

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 3RD JUNE, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor P Gruen in the Chair
Councillors K Maqsood and P Truswell

Tenant / Leaseholder

Ted Wilson
Andy Liptrot
Madeline Hunter

Co-opted Member

J Hourigan

- 38 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**
RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-
- Appendices 1 and 2 to agenda item 10 entitled, 'Progress on Delivering the Council Housing Growth Programme', is designated as exempt in accordance with paragraph 10.4(3) of Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it contains commercially sensitive and sensitive financial information that could be used to gain an advantage through any future procurement exercise, and as such it is deemed that it is in the public interest not to disclose this information at this time. (Minute No. 45 referred).
- 39 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**
There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests made at the meeting.
- 40 Apologies for Absence**
Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Anderson, J Bentley and Lowe, and Timothy Woods, Matthew Walker, Andrew Feldhaus and David Glew.
- 41 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th April 2014 be approved as a correct record.

42 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The following matters arising from the minutes were highlighted:-

Housing and the Jobs and Skills Agenda (Minute No. 6 of the 4th December 2013 Shadow Housing Advisory Board meeting referred)

Members noted that work in this area continued, and that a report regarding Housing Construction Apprenticeships could be found elsewhere on the agenda.

Tenant Involvement (Minute No. 7 of the 4th December 2013 Shadow Housing Advisory Board meeting referred)

The Board noted the progress which was being made in this area. Members welcomed the investments in local environmental and community projects which had been made by Housing Area Panels (HAPs) to date. However, emphasis was placed upon the need to ensure that an effective communications plan associated with the HAPs funding allocation procedure was established.

It was noted that an update report regarding tenant engagement could be found elsewhere on the agenda, and as such, any actions arising from Minute No. 7 of the 4th December 2013 Shadow Housing Advisory Board be designated as closed.

Development of a Leeds Decent Homes Standard (Minute No. 11(ii) of the 28th January 2014 Housing Advisory Board meeting referred)

Responding to an enquiry, it was noted that a report on this matter was scheduled to be submitted to the Board in November 2014.

43 Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position Outturn 2013/14

The Head of Finance (Environment and Housing) submitted a report presenting a financial position statement on the Housing Leeds Capital Programme Outturn for the financial year 2013/2014.

Specifically, the submitted report provided details upon the Housing Leeds and BITMO refurbishment programme and also the Housing Leeds New Build Programme.

Responding to the Board's enquiries, officers provided clarification on a number of figures detailed within the report. In addition, officers also undertook to provide details to the Board regarding those 20 empty properties and 2 community centres which had been identified as part of an initiative to convert and let as Council housing.

RESOLVED – That the outturn position for the financial year 2013/2014 be noted.

44 Housing Revenue Account - 2013/14 Outturn

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report providing an update on the 2013/2014 draft outturn position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). In addition, the submitted report also presented the 'Right to Buy' (RTB) initiative's sales and arrears figures.

In considering the submitted report, the Board discussed and received further information on the following:

- The level of 'Right to Buy' sales which had been achieved, the £20.5million receipts which had been generated by such sales, the £15.1million sum retained by the Council, of which £6.4million was to be passported to the Registered Social Landlord;
- Members noted the current arrears levels and received clarification regarding the under-occupancy statistics, as detailed within the submitted report;
- The Board paid tribute to the proactive work which had been undertaken by officers and which had led to rent collection rates being 97.85% at the 2013/14 year end. It was noted that Leeds' collection rates compared positively to other Local Authorities.

RESOLVED – That the draft outturn position of the Housing Revenue Account, together with the 'Right to Buy' initiative's sales and arrears figures, be noted.

45 Progress on Delivering the Council Housing Growth Programme.

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report providing an update on the Council Housing Growth Programme and the sites which had been identified for development, and providing details of the sites where a bid had been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for grant funding. In addition, the report detailed the rental strategy to be adopted, as new properties developed through grant funding from the HCA would need to be charged as affordable rents (which is 80% of market rent levels) and also provided an update on the work undertaken to develop a 'Leeds Standard' which would include design approaches to reduce running costs by providing a more energy efficient product.

