47	24,455.04	12,162.48	12,292.56	50	47	18341.28	9690.96	8650.32	47.16	23	48.94%	29	
Birstall, Windmill Avenue	17	6,838.08	5,078.28	1,759.80	26	17	8,845.44	6,764.16	2,081.28	24	17	6634.08	4823.80	1810.28	27.29	5	29.41%	28	
Burton, Seymour Road	5	2,011.20	1,290.52	720.68	36	5	2,601.60	1,560.96	1,040.64	40	5	1951.20	1,170.72	780.48	40.00	2	40.00%	13	
Hathern, The Green	5	2,011.20	2,011.20	-	-	5	2,601.60	2,601.60	-	-	5	1951.20	1,951.20	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	21	
Lboro, Alan Moss Crescent	26	10,458.24	8,447.04	2,011.20	19	26	13,528.32	8,769.56	4,758.76	35	26	10146.24	6254.68	3891.56	38.35	10	38.46%	19	2 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Alan Moss Road	14	5,631.36	4,215.14	1,416.22	25	14	7,284.48	5,268.24	2,016.24	28	14	5463.36	4682.88	780.48	14.29	2	14.29%	24	
Lboro, Blackbrook Road	14	5,631.36	4,994.48	636.88	11	14	7,284.48	5,062.28	2,222.20	31	14	5463.36	2937.64	2525.72	46.23	7	50.00%	16	
Lboro, Broadway	41	16,491.84	8,229.16	8,262.68	50	41	21,333.12	7,804.80	13,528.32	63	41	15999.84	5853.60	10146.24	63.41	26	63.41%	30	6-8 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Browning Road	6	2,528.16	804.48	1,723.68	68	6	3,266.88	1,040.64	2,226.24	68	6	2450.16	1,105.68	1,344.48	54.87	3	50.00%	12	
Lboro, Castledine St Ext	9	3,620.16	3,561.50	58.66	2	9	4,682.88	4,162.56	520.32	11	9	3512.16	3121.92	390.24	11.11	1	11.11%	13	4 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Chapman Street	4	1,608.96	804.48	804.48	50	4	2,081.28	1,040.64	1,040.64	50	4	1560.96	780.48	780.48	50.00	2	50.00%	29	4 x 1 bed flats
Lboro, Durham Road	9	3,620.16	3,217.92	402.24	11	9	4,682.88	3,642.24	1,040.64	22	9	3512.16	2731.68	780.48	22.22	2	22.22%	23	
Lboro, Empress Road	13	4,424.64	1,684.36	3,544.74	80	13	5,723.52	2,081.28	4,682.88	82	13	4292.64	1,203.24	3869.88	90.15	10	76.92%	30	
Lboro, Factory Street	5	2,011.20	1,969.30	41.90	2	5	2,601.60	1,658.52	943.08	36	5	1951.20	1777.76	173.44	8.89	0	0.00%	27	
Lboro, Fielding Court	7	2,815.68	561.46	2,254.22	80	7	3,642.24	520.32	3,121.92	86	7	2731.68	390.24	2341.44	85.71	6	85.71%	30	
Lboro, Forest Road	1	557.28	557.28	-	-	1	716.16	716.16	-	-	1	537.12	537.12	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	5	
Lboro, Garendon Green	23	9,251.52	6,502.88	2,748.64	30	23	11,967.36	6,059.56	5,907.80	49	23	8975.52	3783.16	5192.36	57.85	14	60.87%	18	4 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Hume Street	4	1,608.96	1,424.60	184.36	11	4	2,081.28	520.32	1,560.96	75	4	1560.96	390.24	1170.72	75.00	3	75.00%	29	
