

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 8TH APRIL, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor P Gruen in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bentley,
K Maqsood and P Truswell

Tenant / Leaseholder

Madeline Hunter
Ted Wilson
Andy Liptrot

Independent Representative

Timothy Woods
Matthew Walker
Andrew Feldhaus

Co-opted Member

David Glew
Jo Hourigan

18 Chair's Opening Comments

The Chair welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Housing Advisory Board.

It was reported that a number of Membership changes had occurred following the first meeting of the Board with Madeline Hunter and Andy Liptrot being elected to the Board. Existing Board Member Jo Hourigan was standing down from her temporary position following Mr Liptrot's appointment.

The Chair welcomed Mrs Hunter and Mr Liptrot commenting that their contributions to future debates would be most welcome.

In paying tribute to Jo Hourigan, the Chair said Jo had served as a Member of the Shadow Housing Advisory Board and made some valuable contributions and it would be disappointing to lose such a valued Member.

The Chair reported that he had spoken to Jo about the possibility of remaining on the Board and had received a favourable response.

The Chair proposed that Jo Hourigan be appointed as a Co-opted Member to the Board.

Board Members were supportive of the proposal

RESOLVED – That Ms Jo Hourigan be appointed as a Co-opted (Non-voting) Member of the Board

19 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of the Inspection of Documents

20 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no formal late items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered

21 Late Items

There were no formal late items submitted

22 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interest

23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Lowe

24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th January 2014 were submitted for comment / accuracy.

Referring to Minute No. 9 David Glew ask for a minor correction to indicate that he represented Leeds Metropolitan University and not Leeds University

RESOLVED – That with the inclusion of the suggested amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th January 2014 were accepted as a true and correct record

25 Matters Arising

The following Matters Arising from the Minutes were highlighted:

Housing Leeds Capital Programme 2014/15 (Minute No. 11 refers) – Referring to recommendation (ii) “to develop a Leeds Decent Homes Standard which gives greater prominence to thermal efficiency requirements”. Councillor Truswell suggested that this needs to tie in with the Housing Design Standard, space standard was a vital element

Mears – Service Improvement and Modernisation Plan (Minute No.13 refers)
– Andy Liptrot sought clarification as to how tenant satisfaction was monitored.

In responding Steve Hunt, Chief Officer, Property and Contract said that targets would be set for a 6 month period and would be measured by performance indicators. Both Mears and Housing Leeds had their own performance indicators to evaluate performance

26 Housing Advisory Panels

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the creation of Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) and highlighted some of the development areas which would be included in the emerging forward work programme.

The report also sought approval of the Terms of Reference for both the Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) and the Cross City Chairs Group (CCCG)

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/ comment of the meeting:

- Draft Terms of Reference Local Housing Advisory Panels – (Appendix 1 refers)
- Draft Terms of Reference Cross City Chairs Group – (Appendix 2 refers)

Ian Montgomery, Customer Involvement Manager, Housing Leeds, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The need for an effective level of governance and financial control
- The need to provide clarity and consistency of operation
- The need to develop a forward work programme to address a range of issues including the future level of resources available to the panels, financial protocols, marketing and communications, training and development, reporting processes and recruitment to ensure they work productively.

Commenting on paragraph 2.9 of the draft terms of reference for the Local Housing Advisory Panel, Councillor Anderson said that Elected Members would be nominated via the Community Committees Not Area Committees as referred to in the report

In conclusion the Chair welcomed the report suggesting it was a step in the right direction

RESOLVED –

- (i) To approve the Terms of Reference of the Housing Advisory Panels;
- (ii) To approve the Terms of Reference for the Cross City Chairs Group; and
- (iii) To support the creation of a forward work programme, developed and monitored with the CCCG, to ensure consistent working practices and appropriate operational and financial controls.

