

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 2ND FEBRUARY, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D Coupar in the Chair
Councillors B Anderson and K Ritchie

Independent Representative

Matthew Walker

Co-opted Member

David Glew
Jo Hourigan

49 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

50 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

51 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

52 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

53 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor A Gabriel, Councillor S Hamilton, Councillor J Bentley, Ted Wilson, Andy Liptrot, Timothy Woods and Andrew Feldhaus.

54 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th November 2015 were accepted as a true and correct record.

55 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The following matters arising/ actions from the minutes were highlighted:

Minutes No. 72 - Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position Period 2 2015/16

That a breakdown of housing works in each ward would be circulated to Members as it became available

It was reported that a Members portal was been developed to provide updates to Ward Members for Capital Works being carried out in their individual wards – Status Open, in progress

Minutes No. 26 - Key Welfare Changes and Preparations for Universal Credit

Provision of information following visit to Oldham to be brought to a future meeting and Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits to submit a report to a future meeting, including details of exceptions – A comprehensive report to be reported to HAB in April 2016 – Status Open, in progress

Minute No. 28 - Housing Leeds Customer Access Strategy

An update on this issue would be provided to the Board, together with details on how the differing age ranges of tenants could be addressed in terms of the best way in which to engage with the different groups – Information to be reported to HAB in February 2016 as part of the Customer Service Plan Update report – Status, closed

Minute No. 31 - Agenda Distribution

The Chair requested the situation be monitored and if delays continued to consider an alternative method of delivery. It was reported that no further issues had occurred. – Status, closed

Minute No. 39 – Matters Arising from the Minutes

Councillor Ritchie requested if he could be supplied with a Briefing Note as to how the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme operated in Leeds.

The Head of Finance reported that the requested information had been supplied – Status, closed

Minute No. 40 - Voice of Involved Tenants across Leeds

Councillor Hamilton requested if she could be supplied with information about the funding of expenses to VITAL Members and the extent and cost of officer involvement

The Chief Officer Housing Management reported that the requested information had been supplied – Status, closed

Minute No. 42 – Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position – Period 6 – 2015/16

To provide to Members a breakdown of collection rates by the three different collection streams.

It was reported that changes were required to the IT systems to enable this data to be reported. – Status, in progress

Minutes No. 43 – Performance Report

To provide to Members additional performance information in order to give a more accurate assessment of performance across voids and repairs, and to better understand rent collection rates

Information to be reported to HAB in February 2016 as part of the Performance report – Status, closed

To provide to Members an evaluation of City – Wide Environmental Schemes.

The Chief Officer Housing Management reported that a methodology was being developed for evaluating the effectiveness of the environmental improvement programme and individual schemes. Further information to be brought back to the HAB at a later date – Status, Open in progress

Minute No. 46 – High Rise Project Update

That arrangements be made for the Board to visit the Clyde's and Wortley's high rise blocks.

The Chief Officer Housing Management reported that arrangements were be made to visit the area in April 2016 to see the benefit of the security / virtual concierge system and the intensive housing support model which will be more established by this time – Status, Open in progress

Minute No. 47 – HAB Forward Plan

To receive an update from Mears at the next meeting.

Mears to provide an update to HAB in February 2016 – Status, closed

56 Presentation from Mears

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Andy Wilson, Partnering Director (Mears Leeds) and Tom Finch, Head of Housing Contracts, Leeds City Council.

Mr Wilson thanked the Board for the opportunity for Mears to attend today's meeting and provide an update on the work undertaking by the company.

Mr Wilson explained Mears were responsible for Council house repairs and for the returning of void properties. He reported that each week 3,000 repairs were undertaken and 50 void properties were returned. Referring to repair performance he said first time repairs were currently above target at 98.9%. Under the previous contractor void performance was an average of 55 days for a returned property, currently Mears were currently achieving a turn round time of 30 days.

Referring to Customer satisfaction in repairs Mr Wilson said satisfaction rates were high 92% in Leeds South and 91% in Leeds West. Data on recycling, re-use & landfill showed that 98.9% of waste removed from properties was diverted from landfill.

In terms of the Mears workforce Mr Wilson said that since taking on the Leeds contract Mears had increased employment by 18%, currently 110 apprentices were employed with a 90% retention rate. It was also reported that a closer working relationship had been established with the Trade Unions.

Commenting on the Mears contract, Mr Finch reported that the contract had been extended by 4 years providing greater added value to Housing Leeds.

Referring to the letting standard, David Glew asked if he could be provided with a copy of the letting standards being used.

Mr Finch confirmed the requested information would be supplied.

In offering comment, Councillor Ritchie welcomed the information around apprenticeships.

The Chair thanked Mr Wilson and Mr Finch for their attendance and presentation commenting that the information supplied had been interesting and informative.

