

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 7TH JUNE, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D Coupar in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bentley,
S Hamilton and K Ritchie

Tenant/Leaseholder

Ted Wilson
Jo Hourigan

Independent Representative

Timothy Wood
Andrew Feldhaus
Matthew Walker

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

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

2 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.

3 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

4 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

5 Apologies for Absence

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

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th April 2016 were accepted as a true and correct record.

Final Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Tuesday, 13th September, 2016

7 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 arrangements had been made for the requested information to be provided – 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 the information had been included in the finance and performance report submitted to HAB on 7th June 2016 – 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 – Status, Open in progress

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.

It was reported that an update would be brought back to the November meeting of this Board – 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 (Scheduled for June 2016) – Status Closed

- Housing Standards (Scheduled for September 2016) – Status, Open
- High rise housing (Scheduled for September 2016) Status, Open

Minute No.73 – Matters Arising

Tenant Mobility Update – Councillor Ritchie requested if a copy of the Tenant Mobility Scheme could be circulated to the Board for information.

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

Minute No. 77 – Performance Report

Report Format - Councillor Hamilton requested if future reports could include greater explanation and commentary.

Officers reported that a review had taken place and amendments to the report format and content had been made – Status, Closed

Digital Inclusion – Councillor Ritchie requested if a report on digital inclusion could be prepared for a future meeting of the Board – To be scheduled – Status, Open

Minute No. 78 – Update on Welfare Reforms

The Board requested that further updates be provided on a regular basis

If was reported that a further update would be provided in September 2016 – Status, Open

8 Update from Tenant Representatives

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

VITAL Representative Jo Hourigan said that only one meeting of VITAL had taken place since the last HAB meeting which was a Communications Sub Group. The meeting took place on the 19th May 2016, the purpose of the meeting was to ensure key welfare reform messages got through to residents in a timely manner. Following a lengthy discussion a draft communications plan was developed which would include newsletters, websites and pop up stalls at YAGI events.

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The Sub Group also provided feedback on the Sheltered Housing support Models, in particular focus on extra care sheltered housing. It was the view of the tenants groups that the particular model viewed was very good and with added features such as 2 bedroomed flats being considered key in maintaining strong relationships.

Commenting on high rise for the elderly, it was emphasised that focus should concentrate on keeping familiar faces, retaining neighbours. If new tenants moved in, ensure their needs were met by carrying out the necessary adaptations. It was further reported that a number of complaints had been received about CCTV issues. It was the view of the Group that such systems be checked and maintained on a regular basis.

Reference was also made to the fact that there was now extra pressure on Adult Social Care, with a number of Care Homes closing, some tenants were been located to Council housing which was putting extra demands on Housing Officers to deliver suitable accommodation.

Commenting on the VITAL spend for 2015/16, Ted Wilson said that tenant groups had supported 329 Community and Environmental Projects throughout the city, spending 100% of the allocated Budget. VITAL was now becoming very good at providing match funding particularly in partnership with Community Committees. It was satisfying to know that it was the tenants who now decided how the money was spent and not officers.

The Chair thanked both Jo Hourigan and Ted Wilson for their feedback commenting that it was important that tenants views were made known to the Board.

9 Joint Response to Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry - Environment of Estates

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the formal response to the Tenant Scrutiny Board in respect of the environment of estates inquiry. The inquiry covered Housing, Waste, Parks & Countryside and Locality teams.

David Longthorpe, Head of Housing Management, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- The need to adopt a “one Council” approach and work in partnership with other Council Departments
- Involve tenants and other stakeholders in managing estate standards
- The need for a routine inspection programme
- Provide joint Estate Improvement Plans

- Harmonisation of processes
- Set agreed timescales for referrals
- Act on items identified and monitor through to completion
- Ensure information collected was correct and used to improve service outcomes for customers

In offering comment Councillor Anderson welcomed the report in particular the one Council approach and the proactive support for tenant participation.

