

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor P Gruen in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bentley,
A Gabriel and P Truswell

Tenant / Leaseholder

Ted Wilson
Andy Liptrot
Madeline Hunter

Independent Representative

Matthew Walker
Andrew Feldhaus

Co-opted Member

Davd Glew
J Hourigan

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests made at the meeting.

2 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:-

Appendix 2 to Agenda Item 15 entitled, 'A Strategy for High Rise Housing', was 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. 15 referred).

3 Late Items

Final minutes approved at the meeting
held on Tuesday, 11th November, 2014

There were no late items of business, however, the Board did accept the inclusion of supplementary information, submitted in respect of Agenda Item No.7 "Matters Arising from the Minutes" (Minute No.59 refers) Item No. 8 "Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position period 3 2014/15 (Minute No. 8 refers) and tem No. 11 "Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard" (Minutes No. 11 refers)

4 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Matthew Walker declared an interest in Agenda Item No.11 "Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard (Minutes No. 11 refers) in view of his involvement with Leeds Housing Associations

5 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received form Councillor Maqsood and Tim Woods

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Offering comment on the Minutes, Madeline Hunter reported that her name had been incorrectly spelt.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above minor correction, the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2014 be accepted as a true and correct record

7 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The following Matters Arising/ Actions from the Minutes were highlighted:

Housing and the Jobs and Skills Agenda – (Minutes No.6 - 4th December 2013 Shadow Housing Advisory Board refers)

Referring to housing construction opportunities, it was report that Mears had recently appointed 18 new apprentices to the construction sector, and a further 20 apprenticeships had been created through PFI projects with the possibility of a further 30 to be added in the near future – Status of action "In progress"

Development of a Leeds Decent Homes Standard – (Minute No. 11(ii) – 28th January 2014 refers)

It was noted that an item entitled "Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard" appeared elsewhere on the agenda – Status of action "Closed"

Towards a New Housing Strategy - (Minute No.29 – 8th April 2014 refers)

It was noted that the Board act as Project Board and oversee production and future Monitoring. Report due in November 2014 – Status of action “In progress”

Tenants Scrutiny Panel (South) Recommendations from Complaints Inquiry – (Minute No.33 – 8th April 2014 refers)

It was noted that the adoption of the recommendations would be signed off and implemented shortly - Status of action “Closed”

HCA Empty Home Project Update – (Minute No.43 – 3rd June 2014 refers)

To provide to the Board details of the 20 empty properties and 2 Community Centres which had been identified as part of an initiative to convert and let as Council Housing. It was reported that the required details had been supplied to the Board - Status of action “Closed”

Tenant Engagement – (Minute No.47 - 3rd June 2014 refers)

To provide to the Board details of tenant engagement highlighting geographies and customer groups that are currently under represented. Report due in November 2014 – Status of action “In progress”

Implementation of Review of Housing Management Services – Minute No.50 – June 2014 refers)

It was noted that an item entitled “Implementation of the Review of Housing Management Services” appeared elsewhere on the agenda - Status of action “Nearing completion”

Environmental Improvement, Capital Programme

Report due in November 2014 – Status of action “In progress”

8 Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position Period 3 2014/15

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a financial position statement on the Housing Leeds Capital programme at period 3 for the financial year 2014/15.

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:

- Details about the Housing Leeds and BITMO refurbishment programme

- Housing Leeds New Build Programme.

Commenting on Housing Leeds Services & BITMO it was reported that actual spend to period 3 was £5.5m together with £5.2m of commitments equating to 17% of revised available resources at period 3.

Referring to the Housing Leeds Newbuild and other it was reported that at Period 3 the spend on the Council Housing Growth and newbuild programme was £441k in 2014/15

RESOLVED – To note the Period 3 position for the financial year 2013/14.

9 Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position Period 3 2014/15

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the revenue financial position for the Housing Leeds, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Service as at period 3

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:

- Key Variances – Income
- Key Variances – Expenditure
- Right to Buy - Sales including Council House Sales to June 2014 and projected Sales to year end
- Collection Rates

Steve Hunt, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts delivered a presentation on the HRA Capital Programme 2014/15. The issues highlighted included the following:

- Resources available
- Decency Work Schemes
- Energy Efficiency Schemes
- Multi Storey Flats Schemes
- Sheltered Housing Schemes
- Environmental Schemes

- Statutory Schemes/ Costs

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and the issues highlighted in the HRA Capital Programme 2014/15 Presentation, be noted

10 2014/15 Quarter 1 Performance Report

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a summary of the quarter one performance data for 2014 -15 against the six Housing Leeds priorities.

Debra Scott, Head of Resources and Strategy, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Homelessness
- Void Dwellings
- Maximise Rent Collection
- Welfare Change
- Annual Tenancy Visits
- Capital Programme

Commenting rent collection and welfare change, Ted Wilson raised the issue of rent arrears and the increase in the number of tenants falling into rent arrears.

Officers suggested that timing was an issue when rents were collected and an adjustment could be made for “technical arrears”

In responding Mr Wilson said that a technical adjustment would still be reflected in any subsequent credit reference

Councillor Truswell raised the issue of the impact of the withdrawal of discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and the impact they may have on future arrears.

RESOLVED – To note the Quarter I performance data in relating to the six Housing Leeds priorities

11 Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard

The Director of City Development and the Director Environment and Housing spoke about the “Leeds Standard” and the proposal to provide a way forward for improving residential design throughout Leeds ensure quality and quantity is achieved in the delivery of new houses in Leeds through the development of linked activities brought together as the Leeds Standard.

