

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 20TH MAY, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor P Gruen in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bentley and
A Gabriel

Tenant/Leaseholder

Ted Wilson
Andy Liptrot
David Atkinson

Independent Representatives

Matthew Walker
Andrew Feldhaus

Co-opted Members

David Glew
Jo Hourigan

48 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

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

49 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.

50 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

51 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

52 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Truswell, Councillor Maqsood, Maddie Hunter and Tim Woods.

53 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 9th July, 2015

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 3rd February 2015 were submitted for accuracy and approval

David Atkinson reported that he represented the Leeds Tenants Federation and not the Leeds Housing Federation as referred to in the minutes.

RESOLVED – With the inclusion of the suggested amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting held on held on 3rd February 2015 were accepted as a true and correct record.

54 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)

In providing an update Officers reported that the main contractors had recently taken on a full complement of apprentices (100+). Other opportunities within Housing Leeds would continue to be explored. 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)

It was noted that an item “Draft Leeds Housing Strategy” appeared elsewhere on the agenda. Status of action “Proposed to Close”

Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan – Minute No. 29 – 11th November 2014 refers)

In relation to issues around High Rise Blocks, it was reported that an officer had been appointed (Martyn Long) to lead on the high rise strategy and that an update paper appeared elsewhere on the agenda. Status of Action “Propose to Close”.

In relation to Tenant Working Groups, it was reported that an update report appeared elsewhere on the agenda. Status of Action “Propose to Close”.

In relation to Adaptations: a paper was to be brought to a future meeting. Status of action “Open in progress”

Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position Period 8 2014/15 - (minute 40 - 3rd February 2015 refers)

It was noted that a report appeared elsewhere on the agenda included information on progress on major schemes. Status of Action “Propose to Close”.

Housing Revenue Account Investment Strategy - (minute 43 - 3rd February 2015 refers)

It was noted that an item "Housing Revenue Account Investment Strategy" appeared elsewhere on the agenda which reported on the outcomes of the working group. Status of Action "Propose to Close".

55 Housing Leeds Capital Financial Position Outturn 2014/15

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the financial position statement on the Housing Leeds Capital programme at outturn for the financial year 2014/15.

The report also sets out proposals on future delivery of the Housing Leeds Capital 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 Services and BITMO
- Actual spend at outturn 2014/15
- Planned works spend at outturn 2014/15
- Responsive works at outturn 2014/15
- The conclusions of the HAB Working Group
- Council House Growth Programme

Ted Wilson asked if CCTV projects would continue to be funded through Capital funding

In responding, the Head of Strategy and Investment confirmed that CCTV was funded within the programme.

Matthew Walker queried if there was underspend on the adaptations budget.

The Head of Strategy and Investment reported that there had been a 50% increase in the budget in the previous year to cover expected demand. The demand continued to be high.

Responding to a question about new build properties and the possibility of costs rising, the Director of Environments and Housing confirmed that rising cost may affect the cost price per unit. The situation would continue to be monitored.

Referring to paragraph 4.2 of the submitted report Councillor Anderson asked if the Board could be supplied with a detailed ward breakdown.

The Chair confirmed that information on ward breakdowns was currently been gathered and would be made available in due course.

Commenting on paragraph 4.5 David Glew queried “delaying further aspirational works, utilising HAP funding for urgently required environmental”

In responding the Head of Strategy and Investment confirmed the programme had been delayed, heating was one of the largest investments and the assessment of need required further work.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the Housing Leeds Service refurbishment programme and Housing Leeds Council House Growth programme position at outturn 2014/15.
- (ii) To note the issues raised on the plan moving forward regarding the smoothing of the budget over a five year period, Resources, Procurement, Project Management and Internal Service Providers.

56 Housing Leeds (HRA) Provisional Revenue Outturn Position - 2014/15

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the provisional outturn position for the 2014/15 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:

- Key variances to Budget – Income
- Right to buy sales (RTB) sales
- Arrears

Referring to paragraph 3.6 of the submitted report, Andy Liptrot highlighted the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) £0.25m being earmarked to fund tenants with severer disabilities living in adapted properties.

In offering comment the Chair confirmed additional resources had been made available.

Councillor Anderson referring to section 5 of the report on “arrears” asked if Housing Officers were aware of: who can’t pay and who won’t pay. Did we know who to target?

In offering comment the Chair suggested that the recent review of Housing Services had allowed for Housing Managers to be more knowledgeable for their particular areas.