Lboro, Manor Road	25	10,056.00	2,865.96	7,190.04	72	25	13,008.00	3,566.36	9,441.64	73	25	9756.00	2710.00	7046.00	72.22	20	80.00%	27	6-8 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Maple Road	23	9,251.52	7,919.10	1,332.42	14	23	11,967.36	8,661.16	3,306.20	28	23	8975.52	6948.44	2027.08	22.58	7	30.43%	29	
Lboro, Moira Street	7	2,815.68	2,011.20	804.48	29	7	3,642.24	1,560.96	2,081.28	57	7	2731.68	1170.72	1560.96	57.14	4	57.14%	37	
Lboro, Oakham Close	7	2,815.68	2,413.44	402.24	14	7	3,642.24	2,699.16	943.08	26	7	2731.68	2319.76	411.92	15.08	2	28.57%	20	4 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Park Road	5	2,011.20	2,011.20	-	-	5	2,601.60	2,081.28	520.32	20	5	1951.20	1560.96	390.24	20.00	1	20.00%	28	
Lboro, Poplar Road	14	5,631.36	1,843.60	3,787.76	67	14	7,284.48	2,460.68	4,823.80	66	14	5463.36	1853.64	3609.72	66.07	11	78.57%	31	
Lboro, Rockingham Road	10	4,022.40	4,022.40	-	-	10	5,203.20	3,869.88	1,333.32	26	10	3902.40	3121.92	780.48	20.00	2	20.00%	21	
Lboro, Rutland Street	39	15,687.36	10,877.24	4,810.12	31	39	20,292.48	12,335.92	7,956.56	39	39	15219.36	8325.12	6894.24	45.30	19	48.72%	41	9 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Shelthorpe Avenue	7	2,815.68	0.00	2,815.68	100	7	3,642.24	0.00	3,642.24	100	7	2731.68	0.00	2731.68	100.00	7	100.00%	19	4 x 2 bed houses
Lboro, Thorpe Acre Road	7	2,815.68	2,011.20	804.48	29	7	3,642.24	1,788.60	1,853.64	51	7	2731.68	1170.72	1560.96	57.14	4	57.14%	17	
Lboro, Tuckers Road	28	11,262.72	10,240.36	1,022.36	9	28	14,568.96	11,349.48	3,219.48	22	28	10926.72	8737.04	2189.68	20.04	6	21.43%	16	
Lboro, Windsor Road	18	7,240.32	5,765.44	1,474.88	20	18	9,365.76	6,102.92	3,262.84	35	18	7024.32	4715.40	2308.92	32.87	6	33.33%	14	
Mountsorrel, Leicester Road	8	3,217.92	3,217.92	-	-	8	4,162.56	4,119.20	43.36	1	8	3121.92	3121.92	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	27	
Mountsorrel, Marsh Road	9	3,620.16	2,237.46	1,382.70	38	9	4,682.88	2,081.28	2,601.60	56	9	3512.16	1560.96	1951.20	55.56	5	55.56%	28	
Mountsorrel, Sorrel Court	2	804.48	804.48	-	-	2	1,040.64	1,040.64	-	-	2	780.48	780.48	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	26	
Queniborough, Link Road	4	1,608.96	1,206.72	402.24	25	4	2,081.28	1,560.96	520.32	25	4	1560.96	1170.72	390.24	25.00	1	25.00%	22	
Quorn, Freshfold Street	4	1,608.96	1,466.50	142.46	9	4	2,081.28	1,560.96	520.32	25	4	1560.96	195.12	1365.84	87.50	0	0.00%	21	
