

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D Coupar in the Chair

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

Tenant/Leaseholder

Ted Wilson
Tracey McGarry

Independent Representative

Timothy Wood

Co-opted Member

David Glew
Christopher Simpson

18 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

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

19 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.

20 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

21 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor A Gabriel, Jo Hourigan, Matthew Walker and Andrew Feldhaus.

23 Co-opted Member

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Tuesday, 29th November, 2016

The Clerk to the Board reported on a proposal to appoint Christopher Simpson, Chief Executive, Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO) as a Co-opted Member to the Board

In supporting the proposal the Chair said as Chief Executive of BITMO, Chris would bring specialist skill and knowledge which would be of assistance to the Board.

Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED – That Christopher Simpson be appointed as a non-voting Co-opted Member to the Board

24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th June 2016 were submitted for comment and approval.

Ted Wilson referred to Minute No.8 - Update from Tenant Representatives, requesting the substitution of the words “VITAL Budget” to “HAP Budgets”

RESOLVED – That with the inclusion of the suggested wording, the minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2016 be accepted as a true and correct record.

25 Matters Arising from the Minutes

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

Minute No.46 – High Rise Project Update

That arrangement be made for the Board to visit the Clyde’s and Wortley’s high rise blocks, date to be determined.

It was reported that arrangements were being made to coincide with completion of works to lifts – currently scheduled for the February 2017 Board meeting. – Status, open

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

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 a further update on proposed support models for older tenants would be brought back to a future meeting of the Board – Status, open

Minute No.65 – Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2016

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Tuesday, 29th November, 2016

To add the following items:

- Housing Standards
- High Rise Housing

It was reported that Housing Standards would be covered within the Housing Leeds Asset Management Strategy report scheduled for November 2016 – Status, open

High Rise Housing to be scheduled for November 2016 – Status, open

Minute No.77 – Performance Report

That a report on digital inclusion be prepared for a future meeting of the Board

Scheduled for November 2016 – Status, open

Minute No.78 – Update on Welfare Reforms

That further updates be provided on a regular basis

It was reported that reports would be scheduled as required (Last report September 2016) – Status, closed

Minute No.9 – Joint Response to Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry – Environment of Estates

- (iii) That progress on the implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny inquiry be the subject of a report to this Board in 6 months' time (February 2017) – Status, open
- (iv) That a report on Council house repairs be prepared for the next Board meeting (September 2016) – Status, closed

Minute No. 10 – Housing Leeds (HRA) Provisional Revenue Outturn Position – 2015/16

- (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

It was reported that reference was made within the HRA Revenue report and covered in more detail in the Rent Collection and Welfare Reform update report on the September Board agenda – Status, closed

Minute No.13 – HRA Business Plan Presentation

- (ii) That a further update report be brought back to the Board in November 2016

Scheduled for November 2016 – Status, open

Minute No. 14 – Performance Report

- iii) As referred to in Minute No. 9, a separate report on council house repairs would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board (September 2016) – Status, closed

Minute No.15 – Lettings Policy Review Consultation Update

- (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

It was reported that further consultation had taken place, including with Ward Members. A verbal update was provided by the Chief Officer, Housing Management, who advised that the outcomes would be included in a report to the November Board – Status, open

26 Update from Tenants Representatives

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

Ted Wilson reported that VITAL Members continued to have monthly meetings with busy agendas. The various groups were now beginning to come together, working well and sharing strengths and weaknesses along with good practices. The formation of a City wide Repairs Group was ongoing and it was anticipated that by the next meeting a group would be in place.

VITAL had in the last few months been in consultation with Housing Leeds on a variety of subjects including: Asset Management Strategy, Pre-Tenancy Training, the Housing and Planning Act and the Housing Tenancy Review.

It was reported that Councillor Coupar had attended a VITAL meeting in August as a guest speaker. Her positive contributions were well received and went a long way to building a successful relationship with the Housing Advisory Board. Ted, on behalf of VITAL, expressed his thanks and appreciation to Councillor Coupar for her attendance and contributions at the meeting.

Referring to further work to be undertaken by VITAL, Ted said that currently the group were working on the Tenant Review with Officers. The group would be revisiting the terms of reference, including the frequency of meetings for all groups.

Ted said VITAL Members appreciated there would be pressures on budgets but we need to ensure the involvement structure it supports represents value for money. We need to hear the wider tenant voice and deliver outcomes that benefit the local community

On the issue of tenant engagement, VITAL were of the view that a discussion around digital engagement was required. It was important that consideration be given as to how we reach out to tenants using alternative means of communication: social media and conference calling were provided as examples which would be explored further.

