

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
10TH JANUARY 2024**

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

Director Housing and Wellbeing
Head of Landlord Services
Group Accountant (IA)
Strategic Housing Manager
Repairs and Investment Manager
Democratic Services Officer (RD)

APOLOGIES: Board Members Ali and D. Wright

33. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10th January 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

In relation to the procurement of a new communal cleaning contract, it was confirmed that a contract award had been completed and was now in the standstill period. The Director of Housing and Wellbeing would liaise with the Landlord Services Manager to arrange a meeting in March 2024 between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board and the new contractor, as agreed at the previous meeting.

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

No declarations of interest were made.

35. DRAFT BUDGET

The Board considered a report providing an overview of the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2024/25 (item 4 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Group Accountant.

An error was identified in Appendix 4 of the report. 'Acquisition of Affordable Housing to meet housing need' was included in the table twice and it was confirmed that the second entry should be deleted.

Summary of responses to questions and discussion:

- (i) Highlighted that a final version of the draft Housing Revenue Account budget would be presented to Cabinet on 8th February 2024 and would then go to Council for full approval on 26th February 2024, and that an additional £98.6k had been added to the draft budget since the report first went to Cabinet in December 2023.
- (ii) The largest Capital programme in recent years at over £13m for 2024/25.
- (iii) Inflation and the cost of materials/repairs had been factored in.
- (iv) Drawing down on balances to repay loans. Decisions to be made in 2-3 years on further loans to be taken out, when interest rates would have reduced.
- (v) Principal HRA reserve – the minimum level of working balances for the HRA of £110 per property had changed in the past, however was not considered ideal to be lower than £110 per property. Concerns raised with wages increasing/properties aging – confirmed funding available in reserves.
- (vi) Declassification of over 1,000 properties designated for allocation to people aged over 45 years – Board reassured that a recommendation to Cabinet had been made that one additional ASB Officer and one additional Tenancy and Estate Management Officer be recruited and their roles reviewed on an annual basis to ensure support provided in the event of the increase in anti-social behaviour and to make sure the posts were still needed. *Post meeting note: the recommendation was subsequently approved by Cabinet on 11th January 2024.*
- (vii) Progress made with major adaptations and the backlog was expected to be cleared next year. Improvement due to now being one sole contractor with responsibility for adaptations. Board agreed this was positive news.
- (viii) Doors would be replaced based on a survey. Agreed that this information should be highlighted to tenants and would be included in the newsletter.
- (ix) £100,000 in the HRA Capital Programme for garages – confirmed that a review of garage sites was currently taking place and would be reported on. There was currently no identified scheme, however provision was being made in the budget.
- (x) Housing Capital Technical Costs related to costs for staff employed at the Council.
- (xi) Off Development Properties were houses that were not yet finished/just finished.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

36. HOUSING STRATEGY

The Board considered a presentation by the Strategic Housing Manager detailing the Council's position on the Housing Strategy.

Post meeting note: The presentation was published after the meeting as an agenda supplement.

It was explained that there was no legal requirement for the Council to have a housing strategy, but that it was used as a manifesto for the current administration to describe how the Council would deliver the homes needed to support Charnwood's economic and population growth. It also showed the key areas of work around strategic housing such as sheltered accommodation and licensing schemes.

The Housing Strategy was linked with documents such as the National Planning Policy Framework, Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA), Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and the Local Plan.

Key points of discussion:

- (i) The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) – showed population, economic and employment growth in the area, specialist housing needs such as older people, mental health issues, travellers. Also showed the likely level of housing need in the future.
- (ii) Confirmed that students were factored in to the HENA, although were not a key concern.
- (iii) Concerns that sheltered housing had been reduced. The Council was seeing reduced demand for sheltered housing and needed to look into reasons for this and ensure provision of attractive accommodation that would meet people's needs. There were currently no plans to increase the stock, however existing sites would be investigated for possible re-modelling.
- (iv) The HENA was the Council's evidence-base for housing need, however only showed numbers/projections and didn't take into account appropriateness of sites and value of land. It showed a significant need for affordable housing.
- (v) Acknowledged that it would be of benefit for the Council to work in partnership with other organisations and registered providers who may invest in sites. There were examples within the Council's stock of redevelopment of schemes in Birstall and Thurmaston that had been successful. Registered providers offered expertise and resource and would help ensure faster progression.
- (vi) Concerns raised that young people were finding it difficult to move out from parents' homes – they were unable to join the housing list due to their need not being urgent and also could not afford to rent or buy. Confirmed that housing stock was declining due to 'right to buy' and with increasing demands, needs assessments were carried out. Possible solutions included the consideration of shared accommodation or private renting.

It was agreed that Board members would send any questions following the meeting to the Democratic Services Officer who would forward on to the Strategic Housing Manager.

During the presentation, on a personal note, the Chair thanked the Strategic Housing Manager for her concern and support during the recent flooding.

RESOLVED that the presentation and discussion on the matter be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

37. REPAIRS POLICY

The Board considered a presentation by the Head of Landlord Services detailing the Council's Repairs Policy and its approach to meeting its obligations and responsibilities for repairs and maintenance.

Post meeting note: The presentation was published after the meeting as an agenda supplement.

Key points of discussion:

- (i) The Right to Repair Scheme existed for council tenants for jobs with a value of under £250. There were prescribed timescales for completing repairs by category and compensation would be available following two failed attempts to repair within timescales. Compensation would be applied for via Landlord Services.
- (ii) Board reassured that with regard to the risk of legionella at sheltered accommodation, a dosing and flushing regime was performed every seven days and that voids were dosed before being re-let.
- (iii) Concerns raised with regard to tenants not being able to report problems in person at the Council Offices unless an appointment had been arranged. This was an issue that would be picked up corporately and investigated.
- (iv) The handy-person service was a free service provided for vulnerable residents for minor works such as changing a lightbulb or fitting a curtain rail. Agreed that this service would be mentioned in the newsletter to ensure that tenants were aware of the service.
- (v) The Repairs Policy would go to Cabinet in March 2024.

RESOLVED

1. That the draft Repairs Policy be circulated to the Board for comment before Cabinet in March 2024.
2. That the presentation and discussion be noted.

Reason

1. To reflect the Board's involvement and interest in the Repairs Policy.
2. To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

38. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

In accordance with the Board's decision at its meeting on 22nd March 2017 (HMAB Minute 24.1), members of the Board had been asked in advance of the agenda being

published whether they had any questions on matters within the remit of the Board that they wished to ask, for response at this meeting.

On this occasion no questions had been submitted.

39. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report to enable it to agree its work programme (item 8 on the agenda).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Director Housing and Wellbeing

There would be a report on the Sheltered Accommodation Strategy which would be considered at the Cabinet meeting in March 2024.

RESOLVED

1. That the following items be added to the work programme:
Cleaning Contract - Update (20th March 2024)
Review of Charnwood Decent Homes Standard (September 2024)
2. That the following already listed item be scheduled as follows:
Sheltered Accommodation Strategy – (additional Board meeting to be arranged for w/c 19th February 2024)
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. 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.