Rearsby, Brookside	6	2,413.44	1,659.24	754.20	31	6	3,121.92	2,081.28	1,040.64	33	6	2341.44	1560.96	780.48	33.33	2	33.33%	11	
Rothley, Babington Court	1	402.24	402.24	-	-	1	520.32	520.32	-	-	1	390.24	390.24	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	27	
Rothley, Greenway Close	10	4,022.40	3,620.16	402.24	10	10	5,203.20	5,203.20	-	-	10	3902.40	3902.40	0.00	0.00	1	10.00%	37	
Rothley, Halffields Lane	5	2,011.20	1,558.68	452.52	23	5	2,601.60	1,257.44	1,344.16	52	5	1951.20	1170.72	780.48	40.00	2	40.00%	28	
Seagrave, Green Lane Close	19	7,642.56	7,382.78	259.78	3	19	9,886.08	9,148.96	737.12	7	19	7414.56	6634.08	780.48	10.53	3	15.79%	21	
Shephed, Beresford Court	1	402.24	402.24	-	-	1	520.32	520.32	-	-	1	390.24	390.24	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	18	
Shephed, McCarthy Road	6	2,413.44	2,413.44	-	-	6	3,121.92	3,121.92	-	-	6	2341.44	1951.20	390.24	16.67	2	33.33%	21	4 x 1 bed bungalows
Sibley, Dudley Court	2	804.48	804.48	-	-	2	1,040.64	1,040.64	-	-	2	780.48	780.48	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	22	
Sibley, Greendon Rise	24	9,774.72	3,535.28	6,239.44	64	24	12,487.68	3,956.60	8,531.08	68	24	9365.76	2731.68	6634.08	70.83	17	70.83%	25	4 x 2 bed houses
Sibley, Homefield Road	12	4,826.88	4,826.88	-	-	12	6,243.84	5,485.04	758.80	12	12	4682.88	3837.36	845.52	18.06	2	16.67%	27	4-5 x 2 bed houses
Syston, Archdale Street	6	2,413.44	2,011.20	402.24	17	6	3,121.92	2,601.60	520.32	17	6	2341.44	1951.20	390.24	16.67	2	33.33%	44	
Syston, Chapel Close	8	3,217.92	2,815.68	402.24	13	8	4,162.56	3,121.92	1,040.64	25	8	3121.92	2222.20	899.72	28.82	3	37.50%	47	
Syston, Gloucester Avenue	64	25,743.36	16,701.34	9,042.02	35	64	33,300.48	18,525.56	14,774.92	44	64	24975.36	13506.64	11468.72	45.92	30	46.88%	53	-
Syston, Melton Road	2	804.48	804.48	-	-	2	1,040.64	1,040.64	-	-	2	780.48	780.48	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	46	
Syston, Sandford Road	2	804.48	804.48	-	-	2	1,040.64	520.32	520.32	50	2	780.48	390.24	390.24	50.00	1	50.00%	43	
Thurmaston, Bradgate Av	3	1,206.72	1,206.72	-	-	3	1,560.96	1,560.96	-	-	3	1170.72	910.56	260.16	22.22	1	33.33%	17	
Thurmaston, Melton Road	1	409.92	409.92	-	-	1	520.32	520.32	-	-	1	390.24	390.24	0.00	0.00	0	0.00%	17	
Whouse Eaves, Bird Hill Rd	21	8,447.04	5,229.12	3,217.92	38	21	10,926.72	5,203.20	5,723.52	52	21	8195.04	3902.40	4292.64	62.38	11	52.38%	15	4 x 1 bed bungalows.
Whouse Eaves, Hen																			