Maggie Gjessing, Executive Manager, Regeneration, City Development, addresses the Board and explained the Leeds Standard was a route to improve residential design throughout Leeds to ensure quality in the delivery of new homes. The objective was to support the delivery of the growth target ensuring that quality was at the heart of all new supply.

Three components made up the Leeds Standard:

- Urban Design
- Space Standards
- Energy Efficiency

Elements of the Leeds Standard

Urban Design

- Neighbourhoods for Living – A residential Design Guide for Leeds
- Sustainable Design & Construction SPD
- Street Design Guide

Space Standards

- HCA & Design Standards for Accessible Housing
- Additional Specification – bed sizes, storage

Energy Efficiency

- Highly Energy Efficient Properties
- Fabric First/ Passivhaus/ Solar Gain (Site led)
- Metering

Application of the Leeds Standard

Two Routes

- The Council as Local Planning Authority
- The Council as a landlord and deliverer and procurer of services

Two Applications

- Planning Policy and early, pro-active dialogue
- Specification and tender documentation for the Council's own programmes - influence

Commenting on the plan, the Chair said the intention was to provide 70,000 houses over the next 16 years. The aspiration was to bring in the Leeds Standard now, not when considerable numbers had already been built.

In the discussion that ensued the following issues were raised:

- A plan for the next 30-40 years, a benchmark for other development in the city
- Recognise the challenges
- Difficult to impose the Leeds Standard on the private sector
- The trade-off for quality against cost

Offering comment on the trade-off for quality against cost, the Chair suggested that it may be the case of higher rents for better quality homes.

The Chair thanked Ms Gjessing for her attendance and presentation commenting that it was useful and informative the challenge now was to deliver that vision.

RESOLVED – That the presentation “Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard” be welcomed and noted.

12 Implementation of the Review of Housing Management Services

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on progress with the delivery of the Housing Management Review. The report outlined the significant changes being delivered and the benefits (financial and non-financial) that were being realised.

Debra Scott, Head of Resources and Strategy, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Structural Changes and Service Re-design
- Strategic Housing
- Housing Management
- The property and Contracts Function
- Integration of Business Support Service Functions into the Council
- Governance and Tenant Involvement
- Financial Efficiencies and Benefits
- One-off Financial Benefits
- Ongoing Savings and Benefits

It was reported that the new JNC structure had reduced the senior management structure posts making a saving of £588k. It was also reported that the Housing Management function had been reconfigured to provide one consistent model of housing management across the city, delivering and developing frontline services that focus on the tenant experience and customer satisfaction. It had reduced the number of job descriptions and roles from 118 to 8 core roles.

Referring to the Shadow Housing Advisory Board established to oversee service developments and replace the ALMOO Boards, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Ted Wilson and the Chair's Group for their contribution in reviewing the Housing Management Services.

RESOLVED – To note the progress that had been made to deliver the outcomes of the Housing Management Review and the benefits both financial and non-financial that are being realised

(Councillor Gruen vacated the Chair and left the meeting at 6.35pm at the conclusion of this item. Councillor Truswell assumed the Chair)

13 Housing Advisory Board - Forward Plan 2014/15

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

The Director of Environment and Housing suggested that an item dealing with long term investment strategy be added to the February meeting of the Board

RESOLVED – That with the inclusion of the suggested item, the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Work Programme for 2014 be noted

14 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

Tuesday 11th November 2014

Tuesday 3rd February 2015

Tuesday 7th April 2015

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

15 A Strategy for High Rise Housing

The Director of Housing and Environment submitted a report which provided details of the work completed to date on developing and extending the Council's understanding of High Rise Housing in the city through a new evidence base.

Chris Simpson, Chief Executive BITMO (Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation) Environments and Housing, presented the report and provided an overview of the work to date, which included:

- The development of High Rise evidence base
- A new City Wide High Rise Tenant Group
- An initial census of high rise tenants in the city
- Existing investment needs and plans for High Rise Housing
- Development of a model for informing future investment and management decisions

Referring to the next steps of the strategy the Director of Housing and Environment outlined the following:

- To establish a project team for the implementation stage of the strategy
- To develop consistent standards for day to day management and maintenance of high rise – with a key role for the Leeds High Rise Group

- To pilot alternative management techniques and approaches that could be employed when specific difficulties or challenges arose.

In offering comment Ted Wilson welcomed the report and the proposal and thanked officers for the work done to date.

Referring to the High Rise Tenant Group, Andy Liptrot said that this was “work in progress”. He asked if consideration could be given to increasing the number on the group from 8 to 10 and suggested the meetings take place on a monthly basis.

On the issue of the high rise tenant survey, Mr Liptrot asked if a copy could be on display in the foyer of each block. He also reported that many of the foyers of high rise blocks looked tired and dreary and asked if this could be looked at.

In responding officers said there was no problem in increasing the number of representatives on the tenant group from 8 to 10, the suggestion of monthly meetings would be investigated further, high rise tenant survey to be deposited in the foyer of each high rise block and where necessary foyers to be deep cleaned.

In summing up Chris Simpson said the strategy was challenging with the approach being based on tenant perceptions, local intelligence and investment needs.

The Chair thanked Mr Simpson for his presentation commenting that this was the starting point to move things forward.

RESOLVED –

- To note the extensive work completed to date on developing and extending the Council’s understanding of High Rise Housing in the city through a new evidence base;
- To note the progress in creating new tenant involvement structures relating to high rise housing;
- To note the development of a model that will inform future investment and management decisions;
- To note the existing plan for investment in high rise housing;

- To note the proposed development of a consistent standard for day to day management and maintenance - with a key role for the Leeds High Rise Group
- To note the plan to pilot alternative management techniques and approaches that can be employed when specific difficulties or challenges arise