

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D Coupar in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, S Hamilton and
K Ritchie

Tenant/Leaseholder

Ted Wilson

Independent Representative

Timothy Wood
Andrew Feldhaus

Co-opted Member

Jo Hourigan

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the return of Ted Wilson to the Board following a period of absence.

The Chair also welcomed Jill Wildman in her new role as Chief Officer, Housing Management.

67 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

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

68 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.

69 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

70 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

71 Apologies for Absence

Final Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Tuesday, 7th June, 2016

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor A Gabriel, Matthew Walker and David Glew

72 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd February 2016 were accepted as a true and correct record.

73 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The following matters/actions arising 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 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 the Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits to submit a report to a future meeting, including details of exceptions – A comprehensive report had been placed on the agenda for April 2016 – 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 had been scheduled for April 2016 – Status, in progress

Minutes No. 43 – Performance Report

That an evaluation be undertaken of city-wide environmental schemes

Information had been included in a report on the April 2016 agenda – Status, closed

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 being made to visit the area in June 2016 – Status, Open in progress

Minute No.56 – Presentation from Mears

Co-opted Member David Glew requested further details about the Leeds Lettings Standard

It was reported that the requested information had been supplied – Status, Closed

Minute No.59 – Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position Period 9 2015/16

A report reviewing the long term investment strategy including any impact arising from the Housing Planning Bill 2015 was requested.

It was reported that issues connected with the impact of the Housing Planning Bill 2015 were subject of a report on the April 2016 agenda – Status, Closed

Minute No. 60 HRA Capital Financial position Period 9 2015/16

David Glew suggested that the categories used within the report be broken down in Sub Categories.

It was reported that a description of the Sub Categories had been included in the report on the April 2016 agenda – Status, Closed

Minute No. 63 – Sheltered Housing Support Models with focus on Extra Care Sheltered Housing

It was requested that a further update on proposed support models for older tenants be brought back to a future meeting of the Board.

That an update would be brought back to the November meeting of this Board
– Status, Open

Minute No.64 – Tenant Mobility Update

Councillor Richie requested if a copy of the Tenant Mobility Scheme could be circulated to Board Members for information.

Officers reported that the requested information would be supplied – Status,
Open

Minute No. 65 – Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2016

It was requested that the following items be added to the Forward Plan 2016:

- Lettings Policy
- Long term investment strategy / impact of housing Planning Bill
- Housing Standards
- High rise housing

It was reported that the items had been scheduled as follows:

- Lettings Policy (June 2016 – Status, Open)
- Long term investment strategy / impact of housing Planning Bill (April 2016 – Status – Closed)
- Housing Standards (June 2016 – Status, Open)
- High rise housing – (September 2016 – Status, Open)

74 Update from Tenant Representatives

The Chair invited Tenants representatives to provide any updates or feedback on issues affecting Council House Tenants.

Tracey McGarry - Lead on YAgI (Young Adults getting involved) explained that Yagi were encouraging young tenants to participate, and provide feedback on all aspects of the Council House service. Facebook and Twitter continued to provide a swift response to general queries raised by tenants.

It was reported that new tenants to the group often found it difficult and challenging to speak at public meetings. In an attempt to provide assistance, the group were now involved in promoting tenants training tools which may provide greater self-confidence leading to more involved participation.

Further partnership working was currently being explored through Tpas – Tenant Partnership Advisory Service who were able to provide advice on issues such as anti-social behaviour, mental health issues and bereavement.

Jo Hourigan referred to the Tpas Northern Region Awards 2016. She said that any winners shortlisted from our region would participate in the National Finals which were due to take place in July 2016.

Commenting on the work of VITAL, Jo said it was important that their views were brought forward to the Board if they were to influence any new policy development.

The Chair thanked both Ms McGarry and Mrs Hourigan for their feedback commenting that it was important that tenants views were made known to the Board.

75 HRA Capital Financial Position Period 11 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 11 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
- Clarification around the Sub Categories of Housing Leeds Capital Programme spend

RESOLVED – To note the Housing Leeds and BITMO refurbishment programme and the Housing Leeds Council House Growth programme position at period 11, 2015/16.

76 Housing Leeds (HRA) Financial Position as at Period 11 (2015/16) & Financial Strategy - Rents & Service Charges from 2016/17

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 February 2016.

The report also set out the financial strategy in respect of rents and service charges for 2016/17

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 £694K
- Expenditure, particularly around disrepair provision projected to be £243K, above the original estimate
- Repairs budget projected to overspend by £696K
- Net savings of £874K are projected in relation to employees: vacant posts, savings on training and occupational health
- Savings of £369K projected in relation to premises costs
- Other key variations include a reduction in heat lease schemes £775K, additional contributions for large insurance claims £364K and saving to the tenant mobility scheme £170K
- Right to buy sales (RTB) sales – 397 completed sales to end of February, total sales being projected at 410 to year end. Anticipated total receipts could generate £11.7m
- Collection Rates – 97.17% for dwelling rents, compared to the target of 98.06%
- Arrears – Currently £6.24m compared to £5.8m at the end of 2014/15

Referring to paragraph 6.1 of the submitted report Andrew Feldhaus queried the technical arrears and the effect of delays with benefits.

In responding the Head of Finance said the technical arrears would arise when there was a time difference in the collection of direct debits.

Mr Feldhaus questioned if there was a similar time lag in recovering benefits.

In responding the Head of Finance said any such time lag did not affect the overall performance.