Appendix 2 - Summary of Large Parking Sites

Parking Sites	Indicative Development Potential
Bramley Road, Birstall	2 to 4 x 1 bed bungalows
Grey Crescent, Newtown Linford	1 to 4 x 1 bed bungalows
Burgin Road, Anstey	2 to 4 1 bed bungalows
The Stiles, Syston	2 x 2 bed houses
Churchgate, Loughborough	
Hawcliffe Road, Mountsorrel	

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 8 MAY 2024

Report of the landlord services manager

ITEM: REVIEW OF THE PETS POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the board with an interim summary of the effect on tenancy management of the new pets policy, which was implemented in 2022 following cabinet approval and to recommend some minor amendments to it.

2. ACTION REQUESTED

The board is requested to note and invited to comment upon the findings in this report and, if in agreement, endorse the proposed changes.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2021 a new pets policy was approved by cabinet which put into effect new provisions for the management of tenancies in respect of the ownership and keeping of pets. The draft policy had first been presented to HMAB in March 2021 and a number of proposed amendments were incorporated into the final policy presented back to HMAB in May 2021. This subsequently went to cabinet and was approved on 14 October 2021.

3.2 There had never been a formal policy on this matter although there had been internal operational procedures and the then-existing tenancy agreement was lacking in any detail and what detail did exist was open to differing interpretation. This increased the risk of the landlord service's position on pet ownership being inconsistent, subjectively applied and potentially unfair.

3.3 Operational procedures were developed to support implementation of the policy in time for it becoming 'live'.

3.4 The rationale for creating a formal pets policy was based on the acknowledgment that pet ownership is one of the most contentious areas of tenancy management and enforcement and, from housing management practitioners, attracts robust views, ranging from an abolitionist position to a virtual *laissez-faire* one. Such views include:

- Pet ownership is a major cause of anti-social behaviour complaints, especially with barking dogs, owners not clearing up after the pet's excrement and untrained (or malevolently-trained) dogs being kept that are a threat and danger to others;
- Allowing unfettered pet ownership encourages the trade in exotic and illegal animals, the result being that completely inappropriate pets are kept in people's homes;
- Pets provide companionship, especially to people (and even more so, older people) living on their own;

- Pet ownership has been demonstrated to be therapeutic to people’s mental and physical health, especially older people living alone by combatting loneliness;
 - Pet ownership is good for children’s social and educational development.
- 3.5 With or without a clear, published, pets policy and conditions of tenancy that complement it, the objective for those of us committed to practising sound, pragmatic and progressive housing management is to provide as best a balance as possible so as to strike a sensible compromise between those extreme positions exemplified in 3.4 above. Having such a clear policy, however, will aim to achieve all that and minimise the problems that not having a pets policy creates, as exemplified in 3.2 above.
- 3.6 HMAB members requested an update on the effects of the new policy on tenant pet ownership and whether any interim review of the policy was required prior to it being reviewed fully in 2026.

4. POLICY DETAILS

- 4.1 The new draft pets policy was designed to work in conjunction with the then-in-development new tenancy agreement (now in place) in that the conditions of tenancy relating to pet ownership provide some basic, headline, details but state clearly that the pets policy is the defining document. The sections in the conditions of tenancy that do relate to matters of pet ownership are very unlikely to change fundamentally, for example, the need for tenants to seek and obtain written permission before keeping pets, while omitting the more detailed aspects of the policy. The two principal advantages of this are that:
- it is easier to change a policy than it is to change conditions of tenancy; and
 - it reduces the amount of text in what will be a large document in any case without compromising our ability to be clear, consistent and enforce breaches of tenancy.

5. OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE SINCE THE NEW POLICY WAS IMPLEMENTED

- 5.1 In applying the new policy to existing pet owners a ‘light-touch’ approach was adopted from the outset and this has proved to have been a pragmatic and successful decision. Where tenants might be in breach of the policy through, for example, owning more than two dogs or cats, no enforcement action has been taken unless that breach was the subject of complaints that have been validated through investigation.
- 5.2 Since the new policy was put in force, there has been no notable increase in the number of refusals or subsequent enforcement action. 199 new permissions have been requested; but there has been no discernible change in the proportion of refusals to permissions. The pets policy is being applied rigorously to new permissions. Our tenancy management team is discussing with the housing systems [QL] team ways of adapting the QL system to enable more detailed recording of permissions, refusals and reason for refusal. It is clear, however, that the policy and its operational procedures have been implemented successfully and now provide a process whereby officers are able to approach the matter of pet ownership in a consistent and rigorous way.

6. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PETS POLICY

Operational practice and recent national events in respect of, for example, XL Bully dogs, have been taken into account when reviewing the policy. Proposed amendments are highlighted in red type in the policy, which is attached as appendix A to this report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The new pets policy has been a success in terms of its objective to provide a rigorous framework for consistent application of the council's position on pet ownership. We have developed robust operational procedures; suitable training has been provided and officers have welcomed the introduction of the policy.

