

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

TUESDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor D Coupar in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, S Hamilton and
K Ritchie

Tenant/Leaseholder

Tracey McGarry
Mick Dodds

Co-opted Member

David Glew

51 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

52 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor A Gabriel, Ted Wilson, Timothy Woods, Matthew Walker, Andrew Feldhaus and Chris Simpson.

Councillor M Harland was in attendance as a substitute.

53 Minutes - 29 November 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 45 – Council House Growth Programme

Amend 'Natural Ventilation and Heat Recycling' to read 'Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recycling'

54 Matters Arising/Outstanding Actions

The report of the Head of Resources and Strategy provided the Board with an update on matters arising from the last meeting and actions outstanding from the previous minutes including matters that had been concluded and were being recommended to close.

In response to a question of whether the Board would receive a paper on the Leeds Standard, it was reported that there was still legislative consultation taking place regarding this. Colleagues in City Development were currently working on it and the outcome of the consultation was expected in the summer. Following this there would be a report to Executive Board which could also be brought to the Housing Advisory Board.

RESOLVED – That the updates be noted and the relevant items be agreed as closed.

55 Update from the Tenants Representative

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

Tracey McGarry informed the Board of a recent example of positive digital engagement that had taken place with Housing Growth through the tenant involvement scheme. Tenants in new houses had been issued online questionnaires which had returned positive feedback and would be submitted to those involved with future design.

Tracey also made reference to the TARA Panel which supported networking and tenants groups across the city. There had been a one year evaluation of the city wide approach which had demonstrated the sharing of good practice. The most recent meeting had been attended by the Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team which had enabled the group to look at case studies and different solutions to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Mick Dodds reported on the work that had been done with Community Payback Teams. There would be financial support for this for a further year and the work had assisted with the cleaning of and improvement of facilities. He also reported that the Citywide Repair and Investment Group was up and running. This would look at why Leeds had a higher proportion of costly emergency repairs and would consider how engagement could be improved with tenants in order to try and reduce these.

The Board was also given an update on work that the Voice of Older Tenants (VOLT) was involved in. This included the Time to Shine project which aimed to tackle social isolation, engagement with sheltered housing tenants and looking at different support models.

It was announced that Housing Leeds had been shortlisted by TPAS for two categories in the northern awards. These were Annual Reports to Tenants and Tracey McGarry had been shortlisted for Tenant of the Year.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair wished Tracey luck following her nomination and thanked her for her work with tenants and updates to the Board which demonstrated good examples of working partnership with tenants.

The Chair thanked Tracey and Mick for their updates to the Board.

56 Tenant Engagement Framework

The report of the Chief Officer, Housing Management provided the Board with an update on the development of a new Tenant Engagement Framework.

Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management presented the report.

Housing Leeds had been working with VITAL to review the engagement framework with a focus on tenant involvement and engagement. Digital opportunities had been explored for a broader format of engagement and how to get customer insight on how to improve services. Further issues highlighted included work with community groups, other partners, work in priority areas and project work.

Attention was brought to an appendix to the report which showed the wider engagement framework and this was to be implemented from 1 April 2017.

Tracey McGarry gave the Board some examples of tenant engagement and involvement including roadshows, the mobile office and galas; and also the groups that were engaged which had brought a wider representation of tenant views.

RESOLVED – That the Board supports Housing Leeds to continue work with tenants to develop the detail of the updated framework and to plan the transition, with a view to full implementation from 1 April 2017.

57 High Rise Strategy Update

The report of the Director of Environment and Housing provided an update on progress with the implementation of the High Rise Strategy, which included the delivery of a number of initiatives including:

- The development of new housing Management models;
- A range of multi-agency actions to deliver a more joined up, improved service to high rise tenants;
- A programme of physical investment

Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management presented the report.

The Executive Board had agreed to implement a High Rise Strategy in October 2016 and significant progress had been made to date. The implementation plan was appended to the report.

Further issues highlighted included the following:

- There were two main strands to the strategy – Housing Management and Physical Improvements.
- The enhanced management model that had been piloted at the Clydes and Wortleys. This had involved an intensive housing management approach with dedicated officers and had included increased security and work with other partners such as waste management. The scheme would be rolled out to another 17 tower blocks across the city.
- Retirement homes – a number of blocks had been identified as suitable for sheltered accommodation.
- Family homes – there were families in blocks who wished to remain there and investment and studies would be used to improve security and play facilities.
- Physical investment – an investment strategy had been developed to meet the needs of all blocks across the city.
- Wi-fi provision – work was taking place with a number of internet providers in a pilot scheme to install free wi-fi in a number of blocks.
- Further updates would be brought to the Board.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- With regard to the pilot scheme at the Clydes and Wortleys it was reported that there had been improved confidence with sustainability. There would be further surveys over the next 12 months with tenants across all tower blocks which would hopefully lead to further improvement.
- The change of engagement culture and provision of a full wrap around service was useful to all tenants across the city.
- Pre-tenancy training – this had been found beneficial for new tenants as well as new applicants particularly with regards to managing finance and knowing what a tenancy agreement involves. Details of the pre-tenancy training were requested and it was asked whether the training could incorporate issues that may prevent future disrepair claims.