27 HRA Capital Financial Position Period 11

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the financial position statement on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme at period 11 of the financial year 2013/14

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The delivery of a refurbishment programme 2013/14 reporting spend commitments of £43.6m
- Projected outturn at period 11 was expected to be delivered within revised available resources of £53m
- Strategic Landlord actual spend was £456 (Period 11) Resources available in 2013/14 were £1m

RESOLVED – To note the projected financial position at period 11 of the financial year 2013/14

28 HRA Financial Update - Period 11 (February 2014)

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The report included details of Right to Buy; sales and arrears

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The Housing Revenue Account was projecting a surplus of £2.0m (Period 11)
- Right to Buy Sales projected to be 450 by the end of the year, 316 more than budget

Referring to paragraph 5.2 of the submitted report, Councillor Anderson queried the figure for rent arrears for under – occupiers

In providing clarification the Head of Finance confirmed that the figure of £710,000 was the correct figure

Madeline Hunter sought clarification on the period of time that should elapse before a tenant who had purchased a Council property could sell it on

The Head of Finance reported that currently it was 5 years before a property could be sold on, but from January 2015 the amount of time would reduce to 3 years

RESOLVED – To note the projected year-end financial position of the Housing Revenue Account, Right to Buy sales and arrears

29 Towards a New Housing Strategy

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an overview of the review, production and implementation of the Local Authority's revised Housing Strategy.

The report also set out the timeframe, resources, challenges and actions required to revise and develop a new strategy to enable the authority to fulfil its ambition of being the best city and Council in the UK

Appended to the report was a copy of the Housing Strategy (2014) Outline (Appendix A refers)

Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The need to undertake relevant research and consultation to identify key themes
- To acquire an understanding of the housing needs and aspirations of local communities
- An understanding of demographic projections
- Potential implications in terms of health and wellbeing, social care, community safety and other needs
- An awareness of the nature and condition of all housing stock and how it correlates with identified need

In offering comment Matthew Walker welcomed the report and suggested the right priorities had been identified.

David Glew questioned how relevant research and consultation to identify key themes would be undertaken

In responding Rob McCartney suggested this would be achieved using existing resources

Mr Glew said Leeds Metropolitan University may be able to offer support in terms of the research element of the strategy

Members and Officers welcomed the offer of research support from Leeds Metropolitan University.

The Chair said officers would make the necessary approach

Councillor Bentley also welcomed the report, in offer comment he said the timescales appeared to be quite ambitious but hoped they would be deliverable. He suggested that the delivery of the strategy needs to be tested.

Andy Liptrot suggested that there appeared to be no tenant involvement in the strategy and expressed the view that topics such as Crime and Health were areas where useful contributions could be made.

Councillor Truswell also welcomed the report suggesting there was a clear idea of the consultation process required and the strategy contained the necessary components.

In offering comment, the Director of Environment and Housing referring to the consultation process said it was important that tenants and Community Committees identified priorities which would guide investment; this would also set the direction for future years

Referring to Section 3 of the submitted report and the five priority themes:

- Housing Growth
- Improving Housing Conditions
- Enabling Independent Living
- Housing and Health
- Creating Sustainable Communities

The Chair requested Board Members to provide an indication as to which priority theme they would wish to contribute to, and which could involve establishing a Working Group/Groups to oversee development, implementation and production of a strategy.

Board Members responded as follows:

Housing Growth

Matthew Walker
Cllr Barry Anderson
Tim Wood
David Glew
Andrew Feldhaus

Cllr Paul Truswell

Housing and Health

Matthew Walker
Jo Hourigan
Ted Wilson
Andy Liptrot
Cllr Paul Truswell

Enabling Independent Living

Tim Wood
David Glew
Madeline Hunter
Cllr Alison Lowe

Improving Housing Conditions

Matthew Walker
Cllr Barry Anderson
Jo Hourigan
Andy Liptrot

Creating Sustainable Communities

Matthew Walker
Cllr Barry Anderson
David Glew
Jo Hourigan
Cllr Jonathan Bentley
Cllr Kamila Maqsood