7.2 There are some very minor changes to the policy proposed and, if recommended for amendment by members could be incorporated into the policy through delegated powers conferred upon the director of housing and wellbeing by cabinet.

7.3 We propose carrying out a more comprehensive review of the policy within the next three years as per section 8 of the policy.

8. RECOMMENDATION

HMAB members are requested to note and are invited to comment upon this report and, if in agreement, endorse the proposed changes into the pets policy.

Andrew Staton
Landlord Services Manager

12 April 2024

Appendix A

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LANDLORD SERVICES

PETS POLICY

1. Objectives of this policy

1.1 Keeping a pet¹ can bring many benefits and Charnwood Borough Council encourages responsible pet ownership. We also understand that some people need pets for physical, psychological or emotional reasons. Irresponsible pet owners, however, can cause, through their pets, a severe nuisance to others and harm to their pets through neglect or abuse. This policy, therefore, is designed to encourage responsible pet ownership.

1.2 The objectives of this policy are:

- to provide a framework that will deliver a positive, fair, sensitive and enlightened policy on council tenants keeping pets in their homes;
- to align our² policy on pets with the relevant conditions of tenancy as set out in our non-secure, introductory/secure tenancy agreement;
- to enable us to create operational procedures that deliver this policy in a consistent manner but also allowing for the correct degree of flexibility when considering individual requests to keep pets that fall outside this policy statement, for example, requests from tenants living in designated sheltered accommodation;
- to enable us to create operational procedures that will enable us to take the right enforcement action against breaches of tenancy or legislation under this policy, including tackling animal neglect and cruelty and pet-related anti-social behaviour;
- to express through this policy the acknowledgment of the importance of pets to people's well-being, including their psychological, emotional and physical health;
- to express also through this policy the acknowledgment of the disruption to people's lives that uncontrolled animals and irresponsible pet ownership can have on the welfare of the animal and on the lives of others. This policy sets out our position on dealing with uncontrolled and irresponsible pet ownership in our properties;
- to outline how we deal with animal neglect and hoarding.

¹ The use of the word 'pet' throughout this documents includes any living creature including mammals, fish, insects, reptiles, birds, amphibians, and invertebrates such as insects and, arachnids [spiders]

² References throughout this policy to "we", "our" and "us" are to be interpreted as relating to Charnwood Borough Council

2. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to everyone who is currently housed or is to be housed by us in our rented homes. It does not apply to leaseholders, whose lease terms will determine the matter of pet ownership.

3. Policy statement

3.1 Anyone, be they an existing or a prospective tenant wishing to keep a pet, must ask permission from us first by completing an application for permission to keep a pet.

3.2 Permission, if granted, will be granted in writing. Permission is not required for tenants to have a registered assistance (e.g. guide) dog; but tenants must inform us and provide a copy of their registration. For new tenancies, permission must be sought and given before the tenancy sign-up. The decision on whether to allow a pet to be kept will be made by the landlord service.

3.3 We take a positive view about residents keeping pets. Some animals, however, are not suitable for being kept as pets and for which permission will **never** be granted. These include:

- dogs of a breed that is prohibited by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or specified in other regulations or legislation **unless**, under section 1 of that act, the owner has a licence or a certificate of exemption. with conditions for him or her to keep such a dog. The licence or certificate of exemption must be seen and an agreement to abide by the terms must be agreed. If the terms are breached the council reserves the right to inform the police, who may decide to seize the dog.
- creatures covered by the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976;
- cockerels;
- any animal that will be used for breeding or business activity from the property or locality;
- fish that are of a size or breed that makes them unsuitable to be kept in domestic aquariums or garden ponds;
- pigeons or external or internal aviaries.