Tracey McGarry spoke on the work of YAGI – She spoke on the “Communities Can Week” fun days arranged to hear the views of as many tenants as possible, reaching out to the wider community of Leeds but not taking anything away from other tenant conferences that have been held previously.

A number of Area Housing Teams took part in these “fun days” promoting services in the area. The intention of the initiative was to build community spirit within the area. Many positive views were received from tenants about the PFI schemes that had been delivered in the area.

Other fun days were held in other parts of the city with hundreds of people taking part together with local councillors. Tenants found it easier to express their views to agencies / Council staff because they were taking about the areas they lived in.

“Operation Champion” another fun day, took place in the Burmantofts ward, where families and children came together to produce hanging baskets which were erected in the area. The event was hosted in the first week of school holidays and made it easier for families to engage and bring a real sense of pride to the area.

It was reported that there were also a number of “Big Lunch” events held to promote sheltered housing schemes. One elderly tenant said that the communing together of the community reminded her of old village life.

The “Communities Can Week” promoted a real sense of engagement and Community belonging and delivered the vision of sustainable communities

In summing up Tracey said that overall the “Communities Can week” delivered a really positive event and it was hoped that other similar events would take place in future.

The Chair suggested that a representative be invited from the Communities Team to attend the Housing Advisory Board to make links to the wider sustainable communities outcome and community hub programme

The Chair thanked both Ted and Tracey for their feedback commenting that it was important that tenant’s views were made known to the Board.

27 Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position July 2016/17

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the revenue financial position for the Housing Leeds (HRA) service as at the end of July 2016.

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:

- At the end of period 4, the HRA was a surplus of £77k against the 2016/17 budget.
- Income - Income was projected to be £38k higher than budget, additional income of £86k was projected from service charges.
- Expenditure - Disrepair provision was projected to be £200k above budget. Savings of £193k were projected in relation to employee and transport costs due to vacant posts. Premises were projected to overspend by £78k as a result of an unbudgeted increase in charges for the removal and disposal of bulky items. There was a projected net underspend of £148k for charges for internal services.
- Right to Buy Sales – To the end of July 2016 there were 147 completed sales. Projected total sales for year was 400 units, which would generate £20.2m
- Arrears and Collection Rates – Arrears for current tenants as at the end of July 2016 were £6,918k, consistent with the position as end of July 2015
- Comparison of Collection Rates – Compared to 2015/16 performance was much stronger and had increased from 96.19% to 96.73% an increase of 0.54%
- Under Occupation – At the end of June 2016 there were 4,861 tenants classed as under-occupiers

Referring to paragraph 3.2 Councillor Bentley queried why did it appear there was a consistent level of vacancies across the directorate. Councillor Ritchie also raised a similar issue.

In responding the Director said we would continue to manage vacancies and only fill a post when it was vital. He said we were currently looking at staff efficiencies with a view to a further 1% reduction.

In offering comment the Chief Officer, Housing Management said a review was currently taking place in Housing Management but we had to be mindful of key priorities.

Referring to paragraph 5.2 Councillor Anderson welcomed the increase in rent collection rates.

Offering a comment on rent collection rates Tracey McGarry suggested that YAGI may be able to assist in communicating messages to young tenants on rent issues, including highlighting what young people are getting for the rent they pay.

Referring to Tracy McGarry's suggestion, the Chair welcomed the offer and said it was a really good suggestion

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To welcome the suggestion made by Tenants Representatives that YAGI assist in communicating messages to young tenants on rent issues

28 HRA Capital Financial Position Period 4 2016/17

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided a financial position statement on the HRA Housing Leeds Capital programme at period 4 for the financial year 2016/17.

The report also included details of the Housing Leeds & BITMO refurbishment programme (Section 3) and Housing Leeds Council House Growth Programme (Section 4)

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 period 4 was £23.6m equating to 28% of the revised available resources
- BITMOs actual spend and commitments at period 4 were £0.6m representing 24% of revised available resources of £2.5m.
- Total funding injected and available for Council House Growth Programme was £102.5m. At period 4 the spend on the Council Housing Growth and new build programme was £5.2m against an outturn projection of £37m in 2016/17. £11.5m of unallocated funding for schemes was yet to be identified.

With reference to page 22 of the submitted report David Glew requested if a breakdown of capital spend into sub headings could be included in future reports. Also referring to Capital Programme Schemes, he asked if efficiencies could be made by one team undertaking multiple jobs instead of different teams carrying out single jobs.

In responding the Head of Finance confirmed that breakdowns of capital spend into sub headings would be provided and included in future reports to the Board

On the issue of efficiencies the Chief Officer, Property and Contracts reported that when an opportunity arose to carry out multiple jobs, that opportunity would be taken.