Finally, the report sought the Board's views on the creation of a local lettings strategy for new build properties across the city, the first of which would be ready for occupation in September 2014.

By way of introduction to the report, the Chair highlighted the comprehensive and complex nature of the initiative, whilst emphasising the significant impact it would make upon the future of social housing in Leeds.

In receiving the submitted report, the Board considered the following:-

- The Board received information regarding the relationship between the respective levels of private rents, social rents and affordable rents and how such levels ranged throughout the city;
- Members discussed the issues of rising house prices and the relationship with private rent levels;

- The Board noted the 'extra care' provision which had been established at Howarth Court, Yeadon, and responding to an enquiry was advised that the allocation of further provision would be guided by demand for such schemes;
- The Board was provided with information on proposals regarding a fresh approach towards the allocation of new properties, which could provide incentives to good tenants. In response, the Board welcomed this initiative;
- Emphasis was placed upon the importance of enforcement when considering the issue of compliance with the tenants' agreement.

In conclusion, the Board's support for the proposals set out within the report were welcomed and it was noted that further update reports would be submitted to the Board in due course.

Following consideration of Appendices 1 and 2 to the submitted report, designated as exempt from publication under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3), it was

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the progress achieved on the development of the Council Housing Growth Programme be noted.
- (b) That the development of a new rental strategy for new build Council properties which are funded through the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme, be agreed.
- (c) That the progress achieved against the development of the Leeds Standard, as it relates to the development of new council housing, be noted.
- (d) That the comments made during the discussion, together with the support for the proposals detailed within the submitted report be noted, together with the fact that such support would be communicated to Executive Board when it considers a report regarding the allocations policy for new build properties in the city.

(Councillor Truswell left the meeting at 6.10 p.m. at the conclusion of this item)

46 Housing Strategy Update and Housing Advisory Board Working Arrangements

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report presenting the current arrangements for the Housing Advisory Board to engage on areas of work in which it had interest and influence, in order to fulfil its functions as an Advisory Committee. Specifically, the Board was requested to consider such arrangements in order to determine whether they were adequate for fulfilling the Board's functions.

The Head of Housing Support highlighted that such arrangements included the direct involvement of Board members in the development of a new Housing Strategy for Leeds, as previously agreed by the Board. In addition, Members received an overview of the five themes which had been agreed at the previous meeting, as a means of focussing the Board's involvement in strategic areas of work.

An update was provided on the work which had been undertaken on such matters to date, and the Board's views were sought on whether the model was fit for purpose. In response, the Board confirmed that it was agreeable with the model proposed.

The Chair highlighted that Councillor Gabriel would replace Councillor Lowe on the Board in the new municipal year, and as such, Councillor Lowe would no longer sit on the 'Enabling Independent Living' working group. The Chair paid tribute to the work which Councillor Lowe had undertaken in this field, specifically in the West North West area, and highlighted that he looked forward to Councillor Gabriel becoming involved in the work of the Board.

Responding to an enquiry regarding how the interests of young people would be incorporated into the engagement arrangements, officers advised that such matters would be picked up as part of the 'Enabling Independent Living' theme.

RESOLVED – That the working arrangements, as set out within the submitted report be agreed, with a view to them enabling the Board to fulfil its functions as an Advisory Committee of the Council, in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

47 Tenant Engagement Update

The Chief Officer (Housing Management) submitted a report providing an update on the progress made in the development of the Housing Leeds Tenant Engagement Service.

By way of an introduction to the report, the Board was provided with an update on a number of issues including:

- Tenant Scrutiny Board;
- Housing Advisory Panels and the Cross City Chairs' Group;
- Service or Customer Specific Forums;

- Community Development;
- Leeds Tenants' Federation;
- Tenants' and Residents' Associations and Community Voices;
- Marketing and Communications;
- Monitoring activity and outcomes; and
- Equality analysis.

Responding to a specific enquiry, the Board received clarification regarding the process by which the training provider for the Tenant Scrutiny Board had been identified, and how such training providers would be selected in the future.

With regard to Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TARAs), the Board highlighted the invaluable role of these organisations and highlighted that work needed to continue in order to encourage the development of such organisations so as to reduce the number of areas not currently covered by a local TARA.