3.4 Some types of property are considered unsuitable through design or size for tenants to keep pets (other than registered assistance pets) even if they do not fall into the prohibited groups set out in 3.3 above. In addition to the groups set out in 3.3 in the following circumstances permission will not be granted:

- Pets that would be kept in a property that is either too small or generally unsuitable because of design and position for their proper care and well-being;
- Except for situations covered in 3.6 (iii) below, pets that require, for their proper care and well-being, direct and independent access to or permanent existence in outside space, be that private or communal (e.g. livestock, horses, ponies, goats);

- Dogs and cats (other than an exclusively 'indoor' cat) in designated sheltered accommodation where the property in question has no direct and exclusive access to and from outside. If the pet owner cannot gain entry into his or her home or leave it without having to go through any internal communal areas where they live permission will **not** be granted. The tenancy and estate management officer (or, in the case of an applicant, the lettings officer), must always consult the council's warden service when faced with a request from a tenant or potential tenant in sheltered housing before making a decision.

3.5 There are certain overriding terms and conditions that must be satisfied in order that consent to keep a pet will be given. They are:

- that, as a guide and unless explicitly agreed otherwise, **no more than two dogs or cats** (or one of each) will be allowed in any one property; but there may be properties whose size and/or layout means that only one may be kept;
- the guide of two pets for cats and dogs (or one of each) will not apply to other types of pets but permission to keep more than two pets will be dependent upon the species and the property (inside and outside space);
- that any dog kept must have a completed valid and current Charnwood 'pet passport' with a photograph of the pet. It must be microchipped or tattooed. Details of the microchip must be provided to the council. This will apply to each individual pet for which permission has been granted;
- that any cat kept must be microchipped. Details of the microchip must be provided to the council. This will apply to each individual pet for which permission has been granted;
- that the animal is considered suitable for the property, taking into account its size, access to outside space and its relationship with neighbouring properties, such as a flat in a block of flats.

3.6 All tenants seeking permission to keep a pet will be required, in addition to completing an application, sign a declaration and undertaking. This will include the following conditions:

- (i) The pet will not be the subject of any breeding (whether that be for commercial or private purposes) or business activity from the property (this includes outside and inside);
- (ii) The owner will look after his or her pet in compliance with the principal terms of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and will:
 - a. feed it a proper diet;
 - b. protect it from pain, suffering, injury or disease (this includes physical and psychological/emotional suffering or distress etc. (for example leaving a dog alone in a property for an unacceptable length of time³);

³ Usually deemed to be anything greater than four hours but could be longer where no-one is at home for normal hours of work.

- c. provide it with a suitable environment that will allow the pet to exhibit normal behaviour patterns with or apart from, other animals;
 - d. clean up after it and eliminate any offensive smells (this includes in communal outside areas);
 - e. not allow it to wander unaccompanied and unrestrained in any communal parts where they live, inside and outside and to confine it to a separate room, if requested, by visiting council staff, agents or contractors;
 - f. not allow it to create unreasonable levels of noise;
 - g. ensure that all dogs and cats are **neutered, microchipped** and, in the case of dogs, wear a **collar** with a contact tag at all times other than when inside the property.
- (iii) The owner will agree not to fit a cat or dog flap other than to an external door or, exceptionally, a window leading directly to the outside and only after seeking and being given permission. When the tenant leaves they must reinstate the door or window as it was originally. Cat or dog flaps will not be permitted to be fitted in uPVC doors, communal entrance doors or where the cat or dog flap opens into a communal area (inside or outside the property);
- 3.7 If the pet owner refuses to comply with the relevant conditions above, permission will not be given for the pet to be kept; and the tenant will be liable to enforcement action for breach of tenancy if they go ahead and acquire the animal without our written consent. The council will seek to recover any court costs incurred in relation to any enforcement action required. Alternatively, on a case-by- case basis we may liaise with or refer the case to another service at the council to deal with the matter as a nuisance, environmental offence, anti-social behaviour or animal welfare matter.
- 3.8 Similarly if permission is sought and given and subsequently we find that any of the above conditions have not been complied with we reserve the right to withdraw consent to keep the pet. If the animal is not removed we may take enforcement action for breach of tenancy after giving the tenant reasonable time to comply. Alternatively, on a case for case basis we may refer the case to another service at the council to deal with the matter as a nuisance, environmental offence, anti-social behaviour or animal welfare matter.
- 3.9 If a tenant looks after a pet for a temporary period, only one application will need to be made stating the number of pets in total that may be looked after at any one time, i.e. one or two.
- 3.10 If a tenant acquires a pet without first seeking and being granted permission:
- he/she will be required to complete a pet application retrospectively and be shown to have complied with all the conditions set out in 3.5 above if permission would have been given if it had been sought, failing which they may be required to find an alternative permanent home for the animal;
 - If there are complaints about nuisance or anti-social behaviour, we may refer the matter to another service within the council or another agency i.e. RSPCA or police for enforcement.