RESOLVED – That progress on the delivery of the High Rise Strategy be noted, and that pre-tenancy training and support be reviewed and strengthened where necessary in relation to property management and maintenance issues.

58 The Housing Leeds Asset Management Strategy

The report of the Chief Officer, Property & Contracts advised the Board on the development of an Asset Management Strategy (AMS) for Housing Leeds.

Phillip Charlton, Investment Strategy Manager presented the report and gave the Board a presentation on the Asset Management Strategy.

Issues highlighted included the following:

- The Asset Management Strategy had been developed following work with the Chartered Institute of Housing.
- Reference was made to the Best Council Plan and the outcome for people to live in good quality affordable homes within clean and well cared for places.
- The following priorities of the AMS:
 - Delivering Modern, Fit for Purpose Housing and neighbourhoods.
 - Reducing Fuel Poverty, Cutting Carbon and Improving Health Outcomes.
 - Increasing Affordable Housing Supply.
 - Intelligence-led Portfolio Management
- Headline Spending Plans

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- The report and presentation was welcomed particularly how it demonstrated where improvements could be made.
- Provision of affordable housing and release of monies from green belt developments to provide this. The successful example following the development at Spofforth Hill was discussed. While this example had been successful, it was reported that all areas of the City required some affordable provision. Further discussion included the release of land to develop affordable housing in areas which already had infrastructure such as public transport and school provision.
- The focus on supporting communities was welcomed but there was concern regarding pressure on funding for the HAP Environmental Improvement Programmes and the ongoing need to invest in neighbourhood programmes. It was acknowledged that the feel of an estate gave tenant satisfaction as well as improved housing. It was reported that there was £4.5 million capital for environmental works within the Asset Management Strategy.
- Information in the strategy relating to repairs and maintenance was well received.
- Lettings standard and whether this would cover the provision of extraction fans for bathrooms and kitchens.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the progress on the developing AMS be noted.
- (2) That the inclusion of details on the AMS in a report to Executive Board on the revised HRA Business Plan in March 2017 be noted.

59 HRA Capital Financial Position Period 9 2016/17

The report of the Head of Finance, Environment and Housing provided a financial position statement on the HRA Housing Leeds Capital Programme at period 9 for the financial year 2016/17.

The following information was included in the report for the Board's consideration:

- Housing Leeds & BITMO refurbishment programme
- Housing Leeds Council House Growth Programme

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Housing presented the report.

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- The current spending of mainstream capital programme at the end of period 9 was £50.5 million which was below the forecast of £54 million. It was expected that projection of £77 million would be spent by the end of the year.
- BITMO Spending was below estimated projections.
- Council house growth programme spending was below projections but there was confidence that this would be spent by the end of the year.
- Members' attention was brought to an appendix to the report which detailed capital the capital programme spending.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Housing Leeds and BITMO refurbishment programmes at period 9 be noted.
- (2) That the Housing Leeds Council House Growth programme financial position at period 6 be noted.

60 Housing Leeds (HRA) Revenue Financial Position Period 9 - 2016/17

The report of the Head of Finance, Environment and Housing updated the Board on the revenue financial position for the Housing Leeds (HRA) service as at the end of December 2016 (Period 9).

Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Housing presented the report.

The following issues were highlighted:

- At the end of period 9 the HRA was projecting a surplus of £405k against the 2016/17 budget.
- Income was projected to be £380k over budget and reference was made to the variances that were detailed in the report.
- Right to buy sales – 357 had been completed to date and it was anticipated to meet the target of 450 sales for the year. This would generate £16.2 million of receipts to the Council.
- Rent collections and arrears.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Increase in the number of direct debit payments not being met in December – it was reported that there had been a rise in the number of returned direct debits due to accounts not having sufficient funds. Various reasons for this were discussed which included a reduction in the number of tenants in receipt of benefits and spending pressures around the Christmas period. There were also a number of tenants who had not received payments from DWP which also affected this. Further discussion was held regarding the possibility of allowing flexible payments or rent free weeks at certain times of the year when people had spending pressures.
- It was requested that information on where rent money goes be provided.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, that the possible reinstatement of rent free weeks be explored and that communications to tenants includes information on what their rent money helps to provide.

61 Housing Adaptations

The report of the Head of Housing Support set out the steps taken by the Health and Housing Service to improve performance on delivery of housing adaptation schemes within target timescales and to improve budget management relating to council housing adaptations. The report also set out proposals to further improve service performance and budget management.

Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management presented the report.

