

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
4TH FEBRUARY 2021**

PRESENT: The Chair (T. Edwardes)

Councillors Davis, Radford, Seaton and Brennan
Board member A. Davis

Head of Landlord Services
Landlord Services Manager
Repairs and Investment Manager
Group Accountant
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (EB)

APOLOGIES: T. Riley and D. Wright

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

17. CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF BOARD 2020/21 COUNCIL YEAR

It was advised that the positions of Chair and Vice-chair for the Council year 2020/21 needed to be confirmed following the nominations and vote at the informal meeting of the Board on 9th September 2020.

RESOLVED

1. that Mrs T. Edwardes be elected as Chair of the Board for the 2020/21 Council year;
2. that Ms T. Riley be elected as Vice-chair of the Board for the 2020/21 Council year.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING*

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 15th January 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

The minutes of the informal meeting of the Board held on 9th September 2020 were noted as an accurate record.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

20. CORPORATE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HATE INCIDENT POLICY 2020-2024

A report of the Head of Landlord Services was presented to the Board providing opportunity for the board to comment on a draft Corporate Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incident Policy 2020-2024 prior to its likely progression to Cabinet for approval (Item 5 on the Agenda).

The Board was advised that:

- (i) The policy set out a victim-centric approach which considered the circumstances of the victim and perpetrator and action would be taken to reduce risk.
- (ii) Informal resolutions were used most frequently, however sufficiently serious cases could be escalated and dealt with using injunctions and other legal tools. Criminal Behaviour Orders could be dealt with in consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service.
- (iii) The policy set out the 'Community Trigger Mechanism' that was introduced through the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Members of the board expressed concern that residents being monitored due to noise complaints were informed as such and therefore could reduce noise accordingly. The Board were informed that covert monitoring could only take place in specific legal circumstances under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2002 (RIPA).

Action: Head of Landlord Services would prepare a note on RIPA to outline the conditions under which such monitoring could take place.

RESOLVED that the policy go to Cabinet as scheduled.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the item.

21. UPDATE ON VOIDS

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report to the Board to provide an update on the position in respect of voids (Item 6 on the Agenda).

The Board were provided with an update on void repair work including major repairs that significantly improved dwellings and addressed issues that had prevented re-letting.

The Board were also provided with a summary of rent-loss. Rent loss had been high largely due to sheltered accommodation and bedsits remaining vacant.

The Board were provided with performance data. Points included:

- (i) A backlog of voids had been cleared over April and May 2020.

- (ii) The voids team had been working differently in order to comply with social distancing.
- (iii) It took an average of 14.4 repair days to clear a standard void.
- (iv) Sheltered accommodation had been driving up the increase in re-let time.
- (v) There was a focus to improve void performance.

The Board expressed concern that people were not able to view dwellings prior to bidding on them.

Action: The Head of Landlord services would obtain an update on the situation.

The Chair requested confirmation of how the sheltered housing scheme was progressing.

Action: An update on sheltered housing would be presented at a future Board Meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the item.

22. DISABLED ADAPTATIONS UPDATE

The Head of Landlord Services submitted a report to the Board providing an update on the position in respect of major adaptations, also to seek the Boards' endorsement of an amendment to the policy and propose a pilot scheme to support tenants needing adaptations to move to alternative accommodation which better meets their needs (Item 7 on the Agenda).

The Board were informed that whilst waiting times for works had been coming down, they had increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board were informed of a proposed policy amendment to delete a line from the policy that adaptations involving the installation of a level-access shower at a first floor (or above), where there was no existing lift, and where the property was under-occupied by two or more bedrooms may not be considered reasonable or practicable to undertake, as refusing an adaptation solely on these criteria would likely not be appropriate. The test to be applied was whether the works are technically feasible.

The Board were further updated on a proposed Pilot Scheme to support tenants to move to alternative accommodation which better met their needs. It was noted that people should be encouraged to move only if the cost of adaptation was significantly higher than the cost of moving, and any encouragement to move should be done sensitively.

The Board raised their concerns about limited suitable housing stock and the need for adaptations to be prioritised for people leaving hospital in need of such adaptations in order to free up hospital beds.

The Board were assured that urgent adaptations were done as quickly as possible, and that there was an expectation that the scheme would work if there was the appetite for it.

Further concern was raised by the Board over tenants that did not want adaptations made due to shielding.

Assurance was made that the Resident Liaison Officer monitored these cases.

The Board raised the possibility that some tenants may voluntarily move out of ground floor accommodation to open up ground floor accommodation for a disabled person.

Action: Head of Landlord Services, in consultation with the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing would consider whether it would be appropriate to support a scheme incentivising the possibility of tenants voluntarily moving to higher floors if their ground floor accommodation was more suitable for a disabled tenant.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the item.

23. AGENDA VARIANCE

At the approval of the Chair the following item was brought forward: Priorities for Next Financial Year.

24. PRIORITIES FOR NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR

The Head of Landlord Services gave a verbal update on Priorities for the financial year 2021-22 (Item 9 on the Agenda).

The Board were informed that priorities for this year (2020/2021) had been:

- (i) Delivery of works in line with the Charnwood standard
- (ii) Acquisition of social housing
- (iii) New fire doors
- (iv) Bin store improvements and external works to paths and other surfaces, along with
- (v) Production of a new asset management strategy and revised Housing Revenue Account business plan.

