

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2013

Present Councillor Peter Gruen (PG) (Chair)

Councillors: B Anderson (BA), J Bentley (JB), A Lowe (AL), K Maqsood (KM),

Board Members: C Clelland (CC), A Feldhaus (AF), J Hourigan (JH)

LCC Officers: N Evans (NE), L Cook (LC), S Costigan (SC), R Ellis (RE), S Hunt (SH), M Long (ML), C Simpson (CS), J Statham (JS)

In attendance :

Item 6: Phil Reese (PR) [Housing Leeds]; Jane Hopkins (JH) [Employment and Skills]

	ACTION
<p>1. Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Apologies: T Fielden, A Mann, Cllr P Truswell.</p> <p>Chair noted that this is likely to be the final meeting of the shadow Housing Advisory Board and thanked everyone for their hard work. The Board will be formally become part of the council structure in January 2014 following approval by Full Council.</p>	
<p>1.1 ML provided an update on recruitment to the formal Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent members – position of independent board members was advertised in various media during November 2013, applicants have now been shortlisted and interviews will be held on 19th December.• Tenant members – Area Panels are in the process of electing their members.• Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) – has implemented a process to elect their representative and David Atkinson was successful.• The third tenant member will be drawn from the Multi Storey arrangements, discussed at item 8.	
<p>2. Exempt Information</p> <p>Item 10 - Proposed JNC structures for Housing Leeds.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the meeting held on 08 October 2013 and Matters Arising</p>	
<p>3.1 Agreed as a true record of the meeting with the exception of Item 5.1 – ‘rent to buy’ should read ‘right to buy’.</p>	
<p>3.2 Item 6 - JS has met with the Chairs of the Area Panels and they are working through the Terms of Reference and getting to know each other. Next meeting is 18th December. JS is meeting with Tenants Area Panels on Friday to run through the procedures.</p>	
<p>4. Performance Update</p> <p>LC provided an update on performance against the six housing priorities.</p>	

Key points to note:

- 4.1 P1 – Preventing Homelessness through joint working & effective letting:
- Footfall at Leeds Housing Options increased from 17,000 in 2012/13 to forecast 32,000 in 2013/14
 - Homeless prevention outcomes have risen from a monthly average of 266 in 2012/13 to 507 in October 2013
 - Temporary accommodation placements have been reduced by 60% since July 2012: 346 households placed per night to 142 currently
 - Placements with private providers have reduced from 178 in July 2012 to 1 currently
 - There are no households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation
- 4.2 P2 - 30 day void turn round
- The gross average re-let time in days is 38.18 days and continues a downward trend over the year. The number of void properties in week has increased for the week but annual trends show this is traditional. Overall the number of properties in void still remains at an all-time low. Void rent loss has reduced by a total of £418k over the two quarters compared to last year.
 - Cllr Jonathan Bentley thanked the group for the graph analysis but asked why there was such a difference between areas. SH stated that differences reflect different contractual arrangements and on the whole the performance across the areas is improving. Latest position shows a big improvement in former WNW and AVH areas, and Housing Leeds is working across the three areas to ensure improvement is maintained and best practice rolled out across the city.
- 4.3 P3 – Maximise Rent Collection
- Current rent collection is 96.27%. Arrears levels have improved on last year's figures. Leeds is performing much better than other core cities and national trend, in large due to the proactive work that has been undertaken across the city.
- 4.4 P4 - Maximise Support to tenants impacted by Welfare Changes
- Significant work has been undertaken across Leeds to minimise the impact of welfare change on tenants which has included visits to all tenants impacted by the social sector size criteria and individualised tailored support to tenants being developed in addition to promotion of mutual exchange.
- 4.5 P5 - Annual Tenancy Visits
- As of the 4 November 28,692 annual tenancy visits have been undertaken in the City, which equates to 49.82% of tenancies. There are a proportion of visits where there is no access.
- 4.6 P6 - The capital programme is covered in a separate report on this agenda.
- 4.7 PG stated that it has been worthwhile concentrating on the 6 priorities and thanked everyone for their contribution. A massive contributor has

been the concentration of efforts on Welfare Change.

