

Report of

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 8th April 2014

Subject: Housing Advisory Panels

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

- 1. The Shadow Housing Advisory Board accepted the creation of 11 Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) in October 2013. Existing Area Panel Chairs were subsequently invited to convene as a city wide group to review a draft Terms of Reference for the HAPs in preparation for their commencement in April 2014.**
- 2. The Terms of Reference has now been considered by the Cross City Chairs Group (CCCG) and a number of amendments and clarifications are proposed for the Housing Advisory Board's approval.**
- 3. The CCCG have also drafted a terms of reference for the CCCG themselves, recognising the special role this forum has in representing the interests of tenants on a city-wide basis.**
- 4. To ensure the effective operation of the HAPs and CCCG, there needs to be in place a number of protocols to ensure an effective level of governance and financial control, as well as to provide clarity and consistency of operation. Officers are currently working on a forward work programme with the CCCG 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 etc. to ensure they work productively.**

Recommendations

5. The Housing Advisory Board are requested to:

- **Approve the Terms of Reference of the Housing Advisory Panels.**
- **Approve the Terms of Reference for the Cross City Chairs Group.**
- **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.**

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To seek the Housing Advisory Board's approval of the Terms of Reference for both the HAPs and the CCCG. These have been considered in detail by existing Area Panel Chairs and various amendments and further details added.
- 1.2 To update the Housing Advisory Board generally of the creation of HAPs and to highlight some of the development areas to be included in an emerging forward work programme.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The CCCG have met a number of times as a group and are working well together.
- 2.2 The priority for the CCCG has been to review the HAPs terms of reference and to define its own special role as a unified group of 11 local chairs. In going about this task, additional activities were highlighted as being required, for example:
 - Following an election within the CCCG, Ted Wilson has been confirmed as the current 'Chair of Chairs', and Jo Hourigan Vice-Chair.
 - Dates have been set for the HAPs Chair (Ted Wilson), Chair of the Housing Advisory Board (Councillor Peter Gruen) and the Director of Environment and Housing (Neil Evans) to meet at key points in the year to exchange points of interest or matters arising wishing to be escalated to the Housing Advisory Board from the HAPs and vice versa.
 - The CCCG undertook a bus tour on the 17th January, to start to work together as a team and to learn more about the diversity of homes and communities across the city.
 - A Marketing and Communications lead officer was invited to a CCCG meeting to outline some communication tasks and to start to develop a media and communications strategy, including the use of social media to interact with a broader range of tenants.
 - The CCCG had previously requested £120k per individual HAP. This has since been raised by the Chair of the CCCG with the Director of Environment

and Housing and, subject to the creation of financial controls, was accepted and announced at the Tenants Conference on the 27th February.

3 Main issues

3.1 Through an inclusive approach, utilising the knowledge and experience of the existing Area Panel Chairs, a number of proposed amendments were made to the terms of reference. Some of the key proposed changes provided further clarity on membership, for example:

- Membership will be open to a maximum of 10 tenants, of which 1 can be a Leaseholder and 2 Elected Members. The Chair of each Panel will always be a tenant or leaseholder.
- Panel members will be re-appointed on a 4 yearly cycle. Retirement will be based on the length of service.
- Previous years of service on Area Panels will be taken into account when calculating the first recruitment cycle post transfer to Housing Leeds.

3.2 The CCCG Terms of Reference provides clarity on the purpose of this forum, i.e.

- Share areas of concern from Housing Advisory Panels and, where appropriate, prepare reports and make recommendations for improvement to the Housing Advisory Board;
- Promote and disseminate good practice on the work of Housing Advisory Panels;
- Escalate areas of concern and good practice initiatives on tenant involvement to Housing Advisory Board; and
- Receive and act upon feedback from the Housing Advisory Board.

3.3 To ensure the effective operation of the HAPs and CCCG, officers will work in partnership with the CCCG to develop a work programme. This will outline the protocols required to ensure an effective level of governance and financial control as well as to provide clarity and consistency of operation. The work programme will clarify the appropriate lead for each task required, depending on the nature of the protocol required – for example, officers leading on developing financial controls (with awareness and understanding amongst CCCG).

4 Corporate Considerations

4.4 Consultation and Engagement

4.4.1 The Terms of Reference have been considered by existing Area Panel Chairs in a number of meetings between October and February 2014. The Chair of the CCCG presented a summary of the work to date and helped raise the profile of the HAPs more widely at 'Better Together', the city wide tenants conference on the 27th February 2014.

4.5 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.5.1 Giving due regard to equality will be evidenced in the following actions as part of the CCCGs and wider HAPs activity throughout the year:

- Equality monitoring of existing panel members to understand the extent to which the diversity of tenants is represented;
- Using the above to target recruitment in any under-represented groups;
- Creating and monitoring neighbourhood profiles for each panel area, as part of the local priority setting process for each HAP;
- The development of a marketing and communications strategy that will consider how key messages are communicated to and from the panels by a diverse range of customers;
- A training and development programme for CCCG and HAP members raising awareness of equality issues; and
- A Code of Conduct to ensure discriminatory or offensive behaviours are challenged.

4.6 Council policies and City Priorities

4.6.1 HAPs help us to deliver the Best Council objective to 'ensure high quality public services- improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city.'

4.7 Resources and value for money

4.7.1 The HAPs, led by a CCCG, will offer a number of Value for Money advantages. As part of the Housing Leeds service re-design resources can be shared from across the city to support the day to day working of the panels. The level of officer support will be optimised by the creation of consistent processes and practice, for example, standard financial reporting to all 11 panels.

4.7.2 The HAPs, with a CCCG, are now better placed to communicate, share information and work together to achieve city-wide priorities for tenants. Potentially pooling funding from their budgets to invest in high impact initiatives.

4.8 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.8.1 The creation of the HAPs is in line with The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing 2012. In particular: 'Providers are expected to engage meaningfully with their tenants and offer them opportunities to shape the tailoring of services to reflect local priorities. Tenants should have the ability to scrutinise their provider's performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future delivery'.

4.9 Risk Management

- 4.9.1 The HAPs require further guidance, as part of a range of activities outlined in a work programme work programme, that will add effective controls and safeguards (for example, having in place a code of conduct) to reduce financial, reputational and personal tenant risk

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The CCCG have worked well as a group and after detailed consideration are seeking the Housing Advisory Boards approval their work on the two terms of reference and support and any feedback on their future activity.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Housing Advisory Board are requested to:

- Approve the Terms of Reference of the Housing Advisory Panels;
- Approve the Terms of Reference for the Cross City Chairs Group; and
- 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.

7 Background documents

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Terms of Reference of the Housing Advisory Panels
- 7.2 Appendix 2: Terms of Reference for Cross City Chairs Group