It was explained to the Board that many activities had needed to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the priority had shifted to maintaining staff and tenant safety and delivering essential services.

It was reported to the Board that the service was experiencing an 85% tenant refusal rate on capital works including kitchens and bathrooms often due to concerns over Covid-19. As such the service expected to have a carry forward of around 198 bathrooms into next year which when added the bathroom replacements falling due that in 2021/22 equalled around 461 replacement bathrooms and there are 356 due the year after. This volume was seen as unfeasible and it would therefore be necessary to smooth the programme over at least the next three to four years in order to average around 250 planned replacements per year. This would mean that some tenants would get their bathrooms up to 12 months later than planned under the Charnwood Standard, however it would support the efficient planning and management of works given the impact of Covid-19, which would likely continue in to 21/22.

In response to a query from the Board, it was confirmed that choices on style of fittings were offered to tenants, but specifications could not be varied too much as this would complicate maintenance.

RESOLVED that the approach be endorsed by the Board.

Reason

To maintain a good standard of service.

25. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN POSITION 2019/20

The Board received a report of the Head of Finance and Property Services setting out the HRA Revenue Account Outturn 2019/20 (Item 8 on the Agenda).

The Group Accountant attended the meeting and assisted with consideration of the item.

The Board was advised that accounts had taken a longer time to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic but that all had been audited.

The Board were informed that a surplus of £171,000 had been made in the previous financial year and this would be going back into the balance of the HRA.

The Board were directed to information on the account and balances, on controllable cost and on the Capital Program for the end of the period to April 2020 in which there had been an underspend of £886,000 which had been moved into the current financial year (2020/21).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of this matter.

26. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021-2022

The Head of Financial Services submitted a report to enable members of the Board to consider the 2021/22 budget before the final budget report goes to Cabinet in February 2021 (Item 10 on the Agenda).

The Group Accountant attended the meeting and assisted with consideration of the item.

The Board were advised that:

- (i) The rent increase would total 1.5% based on the government formula. Garage and shop rental would remain the same.
- (ii) The general HRA broke even, however, revenue contributions to capital would be coming from the financing fund of approximately £298,000.
- (iii) The list of savings was ongoing and added up to £176,000 and there were pressures of £22,500.
- (iv) The Capital Plan and Programme would be going to Cabinet for approval in February and would then go on to Full Council.

In response to a query the Board were assured that tenants on full Universal Credit would not have to make up the difference on rent increase.

The Board expressed concern that rent may be increasing when the condition of the dwelling was falling. The Head of Landlord Services assured that replacements were carried out on a frequent basis.

RESOLVED that the report go to Cabinet.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of the matter.

27. AGENDA VARIANCE

At the approval of the Chair the following items were brought forward: Questions from Members of the Board and Work Programme and Meeting Dates 2020/21 Council Year.

28. 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 Councillor Radford asked the following question:

“Are Officers trained to look for safeguarding issues when they visit properties?”

The Board were assured that Officers were trained to spot safeguarding issues.

The Chair asked the following questions:

“Could the pool of Tenant/Leaseholder Board Members be increased to six?”

“If a tenant who had requested a disabled adaptation exercises the Right to Buy, are they asked to repay the costs, or does it disqualify them from the Right to Buy scheme”.

RESOLVED

1. that a recommendation be put in the Annual Constitution Review Report to increase the pool of Tenant/Leaseholder Board Members to six.
2. that the protocols surrounding the Right to Buy be clarified by the Head of Landlord Services.

Reason

1. To help to avoid meetings being inquorate and to have a wider range of points of view on the board.
2. To give the Board a clear idea of how disabled adaptations work with the Right to Buy scheme.

29. WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES 2020/21 COUNCIL YEAR

The Board received a report of the Head of Landlord Services to enable the Board to agree its Work Programme (Item 14 on the agenda).

Members of the Board could identify matters that they considered required looking at over the next few meetings of the Board, including any already listed on the Work Programme but not yet scheduled. Officers present could provide advice as to whether items might be appropriately considered at the time proposed.

Summary of discussion:

- (i) The Board Suggested that Performance Information become a full agenda item
- (ii) The Board wished to explore the option of holding more meetings in order to make room for items that may arise later in the year.
- (iii) The Head of Landlord Services suggested that Pets Policy, Fly Tipping and Sheltered Housing be scheduled to be considered on 24th March 2021.
- (iv) The Head of Landlord Services suggested that Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Agreement be scheduled to be considered on 12 May 2021
- (v) The Head of Landlord Services suggested that the HRA Asset Management Strategy and Business plan and Housing Strategy be Scheduled to be considered at a meeting in the 3rd Quarter of 2021

- (vi) The Head of Landlord Services suggested that the Capital Plan be scheduled to be considered at a meeting in January 2022.

RESOLVED

1. That Performance Information be added to the Board's Work Programme.
2. That the Board's Work Programme be updated to reflect all decisions made above and earlier in the meeting.

Reasons

1. So that it can be considered by the Board.
2. To ensure that the information in the Work Programme is up to date.

30. EXEMPT INFORMATION

It was resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

At this point in the meeting the livestream was switched off.

31. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PLANNED WORKS, VOIDS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Landlord Services was considered (Exempt item 12 on the Agenda).

The Head of Landlord Services attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item.

A summary of the Board's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Housing Management Advisory Board 27E. 2020/21).

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 22nd February 2021 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.