- 3.11 If the pet owner subsequently breaks any of the conditions set out in this policy statement and, after a reasonable period of time, does not remedy that breach they will render themselves liable to enforcement action in line with breach of tenancy. They may also render themselves liable to prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 or other relevant legislation. This could also involve reporting any alleged cruelty or neglect to the RSPCA or police.
- 3.12 Anyone found guilty of mistreating or neglecting a pet will be denied permission to keep pets in the future. If action has been taken against a tenant in relation to an animal and there is a court order or disqualification order in place preventing a person from keeping an animal the council will deny permission to keep a pet.

4. Right of appeal

In the event that a tenant is either refused permission to keep a pet or that permission is withdrawn they have a right of appeal to the tenancy and estate management team leader.

5. Pets visiting tenants' homes

Friends and relatives are allowed to visit tenants with their pets. These pets will be expected to comply with the conditions set out in 3.6 (ii) (d), (e) and (g) above. Tenants, however, need to be aware that as per the terms of the tenancy agreement the tenant will be responsible for the behaviour of the animal while at their address or within the neighbourhood (including communal shared areas)

6. Changing circumstances

Some tenants, for example older people, may well at some point become unable to care for their pet in accordance with the conditions set out in 3.5 above. In such circumstances we will make every effort to work with the tenant to try to enable the pet to remain with them and be cared for properly with adequate additional support³. Ultimately, however, the pet's welfare and that of neighbouring tenants will be factors to take into account when deciding whether the pet owner is able to keep their pet.

7. Tenants with existing pets

We recognise that there will be many tenants who have acquired pets without seeking or obtaining the proper permission. Our position on this will be as follows:

- We will not take enforcement action against tenants whose breach of this policy is confined solely to the number of pets they are keeping in their home.
- On implementing this policy, we will grant an amnesty to all pet owners who notify us of their pets, provided those pets are not prohibited under 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 above and are prepared to comply with the conditions set out in this policy statement, upon which point we will grant retrospective permission as if permission were being sought for a new pet and as long as the pet is not prohibited under this policy;

- Any dogs listed under section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or cross breeds involving one of the species specified in that act of parliament will not be eligible for this amnesty unless they have been returned to the owner under licence, they provide the licence or certificate of exemption and agree to abide by its terms.

/This amnesty will last for six months, after which time any pet owner who has not come forward will be liable to enforcement action if they either refuse to comply with the conditions in this policy statement or if they are keeping prohibited pets under this policy. This enforcement action may include the direction to re-home the animal.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed initially after being in operation for twelve months and thereafter every three years unless required earlier through legislative or regulatory changes.

9. Training

- 9.1 Suitable training on this policy will be given to members of staff whose job either directly or indirectly is affected by this policy.
- 9.2 Refresher training on this policy at appropriate intervals will also be given or if the policy is changed materially.

10. Equality and diversity

We aim to ensure that all our policies are fair and transparent and have been impact-assessed according to our procedures and in accordance with legal requirements.

11. Responsibility

The relevant head of service is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy and may delegate amendments to it arising out of changes in legislation or regulation to the head of landlord services.

12. Other external and internal influences on this policy

- 12.1 This policy has been created and should be implemented in conjunction with the following internal documents:
 - Allocations policy;
 - Equality and diversity policy and strategy;
 - Anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crime policies in respect of tenants either using pets as a means of causing nuisance or harassment to others or allowing, through their pet's behaviour, that pet to cause nuisance or harassment to others.