The Director of Environment and Housing said information on partial payments was available and could be used to pursue tenants in arrears. Further work in contacting tenants was required if the target was to be achieved.

Referring to arrear payments, Jo Hourigan asked how quickly outstanding payments were pursued.

In responding the Director of Environment and Housing said early intervention was important, arrear payments were not allowed to drift.

David Glew raised the issue of disrepair claims. He suggested the possibility of targeting known problem areas within the housing stock (and areas of fuel poverty) and using sensors to record energy consumption. In gathering this information, problem areas could be identified; potential disrepair claims could be highlighted and data collected may assist with any future claims.

The Chair welcomed the suggestions made and suggested that officers may wish to look into the matter further.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

57 STAR Survey 2014/15 - Headline Findings

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the headline findings from the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) 2014/15 survey and analysis of key themes.

The report also summarised Service action points for 2015/16 arising as a consequence of the findings.

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:

- Overall satisfaction with services
- Differences in satisfaction across different age groups
- Successes
- Areas for further development
- Communicate and engage with tenants.

In offering comment the Chair welcomed the report and its findings. He said 3,500 responses was good and overall satisfaction with services was good at 77%.

Referring to section 5.4, satisfaction by age. The Chair said that older tenants (aged over 65) appeared to be satisfied with the services provided but the younger tenants (aged under 35) were less satisfied.

The Chair said the challenge was to improve engagement with young people.

Jo Hourigan suggested that older tenants were more patient, while younger tenants, particularly those who had children were less patient.

David Glew said the report was good, and suggested that there were further opportunities for analysis, particularly around ward trends. Responses could be linked to building type and analysis would identify areas/ properties to target home innovation measures.

The Chair thanked Mr Glew for his comments, suggesting officers may wish to undertake further analysis.

RESOLVED – To support:

- Changes to how customer services are delivered including Housing Officer patch working, the rationalisation of office opening hours and working with Contact Centre to ensure it is adequately resourced.
- Development of a Tenant Communications Plan to meet the needs of different audiences, and implementation of the new Tenant Involvement Framework.
- Allocation of £3m in funding for environmental improvement projects to cover interrelated issues around car parking, access and waste, and support changes to grounds maintenance contract monitoring to focus on smaller geographic areas.
- A feasibility exercise to determine a 10 year investment programme for multi-storey flats.
- Actions to help tenants in financial difficulty including the development of an enhanced offer for those affected by Welfare Reform, the establishment of a Welfare Reform Project Group, and the refocus of Annual Home Visits.

58 Tenant Engagement Framework Update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on: the development of the tenant involvement service, the progress against delivering the new Tenant Involvement Framework; how the service proposes to support and strengthen its role and give opportunity for a strategic voice for tenants and how the service will look to increase the opportunity for young tenants to influence the way that services are provided.

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:

- Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) and the Cross City Chair's Group (CCCG)
- High Rise Advisory Group
- Older Persons Housing Group
- Rainbow Roofs (LGBT)
- Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF)
- Tenants and Residents Association (TARAs)
- Focus on a new Strategic Tenants Body
- Focus on Younger Tenants
- Housing Management Plus
- Community Lettings Policies

Commenting on section 3.9 of the submitted report, "young person's group" Councillor Gabriel asked what was the age range of the young person's group?

In responding the Head of Neighbourhood Services said the age range had not yet been defined but possibly under 25 years of age.

In offering comment Matthew Walker welcomed the report, it was a useful update and would like to see further details in due course

Ted Wilson referring to the development of a Strategic Tenant Body said that this particular issue was a work in progress and that further development was required.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To support in principle the development of the Strategic Tenant Body, subject to further development of the arrangements for representing this body on the Housing Advisory Board
- (ii) To support the work undertaken to develop groups and forums to complement the tenant involvement framework
- (iii) To support the approach to increasing opportunities for younger tenants

59 High Rise Project Update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on progress made with the High Rise Project, including information on a number of projects that were underway in response to the MSF tenant survey undertaken in July/August 2014.

Martyn Long, Service Manager Projects, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

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

- High Rise project
- MSF Tenant Survey
- Scope for cleaning
- Review of waste and recycling
- Cyclical repairs and maintenance programme for High Rise

In offering comment Andy Liptrot welcomed the report suggesting that Tenant involvement and engagement may increase across the City as a result of the High Rise Project.

The Chair also welcomed the report suggesting good progress had been made.

RESOLVED – To note the progress to date on the High Rise Project, and the actions to be undertaken.

