

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
12TH JULY 2023**

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

Director Housing and Wellbeing
Group Accountant (IA)
Repairs and Investment Manager
Landlord Services Manager
Principal Officer - Customer Engagement & Older
People's Services
Democratic Services Officer (RD) and Democratic
Services Officer (LS)

APOLOGIES: Board Members Ali and D. Wright

1. CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF BOARD 2023/24 COUNCIL YEAR

RESOLVED

1. that T. Edwardes be appointed as Chair of the Board for the 2023/24 Council year;
2. that T. Riley be appointed as Vice-chair of the Board for the 2023/24 Council year.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 22nd March 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.

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

No disclosures were made.

4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) OUTTURN

The Board considered a report setting out the Housing Revenue Account Outturn for 2022/23 for revenue and capital expenditure (item 5 on the agenda).

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

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Reason for underspend of approx. £2m was that capital spend had been lower than budget and a substantial amount of capital spend for the year had been due to be budgeted from revenue. Would get spent, just at a later date.
- (ii) Supervision and Management, £154k overspend, hard to point to one factor, major factors set out in report, included pay award higher than budgeted.
- (iii) Continued rise in tenants receiving Universal Credit comprised both those moving from Housing Benefit (usually due to change in circumstances) and those newly eligible.
- (iv) Voids higher than expected as outlined in report, cost to HRA, lost rents and Council Tax due. That was due to number of factors, notably allocations capacity, void works (repairs) capacity, low demand for some types of accommodation. Work undertaken/planned to improve position was outlined. Council's scrutiny function also monitoring. Noted, recent news re: J. Tomlinson (contractor) having gone into administration). Report programmed for Council's Cabinet August 2023 to consider procurement of additional contractor to work on void properties. Properties could not be let until in good condition.
- (v) Slippage referred to unspent budgets being moved forward to the next year.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

5. DAMP AND MOULD POLICY

The Board considered a report setting out a draft Damp and Mould Framework to inform the Council's approach to dealing with damp and mould (item 6 on the agenda).

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

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Noted, officers would be including damp and mould case data in the Performance Information Pack submitted to the Board.
- (ii) Was damp/mould major problem in Council's housing stock? Inspection of 1,000 properties had concluded 1 x severe category 1, 41 x moderate category 2 damp/mould hazard. Scaled up indicated 4%.
- (iii) Concern that some tenants might need support with redecorating following required damp/mould remediation work. The Director Housing and Wellbeing would look to incorporate appropriate provision in Framework.
- (iv) Any increase in damp/mould cases as a result of cost of living/energy price rises? Council had experienced increase in reporting following news coverage of death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale due to exposure to mould. Those reports had been correct in their concerns re: mould.
- (v) Reference to items/furniture being pushed against walls increasing risk, that information should be provided to tenants in tenancy pack. The importance of heating rooms periodically was also noted.

RESOLVED that the report and the Board's comments be noted, in particular the addition agreed in (iii) above and the suggestions in (v) above.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter and to enable the Board's views to feed into the development of the Council's approach to dealing with damp and mould.

6. UPDATE TO TENANCY POLICY

The Board considered a report setting out a proposed revised tenancy policy that removed the granting of flexible/fixed-term tenancies (item 7 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Landlord Services Manager.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) The proposed revision followed a Supreme Court ruling in March 2022 (Croydon LBC v Kalonga), the effect of which was outlined in the report.
- (ii) The Renters (Reform) Bill related to private sector, unlikely to impact Council as landlord.
- (iii) The Council reviewed its Tenancy Policy both periodically and when required by changes to legislation.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the policy be recommended for approval.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

7. HRA BUSINESS PLAN AND CAPACITY UPDATE

The Board considered a report setting out an updated Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Capacity Review to provide insight in to the current HRA financial position (item 8 on the agenda).

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

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Document based on set of assumptions at point in time, set out therein. Changes and actions could affect position positively, examples given: negative inflation; disposing of properties that needed lots of work and acquiring properties that needed less; availability of Government grants/other funding; disposal of land (limited).
- (ii) Council could try to make components last longer replacing based on condition rather than after fixed time, tenants may not support/may lead to more repairs work.