12.2 Similarly, this policy has been created and should be implemented in conjunction with the external documents and publications, including but not limited to:

- Housing Act 1985;
- Housing Act 1996;
- Housing Act 2004;
- Homelessness Act 2002;
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2018
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976;
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or any subsequent relevant legislation or regulation governing specific dogs or breeds of dogs;
- The Dangerous Dogs (Exemption Schemes and Miscellaneous Provisions) (England and Wales Order 2023);
- Animal Welfare Act 2006.

³ This could be neighbours, friends, family or organisations such as The Cinnamon Trust

8TH MAY 2024

Report of the Director Housing and Wellbeing

WORK PROGRAMME

Purpose of the Report

To enable the Board to consider its work programme.

The current work programme, appended, sets out the position following the previous meeting of the Board on 20th March 2024 and a subsequent discussion between the Director Housing and Wellbeing and the Chair/Vice-chair regarding items that require consideration by the Board.

For information, further meetings of the Board are scheduled as follows in the 2024/25 Council year (all at 4.30pm):

10th July 2024
18th September 2024
6th November 2024
8th January 2025
26th March 2025

Recommendation

That the Board's work programme be updated in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and any other decisions taken during the course of the meeting.

Reason

To ensure that the information in the Board's work programme is up to date.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD - WORK PROGRAMME

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
SCHEDULED:			
Every meeting	Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	To review the Board's work programme.
Every meeting	Questions from Members of the Board	Democratic Services Officer	<p>Questions on matters within the remit of the Board (if any), for response at the meeting.</p> <p>Members will be asked in advance of the agenda being published for each meeting whether they have any such questions, for listing on the agenda.</p>
Quarterly	Performance Information	Director Housing and Wellbeing	<p>To enable the Board to ask questions, if any, on the performance information pack sent out with the agenda for the meeting.</p> <p>See notes at end of work programme for information currently included.</p>
Annual - January	Draft Budget	Group Accountant (IA)	January
Annual - May	Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code - Self-Assessment	Landlord Services Manager	May (Regulatory requirement to complete by June)
Annual - July	Appointment of Chair/Vice Chair	Democratic Services Officer	July (first meeting of Council year)
Annual - July	HRA outturn	Group Accountant (IA)	July

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
Annual - July	Annual Self-Assessment- Consumer Standards	Director Housing and Wellbeing / Head of Landlord Services	July (To go to Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee on 2nd July 2024)
Annual - November	Budget Setting and Priorities for Next Year	Director Housing and Wellbeing / Head of Landlord Services / Head of Strategic Housing	November
8th May 2024	Garage Strategy	Head of Strategic Housing	
8th May 2024	Review of Pets Policy	Landlord Services Manager	
8th May 2024	Introduction to new regulatory standards	Director Housing and Wellbeing / Head of Landlord Services	Verbal report / presentation
10th July 2024	Review of Cleaning Contract	Head of Landlord Services	Requested at Board meeting on 20th March 2024 following introduction to aAFD Services.
18th September 2024	Review of Charnwood Decent Homes Standard	Head of Landlord Services	

TO BE SCHEDULED:

To be scheduled	Decant and Disturbance Policy - Update	Landlord Services Manager	Six months after policy is implemented.
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To be scheduled	Domestic Abuse Policy	Head of Landlord Services / Landlord Services Manager	
To be scheduled	Future of Sheltered Accommodation (including Fielding Court)	Director Housing and Wellbeing	

Notes:

1. All reports must include an explanatory list of any acronyms used.
2. Performance information pack will include (a) Repairs; (b) Gas Servicing; (c) Rent Collection; (d) Rent Arrears Percentage of the Annual Rent Debit; (e) Tenancy Management; (f) Anti-Social Behaviour; (g) Supported Housing; (h) Customer Satisfaction; (i) Voids Journey; and (j) Planned Maintenance Contractor Performance.