A query was raised as to what was the reason for an increase in the costs of communal replacements.

The Chief Officer, Property and Contract agreed to make the necessary enquiries and respond accordingly.

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 at period 4 for the financial year 2016/17.
- (ii) To note that a progress update report on the Council House Growth programme at period 4 for the financial year 2016/17
- (iii) That a breakdown of capital spend into sub headings would be provided and included in future reports to the Board

29 Draft Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an updated draft Housing Strategy and proposed arrangements for monitoring the strategy.

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

- Draft Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 (Appendix 1 referred)

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

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

- Affordable Housing Growth
- Housing Quality
- Promoting Independent Living
- Creating Sustainable Communities
- Improving Health Through Housing
- Meeting the Needs of Older Residents

Tim Woods said the new draft strategy was a significant improvement on the previous version but could the targets be more challenging?

Referring to paragraph 3.1.6 of the submitted report, Councillor Bentley queried if we were meeting housing needs of older residents.

In responding the Director of Environment and Housing said work was ongoing to look at council stock to see if it was meeting the aspiration of tenants. Housing growth monies was already going into extra care provision and development at Yeadon and East Ardsley were schemes already in progress.

The Director further reported that we were also looking to the private sector to build for the elderly but this was down to commercial viability.

Councillor Bentley made reference to the old Cookridge Hospital site which included provision for extra care housing. He said the developer was unable to fund the whole development and finding a partner was difficult, was the extra care housing planned for.

In responding the Chair said developers want to deliver but that can sometimes be challenging.

Offering comment the Director said there were some difficulties due to the cap on housing rent levels on supported housing which could lead to an unwillingness to invest.

Referring to the Core Strategy – Leeds City Council, Councillor Anderson said that older people housing was included as part of the housing mix and this was clear in the Core Strategy. He suggested Planning Officers need to take more notice of the core strategies, it appeared older people housing was not been prioritised.

In responding the Director said that the Core Strategy had clashed with central guidance resulting in the loss of a number of planning appeals, the developers winning on each occasion, planning officers were now more mindful of what they could deliver on.

The Chair asked for the views of Planners on the provision of older people's housing and the Core Strategy to be provided to the Board.

David Glew welcomed the new draft strategy. In offering comment, he noted £3m was spent on carrying out adaptations to Council Properties. He suggested that if we carry out more adaptations more quickly this may reduce the amount of time patients spend in hospital and could lead to significant savings to the NHS. He asked if a discussion could take place with NHS Leeds with a view to them contributing towards the cost of adaptations.

The Chair suggested that any liaison with NHS Leeds should be done through Adult Social Care.

The Chair thanked Members for their contributions.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the progress in delivering the draft Housing Strategy
- (ii) To note and welcome the arrangements for monitoring delivery of the strategy targets
- (iii) That a response from Planners in respect of older people housing and the Core Strategy be provided to the Board
- (iv) That Adult Social care be requested, on behalf of this Board, to explore with NHS Leeds the possibility of contributing towards the cost of adaptations

30 Enhancing the Lettings Standard in Targeted Areas with Low Satisfaction

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided details of the changes that had been introduced to the current “Lettings Standard” in targeted areas with low satisfaction.

Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

Detailed discussion ensued on the contents of the report.

Councillor Anderson asked how “our” lettings standards compared to those in the private sector.

Councillor Hamilton said we need to improve our own letting standard if we are to take action on private lettings.

In responding the Chief Officer, Property and Contracts said the intention was to push up our own standard to be the same as the private rented sector standard; the new enhanced standard was comparable to those in the private sector.

Councillor Bentley asked if Beaver’s Court could be added to the list of properties that would be offered a decoration scheme as he believed it would hit the variation to the lettings Criteria

David Glew asked if details about the criteria could be circulated to the Board.

In responding officers confirmed that Beaver's Court would be checked against the necessary criteria and details about the criteria would be circulated to the Board.

In drawing the discussion to conclusion the Chair said that the intention was to look at lettings standards across all tenures in the not too distant future.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report by noted
- (ii) To endorse the approach taken by Housing Leeds in revising the "Lettings Standard" in targeted areas with low satisfaction
- (iii) To note the intention to look at lettings standards across all tenures in the not too distant future.
- (iv) That details about the lettings criteria be circulated to Board Members for information

31 Rent Collection and Welfare Reform Update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided information on rent collection performance for Quarter 1, 2016 -17.

The report also included the profiling of tenants in arrears and activities being taken to maximise rent collection and provide an update on tenants affected by key Welfare Reforms along with what action was being taken to support those tenants.