- 4.8 JH asked if an existing tenant wanted to swap properties with a management let would this be possible. PG is aware of the case and LC stated that priority would be given to people who were experiencing difficulties as a result of Welfare Change so we have to look at how we maximise this. NE stated that we would be bringing a paper in the new year on how to maximise stock with regards to Welfare Change. SC has been doing analysis and 147 mutual exchanges have taken place as a result of Welfare Change, which is really positive.

5. HRA Financial Position

RE provided the Board with the position of HRA at the end of period 7

- 5.1 Current projections forecast a surplus of £905k

5.2 Key variances include:

- Rental income - £404k on dwelling rents due to loss of income on Right to Buy Properties.
- Other income – grants – £5,456m

5.3 Key areas of expenditure:

- Employee costs down by £655k due to the vacancy factor.
- Disrepair cases - an additional £159k put aside.
- Capital – u/spend £836k due to base budget assumes we put aside £3m – reflects a slippage and reduction on the unitary charge.
- Right to Buys – to the end of October there were 275 completed sales. Current projections based on live applications are that 450 properties will be sold in 2013/14, generating sales receipts of £18.8m of which LCC can retain the sum of £13.5m.

6. Housing and the Jobs and Skills Agenda

CS introduced a discussion paper requested by the Chair to look at the jobs and skills agenda in relation to council tenants in the city. PR and JH attended to outline what their respective services currently offer and how they could better work together in future.

- 6.1 Many initiatives are being used to encourage tenants to use the services of Employment and Skills and it is felt that even more could be done by creating closer links.

6.2 The Employment and Skills delivers and commissions employment and skills activity across the city. Tenants benefit from the links Employment and Skills have formed with both internal and external organisations.

6.3 Employment and Skills Service has a targeted approach that broadly matches the geography of local authority housing tenancies. This will be enhanced by a targeted pilot approach to specific tenants impacted by welfare reforms and planned outreach activity through the integration of functions within community hubs. These interventions, including the planned outreach activity should be targeted to priority areas / client groups through an intelligence led approach. This is best enabled by joint working between the services and delivered through multi-disciplinary

teams. It is suggested therefore, that in practice, staff involved in employment support within Housing Leeds remain embedded in Housing Leeds but additionally, benefit from professional direction from Employment and Skills as appropriate. In this way, they will be able to connect to and use intelligence outlined in the report to maximise outcomes for tenants.

6.4 PG stated that the City Deal is all around jobs and skills and not certain that we are fully exploiting the funding available by way of grants. PG would like to see the new Housing Leeds working with the Worklessness agenda to exploit what it can provide.

6.5 PG requested that officers work with Cllr Maqsood who is employment lead and for a further paper to be brought back to a future meeting of the Board.

6.6 Points of discussion

- The extent to which a connection is made between homeless and unemployed people in order that services are joined up.
 - Work on the Housing Needs assessment is exploring a more holistic approach to encompass jobs which will be fed into the Housing Needs work-stream.
- The chair noted that we are not in a position to outline what resources are available for this work at present but he would expect that the outcomes being delivered would continue.

7. **Tenant Involvement**

SC presented a report on Tenant Involvement aiming to clarify existing work and providing consistency during a period of transition.

7.1 Since the creation of the ALMO's in Leeds, Housing Leeds has developed a robust model for engagement through three local Community Engagement Teams in partnership with Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) which operate at a City wide level and provides an opportunity to engage on a national platform to discuss a full range of housing issues. LTF provides support for 115 groups and has a membership of approximately 1500. Across Housing Leeds the tenant involvement teams support approximately 130 registered tenant groups which involves funding and officer support. We undertake a range of activities where we engage people through formal mechanisms, including the social media.