Regarding the tenant newsletter, emphasis was placed upon the need to ensure that a more structured approach was taken towards engagement with tenants on this initiative. In response, it was noted that further work would be undertaken to ensure that the number and range of groups involved would be maximised, and it was suggested that an editorial panel involving Councillor Maqsood could be established in order to help deliver this.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the submitted report, the current position regarding tenant engagement, together with the comments and suggestions made during the meeting, be noted.
- (b) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting in order to highlight in more detail, the geographies and customer groups that are currently un-represented or underrepresented and how the Council will try and tackle this as part of the new service arrangements.
- (c) That in line with the comments outlined above, further work be undertaken on the process by which tenant groups are involved and engaged in the production of the tenant newsletter.

(Councillor Maqsood left the meeting at 6.45 p.m. At this point, the meeting became inquorate, as the quorum for the Housing Advisory Board included a minimum of 2 Leeds City Councillors. As such, the Board was unable to make any formal decisions for the remainder of the meeting. Any recommendations from this point onwards could be ratified at the next meeting of the Board)

48 Housing Leeds Multi-Storey Flats CCTV Network

The Chief Officer (Property and Contracts) submitted a report providing an update on Housing Leeds' plans to work with the Council's 'Leeds Watch' service to extend the existing multi-storey flat monitored CCTV system. The report outlined plans developed which could see all blocks within the west of the city being covered by the scheme, which would result in all of the city's blocks having monitored CCTV services in place.

In addition to receiving an update on the proposed expansion of CCTV provision, the Board also received details of the ongoing work which was looking to explore the possibility of providing broadband internet connectivity for residents of multi-storey blocks.

RECOMMENDED – That the proposed expansion of the multi-storey block CCTV system into West Leeds be supported.

49 Housing Construction Apprenticeships

The Chief Officer (Property and Contracts), Housing Leeds submitted a report providing an update on the work being undertaken in order to increase the number of construction apprenticeships being offered directly by the Council and by Contractors undertaking major works projects within the city, particularly those that had a housing element.

In receiving the report, the Board noted the collaborative approach which was being taken towards the provision of apprenticeships, with a view to apprentices being moved between contractors, in order to provide a broader and more varied range of training and development. In addition, it was noted that further detail on the work being undertaken to develop apprenticeships in the area of housing management would be reported to a future meeting.

Responding to an enquiry, the Board received further details on the processes by which potential apprentices were recruited, and it was suggested that the websites of the Council and other appropriate partners could be used as part of the recruitment process in the future.

RECOMMENDED – That the work being undertaken on apprenticeships through Housing Leeds, Construction and Housing Yorkshire and The Alliance, be noted.

50 Implementation of the Review of Housing Management Services: Update Report

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report providing an update on the progress made regarding the delivery of Housing Management Review outcomes.

Specifically, the Director advised that the appointments to JNC level positions had now been completed and that work continued with a view to the structure proposals being fully delivered by the end of July 2014.

The Board noted the work being undertaken which aimed to ensure that a more flexible and consistent approach could be taken across Housing Management Services.

RECOMMENDED – That the progress being made to deliver the outcomes of the Housing Management Review, including the recent appointments to senior manager posts and service redesign be noted, and that further updates be submitted to the Housing Advisory Board as the implementation plans progress.

51 Housing Advisory Board - Work Programme 2014

The Board considered the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Work Programme for 2014, and members were invited to submit any items of business which they would like incorporating into it.

An enquiry was raised regarding the possibility of Board members receiving Council ID badges. In response, officers undertook to look into this matter further.

RECOMMENDED – That the contents of the submitted Housing Advisory Board Work Programme, be noted.

52 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RECOMMENDED – That the following schedule of Housing Advisory Board meetings for the 2014/2015 municipal year be noted:

- Tuesday, 9th September 2014
- Tuesday, 11th November 2014
- Tuesday, 3rd February 2015
- Tuesday, 7th April 2015

(All meetings to take place in the Civic Hall, Leeds, commencing at 5.00 p.m.)