(Chair to be ex-officio on the groups)

RESOLVED –

- (i) To welcome the offer of support from Leeds Metropolitan University
- (ii) To approve the process, timescales and priorities as outlined in Section 3 of the submitted report
- (iii) That the Housing Advisory Board to act as a Project Board to oversee the production and future monitoring of the Housing Strategy

30 Right to Buy - Cessation as Mortgage Lender in Last Resort

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which sought the agreement / views for the Council to cease to act as Lender in Last Resort in the provision of voluntary mortgages for tenants wishing to buy their home under the Right to Buy scheme.

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- With effect from April/May 2014 there would be an increase in the maximum discount percentage for houses increasing from 60% to 70%
- The qualifying period for Right to Buy was proposed to be reduced from 5 years to 3 years
- There was also a proposal to increase the maximum discount of £75,000 by an allowance for inflation each year
- The government intention to provide further support for the Right to Buy by introducing Right to Buy agents to help buyers complete their home purchase, and provide £100 million to increase Right to Buy sales by improving applicants' access to mortgage finance

Referring to paragraph 2.2.1 of the submitted report and the figure of 24,489 on the housing waiting list, Councillor Anderson expressed caution about using that number as a baseline figure

Members were supportive of the proposals with the exception of Councillor Anderson who indicated he could not support the proposal

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To support the cessation of the Council acting as Lender in Last Resort, subject to the formal approval of the Environment and Housing Panel

31 Affordable Housing Growth and Investment through the Affordable Homes Programme

The Director of City Development and Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the delivery of affordable housing, particularly in the context of the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)

The report provided an overview of how the Council had responded to the 2015 – 2018 Affordable Housing Programme from the Homes and Communities Agency and how the Council aims to maximise development of affordable housing units throughout the programme

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/ comment of the meeting:

- Tranche 1 Sites marketed to Registered Providers (Appendix 1 refers)
- Tranche 2 Affordable Housing Sites for Disposal to Registered Providers (Appendix 2 refers)
- Future Affordable Housing Development Sites (Appendix 3 refers)

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

It was reported that the report had been considered and approved by the Executive Board at its meeting on 2nd April 2014

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The importance of a mixed economy of housing provision in Communities across the city;
- Emphasis was placed upon the need for the proposed provision of Affordable housing to be delivered within a 5 year period as part of the Council's 5 year land supply;
- The quality standards required for any new housing provision in Leeds.
- Enabling report to promote growth, £46m Plan to spend, funding for 1200 properties

In offering comment Councillor Truswell welcomed the report suggesting it would create affordable rent across a mixture of tenures

In summing up the Chair suggested Members appeared to be supportive of the proposals

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted and welcomed

32 Review of Tenancy Management Policies on keeping pets in Council Homes, Electric Mobility Scooters and Installing Satellite Dishes

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which sought approval for the following Tenancy Management Policies:

- Keeping Pets in Council Homes
- Electric Mobility Scooters
- Installing Satellite Dishes

The report also sought approval for the Council to work towards achieving the RSPCA's Gold Standard Community Animal Welfare Footprint award

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/ comment of the meeting:

- Policy of Keeping Pets in Council Houses (Appendix 1 refers)
- Policy on Electric Mobility Scooters (Appendix 2 refers)
- Policy on Installing Satellite Dishes (Appendix 3 refers)
- Equality Impact Assessment – Pets Policy (Appendix 4 refers)
- Equality Impact Assessment – Electric mobility Scooters Policy (Appendix 5 refers)
- Equality Impact Assessment – Installing Satellite Dishes Policy (Appendix 6 refers)

Liz Cook, Chief Officer, Housing Management, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The revised Policy on Keeping pets in Council Homes
- The new Policy on Keeping Electric Mobility Scooters
- The Policy on Installing Satellite Dishes

In offering comment Ted Wilson said that tenants enter into a Tenancy Agreement, when disputes occur tenants expect the Tenancy Agreement to be followed

