

Appendix 1

The Future of Council Housing in Leeds Project - Strategic Governance Board

Purpose

1. This paper sets out proposals for the establishment of the Strategic Governance Board as part of the reforms to the future of council housing approved by the Executive Board on 3rd November 2010.

Background

1. The future of council housing project identified that the weaknesses with the current governance arrangements between the Council and its three ALMOs were that:
 - There is a lack of a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the services delegated to the ALMOs. This independent approach has in part been driven by the inspection regime of the Audit Commission. This has been particularly evidenced by the lack of a joined up approach to; asset management and investment planning; the development of service standards; multiple Service Level Agreements with Council services; contract procurement; contract management and terms and conditions of employees. The abolition of the current inspection regime offers a different approach with less emphasis on the ALMO's standing alone.
 - There are no formal arrangements to provide the ALMOs with connectivity into the Council to allow opportunity for participation in the development of strategies and policies. Equally there are no formal arrangements by which the ALMOs can work together collectively and/or with other locally based service providers from the Council. An example of this is the lack of formal arrangements for locality working with Area Management.
 - These arrangements lead to a best endeavours approach to engaging with the Council's strategic vision and plans and its locally based service providers, thereby losing the opportunity to influence and play a key role in the creation of improved, strong and healthy communities. Without the overarching Council strategy and priorities, independent decision making at ALMO Board level can lead to tensions between city aspirations and local decisions.
2. To resolve these issues the project proposed:
 - To establish a new Strategic Governance Board. The Board would not take on any existing powers currently placed with the Executive Board, the delegated decision scheme with the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the ALMO Boards, nor would it directly manage local delivery of services.
 - It is proposed that the Board would meet to agree key high level strategies to ensure that there is a joint approach on key issues across the ALMOs. The ALMO Boards would remain responsible for the decisions relating to local service delivery. It would be expected that the Chairs of the Boards and their Chief Executives would work together to ensure that there was greater standardisation in the delivery of those services.
 - The Board would also maintain an overview on the performance of the Shared Service Centre and the ALMO representatives on the Board would take decisions on the performance of and the provision of services within the Shared Service Centre and on relationships with the Council
 - This Board would also offer a formal arrangement through which the ALMOs would be able to meet with the Council to discuss the development of and make recommendations on key Council strategies such as the Housing Strategy and the Regeneration Strategy.

- This arrangement would better align the delivery of services whilst enabling the ALMOs to retain a locality focus concentrating on delivering a high quality services under agreed terms. This would remove the tension that has often existed between city aspirations and local independence. The independence would remain in the delivery but it would be in the context of agreed city wide objectives.

Membership

1. The members of the Board will be
 - The Executive Member for Environments and Neighbourhoods
 - The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
 - The Chief Statutory Housing Officer
 - The Head of Housing Partnerships
 - The Chairs of the three ALMOs
 - The Chief Executives of the three ALMOs
 - The Chair of BITMO
 - The Chief Executive of BITMO

Objectives

Leeds is a vibrant, successful and growing modern city with a thriving quality of life. In order to ensure that Leeds can develop and grow in the way the Council wants it to grow, it is essential that there is good quality council housing in the city that meets the needs, requirements and aspirations of tenants and prospective tenants.

The Strategic Governance Board will play a key role in delivering those needs, requirements and aspirations by providing a strategic approach to increasing the quality of accommodation for tenants and the quality of services delivered to tenants. This will be done by:

- providing an opportunity for involvement in the planning and delivery of the Council's key objectives
- ensuring that all decisions taken support the Council's vision for Leeds and its key strategic objectives as set out in strategies such as the Housing Strategy and the Regeneration Strategy
- being a forum for discussions about the development and delivery of the Housing Strategy and its associated strategies
- providing a strong governance lead to the ALMO/BITMO boards
- providing strategic guidance to the ALMO/BITMO Boards on a range of key policies such as but not limited to investment, adaptations, safeguarding, the Leeds Service Offer ensuring value for money and uniform approaches in all decisions
- providing regular progress reports to the Council
- ensuring that all decisions taken within the Board are uniformly implemented by the ALMO/BITMO Boards
- ensuring that ALMO/BITMO business plans reflect the priorities agreed by the Board
- providing investment data so as to maintain the currency of the Leeds Investment Plan
- taking decisions on the priority of investment in Council Houses
- Overseeing the co-regulation of the ALMOs/BITMO
- overseeing the delivery and maintenance of common terms and conditions for all staff within the ALMOs and BITMO
- agreeing the development of the shared service centre
- discussing the performance of the shared Service Centre and the Service Level Agreements with the Council.

Terms of Reference

1. The development of the terms of reference has been done in the light of some key principles. These have been established following initial discussions with officers from the Council's legal services division and are that:
 - There will be no changes to the delegation scheme under the Council's constitution
 - The current delegation arrangements mean that strategic housing matters are within the remit of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods/ the Chief Housing Officer, or in appropriate cases, the Executive Board
 - Specific housing management arrangements are delegated directly from the Executive Board to the ALMOs and BITMO.
 - Functions of the Executive Board can only be delegated to committee of the Board, or to a single member of the Board or to officers.

The Strategic Governance Board could, therefore, not receive delegated powers from the City Council as this would require changes to the Council's constitution which are not proposed as part of the Future of Council Housing Project.

Terms of Reference

- The Board will meet bi monthly but may meet at other frequencies as required
- The Executive Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods will chair the Board
- The ALMO/BITMO representatives on the Board may make recommendations in relation to the delegated functions and the existing ALMO constitutions will be amended to reflect this
- The ALMO/BITMO representatives on the Board will make decisions in relation to the provision of services and performance within the Shared Service Centre
- The Boards recommendations will be reached through discussion
- The Board's decisions will be recommended to the ALMO/BITMO Boards
- The ALMO/BITMO representatives on the Board can make recommendations to the Council on non delegated functions
- The Board can require other officers from either the Council or the ALMOs/BITMO to attend the Board for specific discussions
- The Board will have formal agendas and minutes will be kept of discussions
- The minutes of the Board will be a matter of public record through the publication of the ALMO/BITMO Board papers