57 Customer Services Plan Update

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

- Progress with the delivery of Community Hubs through the Citizens@leeds agenda
- The progress made in the review of the Local Housing Offer to tenants.
- An update on the progress with regard to improving the quality of customer service and access to Housing Leeds tenants

Amanda Britton, Service Manager, Environment and Housing, and Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer (Customer Access), Citizens' & Communities presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

The Chief Officer (Customer Access) provided an update on the Hub provision throughout the city. Details of the facilities available together with new closer working practices with Housing Leeds was highlighted

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

- How to integrate Housing into the Community Hubs
- Tenants to have multiple issues addressed
- Rationalisation of housing assets

Councillor Anderson said he was aware that Scrutiny was looking into the Community Hub model.

In offering comment Councillor Ritchie welcome the development of the Community Hubs and the services on offer.

RESOLVED – To welcome and support the overall approach to developing Community Hubs

58 Update from VITAL (Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds)

The Chair introduced and welcomed Mick Dodds - Chair of VOLT (Voice of Older Tenants group) and Tracey McGarry - Lead on YAgI (Young Adults getting involved).

In providing feedback on issues affecting Council House Tenants, Ms McGarry said she had been a Council House tenant for 13 years and was a member of YAgI. She explained that Yagi was the first forum where young tenants could come along and participate, and provide feedback on all aspects of the Council House service.

Referring to recent gatherings of YAgI Ms McGarry said the group had discussed welfare reform and universal credit and what impact this would

have were issues which were important to young tenants. Ms McGarry said it was important for the views of young tenants to be heard. She said it was important that Housing Advisory Panels, YAgi, VOLT and VITAL all shared their views for the benefit of the council house community.

Referring to YAgi's involvement in assisting new tenants, she said the Tenants Handbook was important and very useful. Facebook and Twitter had also been used in providing a swift response to tenants on the simpler questions. In the near future YAgi would like to test out an application where tenants would be able to bid for properties.

Ms McGarry said the presence of YAgi at Community Hubs / One Stop Centres would be really useful, it would be an opportunity to reach out to Council house tenants to understand what was important to them and find out what's going on in the Community.

Finally, Yagi would like to work with Mears to discuss future opportunities for apprentices as part of a jobs and skills partnership.

In offering comment to Ms McGarry, Councillor Ritchie said thank you for coming. Your presentation was informative and your enthusiasm was inspiring. He suggested that Community Committees should be encouraged to play a greater role in getting information out to Council House tenants.

The Chair added to these comments by offering to write to the Chairs of Community Committees, and also to attend a Question and Answer session with young tenants.

Matthew Walker also referred to the presentation as inspiring. Commenting on Universal Credit, he suggested that more work needs to be done to communicate the information more effectively with all social housing providers. He also said that recommendations need to come forward which will assist tenants with Universal Credit.

The Chair thanked both Ms McGarry and Mr Dodds for their attendance and presentation commenting that it had been enthusiastic and informative and it had certainly been well received by Board Members.

59 Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position - Period 9 - 2015/16

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 the end of December 2015.

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment 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 to Income – Income projected to be £803K
 - Expenditure, particularly around disrepair provision projected to be £1,581K, £81K above the original estimate
 - Repairs budget projected to overspend by £696K
 - Net savings of £660K are projected in relation to employees: vacant posts, savings on training and occupational health
 - Savings of £284K projected in relation to premises costs
 - Right to buy sales (RTB) sales – 308 completed sales to end of December, total sales being projected at 410 to year end. Anticipated total sales could generate £18.8m
 - Collection Rates – 96.86% for dwelling rents, compared to the target of 98%
 - Arrears – Currently £6.7m compared to £5.8m at the end of 2014/15
- In offering comment Matthew Walker asked if there were any plans for a rent increase.

In responding the Director of Environment and Housing said at this stage there were no proposals to increase rents. Any shortfall would be made up by the use of reserves and the introduction of some service charges within sheltered housing schemes. He suggested there also may be a need to undertake a review of the long term Investment Strategy taking into account any impact arising from the Housing Planning bill

Jo Hourigan said that minimising any potential increase to tenants was important and suggested looking to housing partners with a view to gain additional income.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) That a report reviewing the long term Investment Strategy taking into account any impact arising from the Housing Planning bill, be incorporated within the Board's Forward Plan

60 HRA Capital Financial Position Period 9 2015/16

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a financial position statement on the HRA Housing Leeds Capital programme at period 9 for the financial year 2015/16.

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 Services and BITMO refurbishment programme
- Housing Leeds New build Programme & Other

Referring to the table on page 22 of the submitted report, Housing Leeds Capital Programme, David Glew suggested the table was really informative but could some of the categories be broken down into sub categories

In responding the Head of Finance, Environments and Housing said that works were currently ongoing to develop a system which would provide updates for Capital Works being carried out in a particular area which may include the information requested.