Referring to communal bins storage areas, Councillor Anderson said these were often used as fly tipping zones and could this problem be addressed

In responding the Head of Housing Management said many of the estates were now a mixed tenure and problems did arise with private rented tenants.

Councillor Ritchie also welcomed the report commenting that there was a lot of common sense contained within the recommendations. Action within an agreed timescale was also a useful inclusion. He also suggested that a more proactive workforce at ground level was desirable but accepted the support of the trade unions would be required.

Councillor Hamilton welcomed the Scrutiny Board inquiry and asked if a further inquiry could be undertaken into council house repairs, she said many of the tenants complaints were about repairs. Referring to the estate walkabouts, she said tenants were not being informed when walkabouts were happening, better communication was required.

In offering comment Councillor Bentley supported Councillor Hamilton's call for a Scrutiny inquiry into council house repairs. Referring to the priorities listed by the tenants in the STAR survey report, paragraph 4.2 of the submitted report referred, Councillor Bentley asked if more could be done in reminding tenants/ right to buy owners of their responsibilities in terms of being good neighbours.

Jo Hourigan supported Councillor Hamilton's comments that tenants were not been informed about estate walkabouts, tenants also wanted to be able to see action plans.

In summing up the Chair said the issue of council house repairs would be looked into. Referring to the 11 recommendations made by the Scrutiny Board, the Chair said that Housing Leeds had accepted all the recommendations and progress on implementing these recommendations would be revisited in 6 months-time.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the feedback from Housing, Waste, Localities and Park & Countryside in response to the recommendations received regarding the environment of estates inquiry

- (ii) To note that Environment and Housing Services would be working together to deliver outcomes recommended in the submitted report and would provide an update to Tenant Scrutiny Board in 6 months
- (iii) That progress on implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny inquiry be the subject of a report to this Board in 6 months-time
- (iv) That a report on council house repairs be prepared for the next meeting of this Board

10 Housing Leeds (HRA) Provisional Revenue Outturn Position - 2015/16

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the provisional outturn position for the 2015/16 financial year in respect of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

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:

- The HRA is projecting to provisionally outturn for 2015/16 a surplus of £817k, this was a reduction of £200k from that reported at period 11
- Approval was being requested from the Executive Board to utilise £522k of the surplus to create a reserve to fund the cost of severance payments to Housing staff leaving under the Council's Early Leavers Initiative Scheme
- Balance of the in year surplus £295k to be transferred to the HRA General Reserve

Commenting on paragraph 5.4 of the submitted report, Councillor Bentley welcomed the inclusion of a breakdown of rent collection rates for tenants on full, partial and not in receipt of Housing Benefit

Councillor Anderson referring to arrears asked if further analysis could be undertaken in respect of collection rates, under occupation, more information on payment methods and trends

The Chair asked if the requested analysis could be undertaken and be reported back to the next meeting.

Officers confirmed the requested information would be the subject of a report to this Board.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted

- (ii) That a report providing further analysis in respect of collection rates, under occupation, more information on payment methods and trends be prepared for the next meeting of this Board

11 Housing Leeds and BITMO Capital Finance Position 2015/16 Outturn

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

The report also included details of the Housing Leeds & BITMO refurbishment programme.

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 actual spend at outturn was £84.2m equating to 105% of the February 2016 reported projection of £80.5m
- BITMOs spend to outturn was £2.3m achieving 79% of the overall programme projected in February 2016.

Referring to paragraph 3.9 of the submitted report Councillor Hamilton queried “the need to better understand the cashflowing of their programme and the timing of the BITMO Boards being crucial to the projections made”

In responding the Head of Finance said that officers would meet with the BITMO Board to discuss the outcomes.

Referring to the Housing Leeds refurbishment programme, Jo Hourigan said about 18 months ago plans were drawn up to deliver a refurbishment programme of around £90m. Significant progress had been made to date with around £78m having been spent on: new heating systems, kitchens and bathrooms.

