

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 16 JANUARY 2019

### Report of the Head of Landlord Services

#### ITEM 5 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2017 – 2020

##### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the board with an update on the delivery of the customer engagement strategy, attached as appendix 1 to this report.

##### 2. ACTION REQUESTED

The board is requested to note the report.

##### 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2017 the landlord service developed and agreed a four-year strategy to develop its customer engagement activities. The strategy sets out the model and structure for customer engagement [council tenants] within Charnwood. It is owned by tenants and its delivery is monitored principally by the Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum ('CHRF') but also the Housing Management Advisory Board ('HMAB').

3.2 The council's Performance Scrutiny Panel is satisfied with the way in which the strategy is being scrutinised currently.

##### 4. STRATEGY FORMAT AND CONTENT

4.1 The strategy is in the form of an action plan and is grouped under four main subject headings:

1. Making it easier for our customers to engage with us in ways and on issues that interest them;
2. Being more accountable for the services we deliver by empowering our residents to challenge us;
3. Using customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money; and
4. Embedding customer engagement in all our services.

4.2 Within each subject heading there are a number of actions against which have been set target completion dates, the person responsible for leading on that particular action and a column to note and record progress made in completing that action.

4.3 Actions that have been deemed to have been completed are shown with a grey fill.

4.4 The strategy explicitly states that that it needs to be visited and amended as necessary following a period of consultation and then kept under review as implementation proceeds.

## 5 CURRENT POSITION

5.1 We are now halfway through the period covered by the strategy and it is fitting, therefore, to:

- comment upon what has been completed thus far against the existing target dates;
- comment upon what is left to do; and
- comment upon how the strategy might be reviewed over the second half of its life.

## 6 ACTIONS COMPLETED

6.1 Under heading 1 – making it easier for our customers to engage with us in ways and on issues that interest them – three of the nine actions have been completed -1.1; 1.2 and 1.8.

6.2 Under heading 2 - being more accountable for the services we deliver by empowering our residents to challenge us – one of the four actions has been completed – 2.4.

6.3 Under heading 3 - using customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money – none of the three actions has been completed.

6.4 Under heading 4 - embedding customer engagement in all our services – none of the three actions has been started yet.

## 7 ACTIONS STILL TO BE COMPLETED

7.1 Under heading 1 only one of the six as-yet-incomplete actions has made no progress – 1.9

7.2 Under heading 2 all the three as-yet-incomplete actions have made progress;

7.3 Under heading 3 only one of the three as-yet-incomplete actions has made no progress – 3.2.

7.4 Finally, under heading 4 none of the three actions has yet to be started; all three have a completion date of March 2019 so cannot be deemed to be out of target yet.

7.5 On the face of it one could infer that the strategy is on course to being delivered and it is clear that a number of significant commitments have been completed. It is, however, worth pointing out that the agreed completion dates of all but the actions under heading 4 fall within the first two years of the strategy's lifespan. With that in mind, it is not surprising, therefore, that many of the agreed actions have run beyond their target completion date.

## 8. MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

8.1 With reference to 4.4 above, we are now mid-way through the term of this strategy. It seems fitting, therefore, to take stock of not only what we have achieved thus far but also how the action plan might be reviewed and adapted through the second half of its term so that, by the end of 2020, it can, by all reasonable measures, be deemed to have been delivered successfully.

8.2 I have identified a number of aspects of the strategy, as currently structured and worded, that I believe could be addressed in order to help deliver the strategy successfully by the end of 2020:

- I would recommend that completion dates need to be reviewed generally so that they are spread more realistically through the remaining term of the strategy;
- I would recommend that, where appropriate, existing structures of engagement be brought into the strategy for consideration/evaluation as part of the existing action in 1.3 - *developing a broad menu of engagement activities*. An example of this is the existing role of 'community representative' (also known as 'tenant champion'). This position was created some time ago but is not actively promoted currently and there is only one tenant acting in the role at present. In view of that it would seem sensible to have a discussion over this and any other engagement model and bring them into the strategy and action plan. For board members' information, a copy of the existing information sheet about this role is attached as appendix 2 to this report;
- I would recommend that some of the actions under the four headings be adapted to become more general objectives, with the objectives being populated by specific, concrete actions that will fulfil that objective. An example of this is action 4.4 - *promoting the strategy and engagement model within Landlord Services and across the council, including presentations/briefings to other departments*: this is more of an objective rather than an action in itself. Statements such as this are more difficult to measure objectively in terms of successful completion and delivery;
- I would recommend that other actions be reviewed with the aim of giving greater rigour to them in terms of their becoming more specific, measurable and time-limited. An example of this would be 1.5 – *widening and developing the social media etc options*: this would help those working to fulfil these actions to become more focused and would give them certainty by having a firm commitment to deliver;
- I would recommend that the remaining incomplete actions, having been through the above stages (if agreed), be re-ordered in terms of practicable priorities. There are actions that are dependent on other actions being completed and the action plan should reflect that. For example, 1.4 - *reviewing the council's website pages to accommodate new ways of providing information and encouraging engagement* - has a target completion date of March 2018 whereas 1.3 – *developing a broad menu of engagement activities* – has a target completion date of September 2018. One could argue that until

or unless we have created and agreed that menu of engagement opportunities as set out in 1.3 there is limited benefit in reviewing our web pages first.

- At present the action plan shows completed commitments as shaded out in grey. Improved monitoring and tracking of progress could be achieved by adopting what is now a well-accepted “RAG”-based tracking system, namely:
  - Completed, one-off actions shown as blue;
  - Completed but continuing actions shown as green;
  - In-progress actions shown as amber;
  - Not-yet-started or out-of-target actions shows as red.

## 9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 This strategy is owned by our tenants and we will work with them on this review in order to give some new impetus to it over the second half of its term.

9.2 I have already met members of the CHRF and agree with their suggestion that a special meeting of that group be set up early in new year to start working with us on the strategy's review.

9.3 I would expect to be able to bring an updated report on that review to the March meeting of HMAB, along with an updated action plan.

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