Gill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing 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:

- Rent Collection Performance
- Rent Collection Rate According to Housing Benefit Entitlement
- Arrears Profiling
- Payment Methods – Direct Debit Take Up
- Under Occupation
- Tenants Under the Age of 25
- Changes in Housing Benefit & Payment Method
- Further Actions To Improve Rent Collection
- Welfare Reform Update

In offering comment Councillor Anderson said it was a very good report and provided a lot of useful information

Ted Wilson referred to payment methods and the suggestion of introducing mandatory Direct Debits payments; he asked if there was any incentives for tenants to move to Direct Debit payments?

Also referring to mandatory Direct Debits payments, Councillor Hamilton said tenants on zero hours contracts may find moving to Direct Debiting difficult.

In responding the Chief Officer, Housing Management said there was no incentive scheme. It was reported that other local authorities who had already introduced mandatory Direct Debiting, had provided feedback suggesting there had been very little impact. Referring to tenants on low income, officers reported that substantial charges may arise if the tenant was to go overdrawn.

In offering comment the Chair said the report was very good and it was her understanding that a report on the introduction of mandatory Direct Debiting would be brought to a future meeting of the Board

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To support the work being undertaken by Housing Leeds to maximise support to tenants affected by Welfare Reform, increase rent collection and reduce rent arrears
- (iii) To note that a report on the introduction of mandatory Direct Debiting would be brought to a future meeting of the Board

32 Repairs Performance

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which set out details of the current performance levels achieved by Mears and Leeds Building Services (LBS), and also described the performance improvement programme that had been developed to improve performance across a range of performance measures that were key to customer satisfaction.

Appended to the report were the following documents:

- 2016/17 Key Performance Indicators (Mears and LBS) - Appendix 1 referred
- Repairs Completed in Target – Appendix 2 referred
- Repairs Action Plan – Appendix 3 referred

Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- Operations procedures and working practices

- Failure by individual trades
- Area profile of failures
- Resource plan/deployment
- Longer term efficiency plan

Councillor Bentley suggested there was no reference to customer satisfaction

Councillor Hamilton said the priority was to fix the problem then seek feedback from the tenant.

Ted Wilson said there was nothing in the report about reporting a repair and once the repair had been carried out, there was not always an opportunity to offer feedback on the service

In responding the Chief Officer, Property and Contracts accepted that further work was required in understanding the customer experience.

The Chair suggested that the minutes of the Tenant Scrutiny Board Enquiry into repairs be included on the agenda for future meetings of HAB to allow the establishing of a link between the two Boards

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the improvements in performance achieved by Housing Leeds in the South and West of the City
- (ii) To note the action plan that is underway with LBS
- (iii) To support the current programme of performance improvement within LBS and receive regular updates on progress
- (iv) That the minutes of the Tenant Scrutiny Board Enquiry into repairs be included on the agenda for future meetings of HAB
- (v) That Regular updates continue to be brought to the HAB.

33 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 the 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, 34 schemes completed to date.
- Update on Homeless preventions and households in temporary accommodation
- Re-Let Days – average 28.07 days
- Number of Void Lettable Properties – 397 (July 2016)
- Repairs Right First Time ; 93.94% (July 2016)
- Repairs Within Target; 93.74% (July 2016)
- Overall Satisfaction; 91.68% (July 2016)

Referring to disrepair claims, Councillor Anderson asked if tenant responses made at the Annual Home Visits were being checked to pick up any repair issues, this would help challenge any future disrepair claims.

In responding the Chief Officer Property and Contracts said more robust procedures were now in place along with area profiling to track potential targeting by claims operators in order to mitigate any potential risk.

Councillor Anderson asked if some analysis could be undertaken to see if repair issues brought to the attention of the service by Elected Members had been actioned or if they had subsequently led to a disrepair claim.

Dave Glew referred to condensation claims and asked if he could be made aware of what questions were being asked at the Annual Home visit, it may be possible to address some condensation issues at AHV conversations or pre-tenant training. It was also suggested that the installation of an extraction fan in the bathrooms of tenancies may solve some condensation problems.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the most recent performance information relating to the Six Housing Leeds Priorities
- (ii) That the requested information in respect of repair analysis and Annual Home visit questions be circulated to Board Members once it became available

34 Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2016/17

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 were added the Boards' Forward Plan

- Lettings Standards across all tenures.
- Proposals for the introduction of mandatory Direct Debiting

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

35 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that future meetings of the Board are arranged as follows:

- Tuesday 29th November 2016 at **4.00pm**
- Tuesday 28th February 2017 at 5.00pm

(All meetings to take place at the Civic Hall, Leeds)