7.2 We are looking at what we currently provide with current resources. Looking at best practice models through engagement. Work is on-going with Area Panels to share experiences across the City. Meetings have been held with the three existing Tenants Scrutiny Panels. A meeting is being held on Friday with the Chairs of the panels. A Scrutiny Panel report is being presented to tenants and panels on the 18th of December.

7.3 Members received a draft involvement update showing information communicated to tenants, such as how we have responded to tenant questions; a calendar of forthcoming events; a tenant's survey form.

CS/PR/
JH

7.4	Much current work is already good practice but there is a need to combine good practice across Housing Leeds to form a consistent model. Information will go out to tenants forums being held over the next 6 weeks, and will undertake a tenants survey to assess requirements.	
7.5	Discussion points	
7.5.1	The work-stream currently comprises officers with plans to include tenants. A strong recommendation to make use of the talents and rich experience of councillors.	SC
7.5.2	Concern that the Chairs of Local Housing Advisory Panels needed support and training for officers to ensure that they maximise their time and focus on coherent, strategic issues to best represent tenants at Housing Advisory Board. SC to ensure this is picked up in developing support for tenant involvement.	SC
7.5.3	Need to reach and engage a greater proportion of tenants using a wider range of media and other activity to do so. Board members to propose innovative ways of doing so.	SC
7.5.4	The importance of Chairs representing the views of tenants – and the need for training and support to enable them to do so.	SC
7.5.5	The need also for training and support to be available for tenants so that they can actively engage.	SC
8.	Multi-Storey Tenant Working Group Options Paper	
	The Board received a Multi-Storey Tenant Working Group – Options Paper.	
8.1	The board approved the recommendations of this report, namely that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic umbrella group for multi storey housing be established, comprising of 6 tenants, along with officers from planned and responsive maintenance, LASBT and housing management. • Tenants will be chosen for the panel following a similar process to that used to appoint members of the Local Housing Advisory Panels. • Further discussion is needed to determine how members of this group could best link into the work of local housing advisory panels. 	CS
8.2	CS to develop plan for taking this work forward and bring to the April meeting of the Board.	CS
8.3	It was noted that a cross-Council group around Sheltered Housing already exists.	
9.	Capital Programme Update	
9.1	SH updated the Board on the current position with the Capital Programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013/14 programme is on track. Currently projecting three quarters of a million ponds overspend which is reducing as predicted. Broadly running at £54.8m against a target of £54m. • 2014/15 programme – report went to Exec board in November, 	SH

outlining programmes for next year that address city wide priorities. The report was signed off after some debate, but the approach was agreed. SH will circulate an update following RE's announcement that £2.3m of extra funding is available from RTB receipts.

- Looking to inject more funding into Adaptations; CCTV, hard to reach energy efficiency schemes. Schemes have been set up following defects in MSFs were identified. SH suggested this item be a regular one in order to update progress. Looking to introduce a rolling programme to gain a steady steer on work.

9.2 Points discussed:

- Priority is to be given to single glazed properties and partially heated properties.
- No longer constrained by "decency" work and we can redefine what we can do to properties.
- Would be useful to have a more in depth discussion around the capital programme at the next meeting.

SH

10. **Update on the JNC Structure (Confidential item)**

Officers were asked to leave for this item.

- NE introduced a report outlining the proposed restructure of the JNC senior management structure for Housing Leeds, and set out the rationale for the changes, and implications for the existing workforce.
- PG outlined the process for recruiting to the Chief Officer posts.
- The consensus from the Board was that this was the right approach. There was also a view that the next stage of the restructure should be completed as quickly as possible so staff know what position they are in. The aim is for the restructure to be completed by 31 March 2014.

11. **Any Other Business**

None

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 28th January, 2014 at 5pm

Members to contact Chair with any issues they would like raised at this future board meeting.