Councillor Anderson referred to section 7 of the submitted report “Financial Strategy – Rents & Service Charges” and queried how the predicted loss of £283m of rental income over the 10 year period (2016/17 – 2024/25) had been calculated.

In responding the Head of Finance said the figures were based on assumptions from previous years.

Referring to the reduction in rental income Councillor Ritchie questioned how any shortfall would be managed and queried if an increase in the level of service charges was adequate and sustainable.

In responding the Director said the bulk of the difference would be made up by the use of HRA reserves together with staffing efficiencies and improved targeting of resources. There would also be a need to review our long term strategy and a new Business Plan for summer 2016 would be prepared.

In offering comment Jo Hourigan said a shortfall in rental income could not be addressed through the use of reserves for a long period.

Ted Wilson referring to a potential increase in service charge each year requested to know how much would such an increase generate?

In responding the Director said that there was scope to increase the charges but at this stage no decision had been taken.

The Chair thanked Members for their contributions

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

77 Performance Report

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a summary of the latest available performance data against measure relating to the six Housing Leeds priorities. The report highlighted the ongoing development of the relevant performance measures and dashboards that would be used to report comprehensively against these priorities.

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
- Rent and arrears collection stands at 97.24% compared to 97.43 % the previous year
- Homeless preventions (1,463 homeless preventions Jan – March 2016 - 78% prevention rate)

- Temporary Accommodations (55 households)
- Re-Let Days – average 29.87 days
- Number of Void Lettable Properties - 450 February 2016
- Adaptation
- Repairs
- Capital Programme Effectiveness
- Annual Home visits
- Disrepair (Continued reduction in disrepair caseload)
- Further work being done to improve performance reporting

In offering general comment on the format of the report Councillor Hamilton said the contents appeared to be repetitive, the figures change but there was no explanation as to why, more commentary was required.

Referring to section 3.6 of the submitted report “Annual Home Visits” Councillor Ritchie raised the issue of digital inclusion and the fact that 38% of tenants did not have access to the internet at home. He said he was aware that internet access was available in local libraries but questioned how many tenants would use this facility.

In offering comment the Director said that there were a number of tower blocks throughout the city where communication masts had been positioned on the roof of the building. In such circumstances an agreement had been reached with the mast operator to provide free wi fi to tenants within the block. Jo Hourigan said a digital inclusion scheme had been provided to elderly care residents in the Moortown/ Alwoodley areas making the area more digitally able.

The Chair suggested that in light of the comments made a report on digital inclusion be prepared for a future meeting of the Board.

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
- (iii) That future Performance reports to include greater explanation and commentary
- (iv) That a report on digital inclusion be prepared for a future meeting of the Board.

78 Update on Welfare Reforms

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) submitted a report which provided an update on the Government's continuing programme of welfare reforms and how the Council was preparing for this.

The report also provided an update on the housing – related reforms that had been introduced since 2011

Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Under-occupancy
- Benefit Cap
- Universal Credit
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Housing Leeds Response to Welfare Changes

Offering comment the Chair said the potential impact on welfare reform was frightening but Leeds would need to be prepared for the challenges ahead.

Referring to Universal Credit, Jo Hourigan said there were many vulnerable tenants who would find it difficult to complete the necessary paperwork, they would not be able to cope with the amount of detail required. In such circumstances they would be advised to see a benefit advisor.

Tracey McGarry said that VITAL were working on communication with the Welfare Reform Group and YAGI was assisting on issues around Universal Credit.

In summing up the Chair said we have confidence in officers to deliver whatever is required.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) That further updates be provided on a regular basis

79 Update on the Environmental Improvement Programme

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a summary of the Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP), which included 82 separate schemes of work across many parts of the cities Council Housing portfolio.

Appended to the report was a copy of the following document:

- Environmental Improvement Programme (Appendix 1 Referred)

Mark Grandfield, Head of Strategy and Investment, Environment and Housing presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report which included an update on the following:

- Community safety and Security schemes
- Waste schemes
- Landscaping, access, amenity and play schemes
- Parking improvements schemes
- Overall progress

Referring to consultation on the schemes Councillor Hamilton requested to know if negative comments/ objections were considered with a view of trying to assist.

In responding the Head of Strategy and Investment said feedback both positive and negative could result in changes to a scheme.

Ted Wilson sought clarification around the locations of the various CCTV schemes

The head of Strategy and Investment said the majority of schemes were located in the west of the city but other additional schemes were been progressed in other locations.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To welcome the progress of the overall programme and individual schemes

80 Housing and Planning Bill 2015

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which set out the key proposals within the Housing and Planning Bill 2015, as they affect starter homes, social housing, affordable housing and the PRS and the potential implications of the Bill.

Maggie Gjessing, Executive Manager Regeneration, City Development presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Starter homes
- Sale of High Value vacant Local Authority homes
- High Income Social Tenants: Mandatory Rents
- Lifetime Tenancies

- PRS Proposals

Referring to the proposals around new fixed term tenancies (between 2 and 5 years) section 3.4.2 of the submitted report, Councillor Hamilton questioned where a family would go.

In responding the Director said the tenant's circumstances would be reviewed and a decision would be made to either grant a new tenancy or to move the tenants to more appropriate social housing or terminate the tenancy.

Offering comment Jo Hourigan said all the previous work carried out around Community Cohesion would be wasted.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

81 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:

- Digital inclusion
- Update on Welfare Reform

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of the above items, the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2016/17 be noted

82 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

- 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