Referring to the Community Safety Programme, Councillor Anderson said the spend on the budget appeared to be down.

The Director of Environment and Housing said that slippage in CCTV works in the west of the city accounted for the low spend, it was not a case of loss of budget.

RESOLVED – To note the Housing Leeds and BITMO refurbishment programme and the Housing Leeds Council House Growth programme position at period 9, 2015/16.

61 Progress Update on the Council House Growth Programme

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on progress in respect of the Council House Growth Programme, including: Acquisitions, new build and long term empty homes.

Lorraine Wright, Service Manager, Relationship Management, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- The ambition of the City Council to deliver 1,000 new Council homes
- An update on acquisitions, new build and long term empty homes
- Budget position

In offering comment David Glew asked if there was any reason why the City Council could not buy from the private sector and bring those properties back into use

In responding the Director of Environment and Housing said it would not be in the Council's best interests to buy isolated properties. There was also an issue around income streams.

Jo Hourigan said there were a lot of family properties available in the East End Park area, the area had become unpopular, many residents wishing to relocate, as a consequence house prices were low.

The Director of Environment and Housing said it may be an appropriate time to review our long term investment strategy.

Referring to new build properties, Councillor Ritchie asked if these properties were being built to the Leeds Standard.

Officers confirmed all new build properties were built in accordance with the Leeds Standard.

RESOLVED – To note the progress to date on the Council House Growth Programme

62 Performance Report

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a summary of the most recent performance data against the six Housing Leeds priorities and informed the Board of progress with the development performance measures and dashboards for each priority. It was reported that the purpose of the dashboards and extended range of performance measures was to give greater insight on matters that affected tenants and to help to put service performance into context.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/ comment of the meeting:

- Priority 1 Dashboard – Environmental Improvement(Appendix 1 referred)
- Priority 2 Dashboard – Rents and Benefits, quarter 3 (Appendix 2 referred)
- Priority 4 Dashboard – Repairs (Appendix 3 referred)

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

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

- Progress on Environmental Improvement schemes
- Improvements in rent collection and arrears performance in quarter 3
- Homeless preventions (1608 homeless preventions Oct – Dec 2015 78%)
- Temporary Accommodations (75 households)
- Re-Let Days
- Number of Void Lettable Properties
- Adaptation
- Repairs
- Capital Programme Effectiveness
- Annual Home visits
- Disrepair (Continued reduction in disrepair caseload)
- Further work being done to improve performance reporting

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the most recent performance information relating to the Six Housing Leeds Priorities
- (ii) To note the progress being made to develop dashboards for each of the Six Housing Leeds priorities providing a range of both performance and contextual data to give a rounded view of performance

63 Development of Sheltered Housing Support models with a particular focus on Extra Care Sheltered Housing

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an outline of the progress being made with regard to the development of more flexible support models for older tenants.

The report also outlined proposals for the management of a new Extra Care sheltered housing scheme in Yeadon.

Juliet Duke, Service Manager, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Review of support models
- Development of extra care housing

RESOLVED –

- (i) To support and welcome the proposals for the development of the flexible support model and Extra Care Sheltered housing
- (ii) That a further update on proposed support models for older tenants be brought back to a future meeting of this board

64 Tenant Mobility update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on the Tenant Mobility Incentive Scheme in terms of progress, timetable for implementation, monitoring and risk management arrangements

Amanda Britton, Service Manager, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- The allocation of £195K to a new tenant mobility incentive scheme.

- Promotion of the scheme via a proactive marketing campaign and incentive payments
- A payment of £500 will be available to assist with removal costs and act as an incentive to relocate.
- Home Swap event has been arranged for 26th February 2016.
- Online registration available
- Eligible criteria included within the promotional material
- Implementation of the scheme

Commenting on the marketing and promotional materials David Glew suggested greater use of technology and the use of an application which would match tenants to properties.

Officers reported that such applications were already provided by external suppliers.

Mick Dodds suggested that the scheme may appeal to single elderly residents who may wish to transfer to a smaller property.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments

RESOLVED – To note progress and welcome implementation of the scheme

65 Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2016

The Board considered the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2016

Having received contributions/ suggestions from Board Members at today's meeting, the following items be added the Boards' Forward Plan:

- Lettings Policy
- Long term Investment Strategy/ impact of Housing Planning bill
- Housing Standards (Lettings Standards and Leeds Standard)
- High Rise Housing

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of the above items, the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2016 be noted

66 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED - To note that future meetings of the Board will be arranged as follows:

- Tuesday 26th April 2016
- Tuesday 7th June 2016
- Tuesday 13th September 2016
- Tuesday 29th November 2016

- Tuesday 28th February 2017

All meetings to commence at 5.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds