

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor P Gruen in the Chair

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

Tenant/Leaseholder

Ted Wilson
Andy Liptrot
Madeline Hunter

Independent Representatives

Timothy Woods
Matthew Walker
Andrew Feldhaus

Co-opted Members

David Glew
Jo Hourigan

16 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents

17 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or members of the public from the meeting.

18 Late Items

There were no late items of business

19 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

20 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence

21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That subject to the inclusion of two minor corrections, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th September 2014 be accepted as a true and correct record.

22 Matters Arising from the Minutes

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

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

The Chair reminded the Board that the Authority was facing some financial challenges and that measures had been introduced to pull back on spend. Managing staffing reductions in the general fund were having some impact on the speed of recruiting to Housing as we provide opportunities for displaced staff to take up vacant posts.

In providing an update Officers reported that “Mears” the main contractors had recently taken on a full complement of apprentices (50+) other opportunities within Housing Leeds would continue to be explored and the Housing Advisory Board would continue to receive updates – Status of action “Open in progress”

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

Officers indicated that a monitoring report would be submitted to the February 2015 meeting of the Housing Advisory Board - Status of action “Open in progress”

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

It was noted that an item entitled “Tenant Engagement update including focus on Tenants and Residents Associations” appeared elsewhere on the agenda – Status of action “Closed”

Implementation of Review of Housing Management Services – Minute No. 50 – 3rd June 2014 refers)

It was reported that a final update report had been considered previously.
- Status of action “Closed”

Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2014/15 – Minute No. 65 – 9th September 2014 refers)

It was suggested that an item dealing with long term investment strategy be added to the February meeting of the Board

Included on the Forward Plan 2014/15 - Status of action "Closed"

23 Developing Community Lettings Policies

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an overview of the lettings outcomes achieved in 2013/14 under the current lettings framework, including feedback on the initial lettings of new homes delivered through the Council House Growth Programme.

The report also sought agreement for the proposed review and consultation methodology and to consider the potential to review the tenancy agreement and overarching lettings policy to deliver a coherent lettings and tenancy management framework which would reward tenants and applicants who had maintained an excellent tenancy record.

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

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

- Fundamental review – new approach based on "Community Lettings"
- Holistic and Consistent approach
- Housing Management structure connects lettings and tenancy management policies to deliver positive outcomes
- Focus on communities not individual blocks
- Inclusive approach to prevent displacement and concentrations in other areas
- Recognise antisocial behaviour exists across all age bands
- Respond to changes in the wider housing market
- Leeds is a welcoming city

- Housing Leeds ambition is to create great places where people want to live, and where people take pride in their home and community
- Lettings policy & community lettings policies
- Pre-tenancy training
- Tenant transfer policy Tenancy agreement

In passing comment the Chair welcomed the review. He suggested the review would be challenging but would dispense of many myths around local lettings.

Matthew Walker welcomed the inclusion of rewarding tenants for good behaviour, but cautioned that there may be tensions if people were not treated fairly.

Andy Liptrot welcomed the proposal to introduce pre-tenancy training suggesting it would be useful if tenant groups were involved in interviewing/ training of perspective tenants and it would be an opportunity to meet and greet.

Mr Liptrot also referred to children in high rise blocks and the need to explore balcony safety/ design

Jo Hourigan welcomed the city wide review and emphasised the need for a local lettings policy which would address the needs of local people; family members and carers.

In offering comment David Glew suggested if the pre –tenancy training could include information to combat condensation, this may reduce the number of disrepair claims

The Director of Environment and Housing said it was important to understand our prospective tenants and their needs and requirements, it was also important to plan around children. The development of community lettings policies would deliver some big gains but it would also create a number of dilemmas.

In drawing the discussion to a conclusion the Chair thanked the Board for their feedback and contributions suggesting it would assist officers in developing alternative policies.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the contents of the report and the new approach to developing community lettings policies which build on the success of new lettings criteria used for new build homes delivered through the council's Housing Growth Programme
- (ii) To recommend the Executive Board that the Chief Officer, Housing Management reviews the current local lettings policies following the process outlined in section 3 of the submitted report

24 Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard

The Board received a presentation on the Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard and the need to agree a new standard for Council Housing following completion of the Decent Homes Standard.

Steve Hunt, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said the new Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard, to supersede the Decent Homes Standard, was now considered to be essential to inform future investment plans for the Council's housing stock. Where reasonable and practical the new Standard should address the short-comings in the Decent Homes Standard and pick up appropriate elements within the Code for Sustainable Housing. Whilst some retro-fit building components were now industry standard with proven benefits, such as replacement UPVC double glazing and cavity wall insulation, there were other emerging components the benefits of which were less well tested, such as upgrade to triple glazing. He informed the Board that in order to better understand whether newer components should be incorporated into the Standard, joint research was being undertaken with both Leeds University and Leeds Beckett University to test components in actual application to occupied and void properties. The results of this research would be used to inform future updates to the Standard.

It was proposed that the Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard comprises the following elements, some of which will be retained from the Decent Homes Standard:-

- Housing Health and Safety Rating System

- Structural elements of Decent Homes Standard (Roof replacement)
- Secure by Design (Burglar proof doors)
- Thermal efficiency upgrade to average SAP
- Fire Safety upgrade to WYFRS concordat
- Double glazed windows
- Composite doors
- Central heating
- Insulation update
- Improved fire safety
- Focus on renewable energy (Solar panels)
- DDA Compliance and communal facility upgrade
- Upgrade to the environment
- Self- contained accommodation

Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard

- Ongoing research and development
- Component quality and standardisation
- Better places for people to live

In conclusion Mr Hunt said the Standard was not a 'finished product' as it would need to keep abreast of emerging building technology and component development and would be informed by the research being undertaken by the two Leeds Universities.

The Chair thanked Mr Hunt for his presentation suggesting this was still a work in progress and would be subject to further discussion through appropriate representative groups.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted

25 Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position Period 6 2014/15

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a financial position on the Housing Leeds Capital programme at period 6 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:

- Housing Leeds & BITMO refurbishment programme
- Housing Leeds Newbuild Programme & other

Referring to section 3.6 of the submitted report Councillor Truswell sought clarification in that adaptations would receive a further £500k in period 7 which would be realigned from within the existing budget.

In responding the Chief Officer, Property and contract said that the budget for adaptations had been reduced for the 2014/15 period but following an increased in demand funding had been brought to the previous level.

Responding to a query about the completion time for adaptations. The Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said that completion could take between 11 – 17 weeks. In the first instance the tenants would receive an assessment to determine priority, the level of priority determined the completion time.

The Chair reported that a report on adaptations would be brought to the next meeting of the Board in February 2015.

In offering comment Ted Wilson said there were currently a number of large programmes ongoing, were they all sustainable?

In responding the Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said there were currently around 40 vacancies; if these posts were not filled there may be slippage in the programme.

Referring to the Refurbishment Programme David Glew referred to decision making on quality spend.

The Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said the refurbishment programme was an investment with focus on component quality and standardisation.

RESOLVED – To note the Housing Leeds Service refurbishment programme and Housing Leeds Council House Growth programme position at period 6 2014/15

26 Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position Period 6- 2014/15

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the revenue financial position for the Housing Leeds (HRA) service as at period 6 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:

- Projected income
- Projected expenditure
- Right to buy (RTB) sales
- Arrears
- Collection rates

Commenting on section 3.5 of the submitted report and the reference of additional resources to address disrepair claims against the Council. Andy Liptrot sought clarification as to whether contractors should contribute towards such claims.

The Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said the claim was against the Council as property landlord. Recently the Council had received an increase in the number of such claims which was often driven by claim companies (Claim farmers)

Councillor Anderson suggested that the registering and recording of maintenance issues at the annual tenants visits may be a defence against any such claims.

Officers confirmed that the registering and recording of maintenance issues would assist in defending such claims.

Ted Wilson asked if there were many disrepair claims from tenants in high rise blocks.

In responding the Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said there were few claims from high rise tenants, restricted access to the block was a suggested deterrent.

Andrew Feldhaus referring to capital of £1.2m to fund a vehicle replacement programme for Construction Services suggested this would be an outright capital loss.

The Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said the replacement programme was for vehicle 10 years and older.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

27 Tenant Engagement Update including focus on Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs)

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on:

- The development of the engagement service, and progress against delivering the new Tenant Engagement Framework
- How the service proposes to support and strengthen, new and existing tenants and residents associations (TRAs) ensuring they remain the foundation of large scale involvement
- The broader service ambitions to be achieved and the challenges in delivering this

Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Update on the progress to date
- Focus on Tenants and Residents Associations
- Future support to help sustain and grow TRAs
- Wider engagement service areas for development

Madeline Hunter suggested that a review was required to determine the relationship between Leeds Tenants Federation and other community and

voluntary organisations. The groups should remain independent but with partnership working.

The Chair suggested that all parties had a common interest but we need to accept that not all groups share the same view.

In offering comment Ted Wilson suggested that tenant inspections should be undertaken in areas outside their own locality.

The Chair thanked Members for their contributions and indicated that further updates would be provided in due course.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

28 2014/15 Quarter 2 Performance Report

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a Summary of the quarter two performance data for 2014 – 15 against the six Housing Leeds priorities

Anna Tansley, Service Manager Performance & Business Implications, Environments and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Housing Support Dashboard (Priority 1 Homelessness)
- Priority 2 Dashboard – Void dwellings
- Priority 3 Dashboard – Maximise rent collection
- Priority 4 Dashboard – Welfare change
- Priority 5 Dashboard – Annual tenancy visits

In providing clarification around void dwellings, officers reported that the average citywide turnaround time remained under the 30 day target at just over 29 days.

Members noted and welcomed the increase in rent collection performance rising to 97.70% compared to 97.26% for the previous year.

It was noted that the percentage of annual tenancy visits completed, stood at 44.41% for the half year

In summing up the Chair suggested that performance against the six Housing Leeds priorities was generally an improving picture.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the Quarter 2 performance information relating to the six Housing Leeds priorities
- (ii) To note that due to mid - year boundary changes across the East & North East, South & South East and West & North West, year on year and month on month comparison could not be made at area level.

29 Housing Advisory Board - Forward Plan 2014/15

The Board considered the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2014/15

Board Members requested that issues around High Rise Blocks, Tenant Working Groups and Adaptations be included in the Boards Forward Plan

RESOLVED – That with the inclusion of the suggested topics, the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2014/14 be noted

30 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

Tuesday 3rd February 2015
Tuesday 7th April 2015

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