In offering comment the Chair said it was pleasing to note the progress made in delivering the programme.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the Housing Leeds and BITMO refurbishment programme outturn position
- (ii) To note that a progress update report on the Council House Growth programme was the subject of a separate item on this agenda (Minute No. 12 refers)

12 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:

1. Acquisitions
2. New Build
3. Long term empty homes

Lorraine Wright, 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:

- A breakdown of the acquisitions acquired to date
- Progress on new build sites
- 42 long term empty homes had been acquired and a further 10 were in the conveyancing process
- Extra care provision

Councillor Anderson queried how successful officers were in negotiating off site funding for affordable homes.

In responding the Director said it was always difficult for local authorities to deliver affordable housing. In some instances the need could be met locally through one to one discussions with the developer but this was not always achievable.

Referring to extra care provision, Councillor Anderson asked if it could be delivered when there was a need identified.

In responding the Director said that the decisions around extra care provision were not simple, such schemes could be delivered but other priorities could be affected as a consequence.

In offering comment the Chair said the funding of extra care provision was often a difficult and contentious issue and offered to meet with Councillor Anderson if he had particular concerns.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

13 HRA Business Plan Presentation

The Board received a presentation on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

It was explained that the purpose of the Business Plan was to:

- Set out a strategy for Council housing in the City and how resources would be utilised and managed to achieve this.
- A time frame of 10 years with emphasis on the first 5 years from 2016/16

Elements of the Plan included:

- The strategic context
- Financial Plan – Pressures
- Financial Plan – Actions to Balance
- Housing Leeds – Strategic Priorities
- Investment Strategy
- The next steps (Timetable for approval)

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the presentation be welcomed and noted.
- (ii) That a further update report be brought back to the Board in November 2016.

14 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.

The report provided performance data, supporting commentary and contextual information, as well as signposting to relevant information contained in other reports on today's HAB agenda.

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 related projects
- Homeless preventions and households in temporary accommodation (55 households)
- Re-Let Days – average 29.87 days
- Number of Void Lettable Properties - 514 April 2016
- Capital Programme Effectiveness
- Annual Home visits
- Disrepair (Continued reduction in disrepair caseload)
- Further work being done to improve performance reporting

In offering comment Councillor Hamilton welcomed the revised content and format of the report

Referring to paragraph 3.4.2 of the submitted report, Councillor Bentley sought clarification as to how customer satisfaction was monitored.

In responding officers reported that a telephone survey, to a random sample of tenants would be carried out following completion of the repair(s).

In relation to repairs performance, it was noted that the Board had already agreed to receive a separate report on council house repairs at its next meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the most recent performance information relating to the Six Housing Leeds Priorities
- (ii) That the revised content and format of the report be welcome
- (iii) As referred to in Minute No. 9 above, a separate report on council house repairs would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board

15 Lettings Policy Review Consultation Update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on progress with the Lettings Policy Review consultation.

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:

- The introduction of a tenant transfer policy
- Review of the main lettings policy to mainstream some elements previously covered by local lettings policies
- A new approach to community lettings policies to replace local lettings policies with improved links to tenancy management issues in the wider community

In offering comment Councillor Ritchie said that any new lettings policy should take account of the Ealing Judgement.

In responding officers confirmed that they were aware of the Ealing Judgement and advice was currently being sought from the Chief Legal officer

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the progress to date with the lettings policy review consultation
- (ii) That a further report on the outcome of the consultation and next steps would be brought back to the next meeting of this Board.

16 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

- Progress on implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Inquiry, Environment of Estates (November 2016)
- Council House repairs (September 2016)
- Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue position to include analysis around arrears (September 2016)
- Progress on HRA Business Plan (November 2016)
- Progress on Lettings Policy Review Consultation (September 2016)

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

17 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

- Tuesday 13th September 2016
- Tuesday 29th November 2016
- Tuesday 28th February 2017

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