60 Tenant Scrutiny Board Recommendations - Review of Annual Tenancy Visit Process

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which sets out details of the Tenant Scrutiny Board's Inquiry and their recommendations made in relation to the Annual Tenancy Visit process.

The report also provided an update on recent changes made to the Annual Tenancy Visit policy and procedure, following the inquiry.

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:

- The visits will be renamed 'Annual Home Visits', to reflect the change of focus towards being more tenant focused.
- The main focus of the visits will now be on building good landlord / tenant relations – identifying tenancy management and sustainability issues which may need additional support.

- Visits will be arranged by appointment, except where there is suspected tenancy fraud.
- For sheltered tenants, Annual Home Visits will be combined with the Annual Support Review.

In offering comment Jo Hourigan said she did not support visits appointment, “tenants may hide bad things”

Andy Liptrot welcomed the report and asked if the possibility of out of hours visits could be considered

Councillor Bentley also welcomed of out of hour’s visits suggesting it would allow greater accessibility for tenants.

Matthew Walker suggested greater use of technology when undertaking visits. Commenting on accessibility, Mr Walker pointed out that 42% of tenants did not have internet access.

In responding the Director of Environment and Housing said it was intended to roll out hand held technology to Housing Officers when carrying out home visits. Communication mast on high rise blocks may be able to address some of the IT issues.

David Glew asked if a report could be brought back to a future meeting of the Board which would provide an example of the data collected from the home visits

In summing up the Chair welcomed the report, he said home visits were very important; many problems could be solved through such a visit. The suggestion of out of hour’s visits was a useful one; it would allow greater accessibility for tenants.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the key findings of Tenant Scrutiny Board’s Inquiry and recommendations
- (ii) To note and welcome the changes made to the Annual Home Visit policy and procedures following the inquiry

- (iii) That a report providing data collected from home visits be submitted to a future meeting of the Board

61 Draft Leeds Housing Strategy

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which sought approval to an updated Leeds Housing Strategy, accompanying Action Plans and the proposed progress reporting arrangements.

The report was considered by the Board 3rd February 2015, with determination being deferred to take into account the feedback received.

Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support, Environment and Housing, presented the report and responded to Members comments and queries.

It was reported that following feedback received at the previous meeting the priority area design had been changed. Priority actions were now better aligned with performance measures and the current baseline position for each performance measure was now included.

Referring to the previous meeting and the feedback received, the Chair said all comments were considered and as a consequence a number of amendments have been made.

The Director of Environment and Housing reported that one of the recommendations had been made to omit the 'Improving Health through Housing' theme of the strategy on the basis that there is an opportunity to engage with Adult Social Care, and the different health services, to identify how housing and housing services could best contribute to health and well-being priorities.

The Environment and Housing Directorate/Housing Leeds would engage with the new Director of Adult Social Care to determine how this could be achieved. The actions that flow from this engagement can form the basis of a future Improving Health and Housing theme within the Housing Strategy.

RESOLVED – To approve the updated Leeds Housing Strategy, accompanying Action Plans and the proposed progress reporting arrangements.

62 Housing Leeds Priorities and Associated Indicators

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided the outcomes of a review of performance for the reporting year 2014/15 against the six existing Housing Leeds priorities, set within the context of performance trends over the last 3 years and a significantly changing operating environment.

The report also sought the views of Members on the proposals for refreshing the set of priorities and indicators used.

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 performance on the existing priorities:

- Homelessness
- Relet times
- Rent collection
- Supporting tenants impacted by Welfare reform
- Annual Tenancy Visits
- Capital Programme Spend

A revised set of priorities was also proposed for the next two years:

- Environmental Investment
- Rents and Benefits
- Housing People
- Repairs right first time
- Capital Programme effectiveness
- Knowing our tenants

In offering comment, Jo Hourigan, referring to Priority Four: Repairs right first time, said she was pleased to see this was included has an headline indicator, housing repairs was very important to tenants

Councillor Bentley welcomed the report commenting that he was pleased to see focus a focus on tenants being included.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note performance against the existing six priorities and how the priorities had been used to provide a strategic focus and to manage risks
- (ii) To approve the refreshed set of priorities as outlined in section 3.3 of the submitted report
- (iii) To approve the recommended targets for priorities.

63 Housing Advisory Board - Forward Plan 2015

The Board considered the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2015.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the addition of a Home Visits Data Report and Housing Strategy Performance updates agreed at this meeting, the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2015 be noted.

64 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

- Tuesday 7th July 2015
- Tuesday 8th September 2015
- Tuesday 10th November 2015

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