Responding to a question on Mobility Scooters Liz Cook said that some users received permission on health needs

In summing up the Chair suggested that Members had raised some useful comments but a Tenancy Agreement was there for a reason and the terms of that agreement had to be applied

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the new policies on keeping pets in Council homes, electric mobility scooters and installing satellite dishes as described in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the submitted report be approved
- (ii) That 'section 2' or Index Exempt Dogs are not permitted in Council properties.
- (iii) That the Council seeks to achieve the RSPCA's Gold Standard CAWF award in 2014/15.
- (iv) That in order for the Council to achieve the RSPCA's Gold Standard Award, the Orchard Housing Management system be

amended to allow the Council to monitor the number and type of animals kept in council homes.

- (v) That the revised policies be publicised to tenants through tenants' newsletters giving feedback from the consultation.
- (vi) That housing staff be briefed on the revised policy prior to its implementation.

33 Housing Leeds Tenant Scrutiny Panel (South) Recommendations from the Complaints Inquiry

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented the Recommendations from the South's Tenant Scrutiny Panel's inquiry into the way housing related complaints are managed and the extent to which the service focusses on the quality of outcomes for customers.

The report also invited the Board to review and accept the officer action plan in response to the recommendations

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/ comment of the meeting:

- Tenants Scrutiny Panel Report – Complaints Inquiry (Appendix 1 refers)
- Leeds City Council Proposed Actions in Response to Tenant Scrutiny Panel's recommendations (Appendix 2 refers)

Ian Montgomery, Customer Involvement Manager, Housing Leeds, and John Gittos, tenant representative, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- The need for accurate recording of information
- The need to empathise with the complainant
- The need to ensure good communication between the customer, the City Council and the contractor
- The need to feedback to the customer at every stage of the process, using accurate data

In offering comment Councillor Truswell said that he welcomed the report suggesting the Enquiry demonstrated real value

RESOLVED –

- (i) To acknowledge the work of the Scrutiny Panel and their positive contribution to service improvement and delivering better outcomes for tenants.

- (ii) To review and accept the Officer Action Plan in response to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel's recommendations

34 STAR Survey 2014/15 - Method and Approach

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a summary of what was learnt from STAR survey 2012, and how the services had changed as a consequence.

The report also proposed a method for carrying out a large city-wide customer perception survey of general needs tenants during 2014/15.

Frank Perrins, Research Manager, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included:

- An explanation of the method and approach to the survey
- A summary of the findings
- Proposals for the 2014/15 STAR Survey

Members welcomed the report and were supportive of the proposal for the survey to be accurate to ward level

RESOLVED –

- (i) To approve that a large scale tenant perception survey be carried out in 2014/15, by the internal Research Team, repeating the same approach as STAR 2012 and at the same time of year.
- (ii) To only produce an English language version of the survey (and versions for sight impaired customers)
- (iii) The survey to be accurate to each management areas (and BITMO), with improved reliability at WARD level, at an additional cost of up to £1500.
- (iv) That during the project planning phase a central function be agreed, through consultation with service managers, to coordinate and monitor planned service improvements across the city.

35 Housing Management Review - Update

The Director of Environment and Housing provided an update on the delivery of the Housing Management Review

It was reported that all Senior Management positions had been filled. Proposals for the remainder of the structure would be developed over the next few weeks. It was intended that the new structure would be finalised and implemented by the end of July 2014

RESOLVED – To note the progress being made in delivering the Housing Management Review

36 Housing Advisory Board - Work Programme 2014

Members considered the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Work Programme for 2014.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the inclusion of any additional items of business identified at this meeting, the contents of the Housing Advisory Board work programme be noted

37 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that future meetings of the Board will take place as follows:

Tuesday 3rd June 2014
Tuesday 9th September 2014
Tuesday 11th November 2014

All meetings to take place at the Civic Hall, Leeds commencing at 5.00pm