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- Improvements in completion of adaptations within timescales.
- Positive impact of combined service areas.
- Development of new targets which would be more customer focussed.
- Significant challenges to be faced with the adaptations budget.
- Consideration of broader options for those who need adaptations including options for rehousing.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- The report and progress made was welcomed.
- Gap between public and private adaptations – there were cost implications and differences in way that private adaptations were funded. Best practice of both models was being looked at in order to bring these in line with each other.
- Where adaptations allowed for early hospital discharge, this helped to prevent future budget pressure on the NHS; this was an area that could be explored further.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

62 Review of Support Models for Older Housing Leeds Tenants

The report of the Director of Environment and housing outlined the following:

- How Housing Leeds planned to enhance the way that it supports residents to remain independent in support of the Council's Breakthrough Project – To Make Leeds the Best City to Grow Old in.
- Proposals of three support models that offer older tenants living in Housing Leeds properties greater choice and flexibility, to ensure that we meet the changing needs of an ageing population and ensure the best use of housing stock.
- Plans to modernise the marketing of housing options of older people by promoting a 'Retirement Living' concept and changing perceptions and attitudes of retirement living of older people, families, carers and professionals.

Jill Wildman, Chief Officer, Housing Management presented the report:

It was reported that the review of the support models for Older Housing Leeds Tenants was ongoing and the following three support models had been identified:

- Extra Care Housing
- Retirement Living with Support (Sheltered Housing)
- In Your Own Home.

Further issues highlighted included the following:

- Extending the Annual Home Visit questionnaire in order to better inform other services on issues such as social isolation.
- Rebranding of Sheltered Housing to Retirement Living
- A further update to be brought to the Board in Autumn 2017.

With regard to the rebranding of Sheltered Housing to retirement Living, it was felt that this may not be fully representative and Mick Dodds agreed to get the views of VOLT and VITAL and report back.

The Chair thanked those who had visited Wharfedale View prior to the meeting which was a good example of quality accommodation and demonstrated the ambition of the Council.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Board supports the development of the three support models and proposals to roll out pilots.

- (2) That the Board supports the proposed marketing campaign linked to older persons housing and further views be sought from VOLT and VITAL on the rebranding of sheltered housing.
- (3) That a further update be brought to the Board in Autumn 2017.

63 Performance Update

The report of the Director of Environment and Housing presented a summary of data against the six Housing Leeds priorities. It also provided performance data, supporting commentary and contextual information as well as signposting to relevant information contained in other reports on the agenda.

Debra Scott, Head of Resources, Environment and Housing presented the report. Prior to this, the Chair announced that this would be Debra's final meeting as she was retiring from the Council and thanked her for her contribution to the work of the Board.

The following issues were highlighted:

- Environmental Improvements – a summary of HAP funded schemes was detailed and an update was given on the Environment Improvement Programme.
- Rent and Benefits – This had been covered in the financial reports.
- Housing People – There was strong performance with regard to preventions and temporary accommodation. Performance was also strong in relation to the re-let of properties and void properties.
- Repairs – Performance was above target on getting repairs right first time.
- Capital Programme – This had been covered in the financial reports.
- Knowing our Tenants – Annual home visits were ahead of target. There was a report to follow on disrepairs. A copy of the questions used for Annual Home Visits was requested.

RESOLVED – That the most recent performance information relating to the six Housing Leeds priorities be noted, and that Annual Home Visit questions be recirculated.

64 Disrepair Case Analysis and Prevention Strategies

The report of the Chief Officer, Property and Contracts provided the Board with the following information:

- Progress made in reducing the disrepair caseload and the significant reduction achieved in costs following the change to processes implemented from November 2016.
- The analysis work undertaken by Housing Leeds in establishing the causes of disrepair and their location and property archetype.

- The link between ongoing repair requests and disrepair cases, mainly in relation to damp.
- The actions Housing Leeds has in place to both effectively target its response to damp and to focus investment on difficult to treat properties.

Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts presented the report.

There had still been an increase with the number of cases coming through but these were now being dealt with under a new fast track process to settle within 28 days which would prevent prolonged delays and reduce costs. There had been a need to bring in additional resources to deal with the increased number of claims and this had ensured that all claims submitted were currently being dealt with. The Board was given details of the numbers of claims that had been submitted and at what stage they were currently at.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- A piece of work was being carried out to identify where and why repeat claims are made. The majority of claims were made due to damp/condensation and as well as repair there was a need to prevent any reoccurrence. Reference was made to specific property types and areas that had seen more claims and work was ongoing to address this under the investment strategy.
- The capital programme had been focussed on improvements to heating and energy efficiency and over £70 million had been invested to date. There was also a need to invest in tenant education which could prevent some of the problems that had occurred.
- Extraction vents were not included in letting standards. It was suggested that all properties be fitted with vents when they become void and all tenants be issued with guidance on preventing damp in order to reduce and prevent future claims.
- It was agreed that Simon Costigan and David Glew meet to discuss issues relating to the disrepair claims and an update be brought back to the Board.

RESOLVED – That the work undertaken by Housing Leeds in taking remedial action and addressing the root cause of Disrepair Claims be noted, and that an update would be brought back to the Board following the discussion between Simon Costigan and David Glew.

65 Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2016/17

The Board considered the contents of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan for 2016/17.

Members were advised that there was to be an additional meeting of the Board to be held on Tuesday, 2nd May 2017 which would primarily consider the results of the Star Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

RESOLVED – That the Content of the Housing Advisory Board Forward Plan 2016/17 be noted.

66 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 2 May 2017 at 5.00 p.m.