

**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.