- (iii) Re: Council's 2030 Carbon Neutral target, no set target for HRA, Asset Management Strategy set out to develop road map to EPCC. Council had installed external insulated on large number of properties approx. 10 years ago, still some that did not have this, scheme to do so likely to be appropriate. Well insulated properties would reduce energy bills for tenants.

RESOLVED that the report and the Board's comments be noted and the Business Plan and Capacity Review be endorsed prior to progression to Cabinet.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter and to support understanding of the HRA Business Plan and financial capacity and enable the Board's view to be conveyed to Cabinet when it considers the matter.

8. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Board considered a report setting out an update on progress with actions identified in the 2022-2025 Customer Engagement Strategy (item 9 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: The Principal Officer – Customer Engagement & Older People's Services.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Effective customer engagement could reduce the complaints received by the Council.
- (ii) The Council was on target to deliver the actions set out in the Strategy, the actions completed were detailed in the report and outlined.
- (iii) "Have Your Say" customer engagement information leaflets and branded notebooks were available for members of the Board to take away from the meeting, if they so wished.
- (iv) The various grants available to tenants were set out in the report.
- (v) The report set out the priorities for next year and how the Strategy would be monitored and reviewed.
- (vi) Members of the Board expressed their views that customer engagement had made good progress/improved and that the team were very effective.
- (vii) Tenants were made aware that the Council could assist with childcare costs to enable participation.
- (viii) Brief discussion regarding training for both officers and tenants. The Council would always aim to arrange/fund training for tenants where a need had been identified.
- (ix) Question regarding grants available to tenants, was formal group required to apply? If tenant had idea, suggested speak to Customer Engagement Team for assistance re: how that might be best progressed. Idea must be supported by people in area concerned, but formal group not necessary. Council could not pay tenant directly, but could pay for items, for example, catering. Initiatives that could take place due to availability of grants were valuable as they lifted people.

RESOLVED that the update report and the Board's comments be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

9. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION PACK

The Board considered a performance information pack for Quarter 4 2022-23 (item 10 on the agenda).

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

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Repairs target of 14 days (average number of days taken to carry out standard re-let repairs) had been badly missed at 65 days. Essentially due to lack of resource repairs team, recruitment continued, retainment significant problem, so performance unlikely to improve quickly. Working to procure additional contractor. Further reference to existing contractor for major voids work having gone into administration.
- (ii) Generally, the Council paid contractors for work completed rather than in advance.
- (iii) New tenancies referred to under Tenancy Management data included any transfers.
- (iv) The factors that had affected performance in respect of "% Complaints responded to within timescales" and the action taken to increase resources in that respect were set out in the report, briefly outlined in response to a question. In addition, online complaint form was sometimes being used for service requests, needed to better filter those. Confirmed that a written response to a complaint could be via email.
- (v) Complaints Policy was available on the Council's website.

T. Edwardes would discuss concern regarding scaffolding and leaks with the Repairs and Investment Manager following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the performance information pack for Quarter 4 2022-23 and the Board's comments be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

In accordance with the Board's previous decision, members of the Board had been asked in advance of the agenda being published whether they had any questions on matters within the remit of the Board that they wished to ask, for response at this meeting.

On this occasion, no questions had been submitted.

11. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report to enable it to agree its work programme (item 12 on the agenda).

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

There was brief discussion regarding issue of anti-social behaviour in particular the data provided under item 10 on the agenda, already considered. Notably, the need to increase surveys completed and that a single case may comprise multiple incidents each reported in the data (agenda page 63). Officers continued to consider how data could most clearly be reported. Noted that a forthcoming review of the Corporate Anti-social Behaviour Policy would come to the Board at an appropriate stage.

P. Hudson would discuss position with replacement door works and communication with tenants re: that with the Repairs and Investment Manager following the meeting.

RESOLVED

1. that the following item be added to the work programme:
Capital Delivery Update (6th September 2023 meeting);
2. that the following already listed items be scheduled as follows:
 - (i) Sheltered Accommodation, update St. Michael's Court, Thurmaston (6th September 2023 meeting);
 - (ii) Asset Management Strategy Update (8th November 2023 meeting);
 - (iii) Decant and Disturbance Policy Update (8th November 2023 or 10th January 2024 meeting);
3. that the Board proceed on the basis of the submitted work programme, updated to reflect work undertaken at this meeting and any amendments or additions agreed above or earlier in the meeting.

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. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next available Ordinary Council meeting unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board.