

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
7TH JUNE 2017**

PRESENT: Mrs T. Edwardes, Mr T. Jackson, Ms T. Riley and Mr D. Wright
Councillors Jukes and Parton

P. Oliver (Head of Landlord Services)
I. Philp (Landlord Services Manager)
I. Allwyn (Group Accountant)

L. Strong (Democratic Services Officer)

APOLOGIES: Mr K. Brewin and Councillor Sharp

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR 2017/18

RESOLVED

1. that Mrs T. Edwardes be elected as Chair of the Board for the 2017/18 Council year;
2. that Mr T. Jackson be elected as Vice-chair of the Board for the 2017/18 Council year.

The Chair welcomed P. Oliver as the new Head of Landlord Services.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10th May 2017 were confirmed as an accurate record.

It was noted that the Landlord Services Manager had provided the information requested in paragraph (vii) on page 2 of those minutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) REVENUE AND CAPITAL
OUTTURN 2016/17

The Board received a report of the Head of Finance and Property Services setting out the HRA Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17 (item 5 on the agenda).

Summary of discussion:

- (i) In response to a question, explanation was provided of the significant reduction in depreciation against budget. This was due to a change in

the method of calculation, as set out in the first paragraph on page 3 of the report. How the Capital Programme was funded and the accounting practices around that were also briefly discussed. Reference was made to spending on sheltered schemes planned in the short-term and the effect that would have on the Capital Programme, together with amounts owed in loans by the HRA.

- (ii) In response to a question concerning levels of underspend over the past five years and any trends in that respect, reference was made to significant capital spending in the period on Decent Homes work and to revenue spending remaining fairly consistent over that time, with further explanation of the latter being provided. **The Group Accountant agreed to send, to members of the Board as soon as possible following the meeting, figures setting out spending against budget over the five year period.**
- (iii) The £89k overspend on backdated enhanced pay awards for unsocial hours related to a corporate review of such arrangements and was an amount that had not been originally budgeted for.
- (iv) The Board discussed the Tenant Bids Scheme, having noted the underspend of £30k in 2016/17, due to low demand. Both past experience and how applications might be encouraged moving forward were considered. The Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum was currently reviewing the scheme, one of the aims being to agree a more flexible approach, for example via a matched funding provision. The scheme was operated by tenants (via CHRf) for tenants.
- (v) Having noted the underspend of £10k in the Maintenance of Trees budget in 2016/17, it was considered that tenants and members of the public in general often did not know what areas/trees were the responsibility of the Council or otherwise. The view was expressed that people shouldn't be afraid to contact the Council or their local representatives for assistance.
- (vi) **The Head of Landlord Services agreed that it would be appropriate to include information on both Landlord Services' Tree Policy and the Tenant Bid Scheme (once reviewed) in the Tenants' Newsletter, to increase awareness of both matters.**
- (vii) **The Head of Landlord Services agreed to clarify, to Councillor Jukes as soon as possible following the meeting, whether the contractor would be picking up the cost of extra works to the car park at Riversdale Court, Birstall (£25.4k).**
- (viii) A member of the Board expressed the view that the cost of bad debt provision was unacceptable and that tenants who paid their rent should not be subsidising those who did not, through debts and associated costs being written off using bad debt provision funded from the Housing Revenue Account.
- (ix) It was confirmed that the accounts in the report were presented as required by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The Board considered where more detailed information might make the reports more meaningful for its purposes. **The Group Accountant agreed to provide a breakdown of revenue expenditure lines "Supervision and Management" and "Repairs**

and Maintenance” in future reports to the Board on the Housing Revenue Account.

- (x) In response to a question, it was explained that the underspend of £157k on the Council’s Contact Centre (referred to at the bottom of page 2 of the report) was essentially due a more accurate spilt of charges, rather than an underspend. It was not the case that the Contact Centre was “receiving fewer calls than had been budgeted for”. The Board discussed tenants’ experiences in calling the Contact Centre, members having heard both unsatisfactory and good reports in that respect, and agreed that it would be useful to consider the work undertaken by the Contact Centre to assist the Landlord Services function in more detail at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

1. that the HRA Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17 be noted;
2. that consideration of the work undertaken by Council’s Contact Centre to assist the Landlord Services function be added to the Board’s Work Programme, to include information on telephone call waiting times and the script(s) followed when calls were received, together with attendance by an appropriate officer to assist that consideration.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the Board’s consideration of this matter.
2. The Board considers that information on this matter will be useful to its role.

5. NEW DECENT HOMES CONTRACT - UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Head of Landlord Services providing an update on the position with the new Decent Homes Contract (item 6 on the agenda). Also circulated to members of the Board at this meeting was the information set out in the Pre-qualification Questionnaire Evaluation, the Board noted that this remained confidential.

Summary of discussion:

- (i) Reference was made to site visits to potential contractors, in particular the view that the visits should include a councillor attending. **The Head of Landlord Services agreed to clarify, to Councillor Jukes as soon as possible following the meeting, whether that would be possible, if the councillor was attending as an observer only.** Given that councillors would be taking the decision on the new Contractor, it would not be appropriate for them to take part in scoring.
- (ii) The timetable for the interview part of the process was outlined.

- (iii) The Board discussed general issues relating to the performance of contractors, including how that might vary for different local authorities/regions and over time, together the procurement process which the Council was required to adhere to.
- (iv) Reference was made to the importance of effectively monitoring a contract, so that intervention could be at an early stage if needed. A member of the Board also expressed the view that the consultant overseeing the process on behalf of the Council was demonstrably taking on board issues raised by those contributing to the process.

RESOLVED that the position with the new Decent Homes Contract be noted.

Reason

To acknowledge the Board's consideration of this matter and to ensure that the Board is kept informed of progress.

6. DE-POOLING OF RENTS

The Board received a report of the Head of Landlord Services providing information on the de-pooling of rents, on the basis requested at the Board's previous meeting (see Minute 28A.2 and 3 10th May 2017) (item 7 on the agenda).

Summary of discussion:

- (i) The Board noted that it had been confirmed that compulsory service charges would be eligible for Housing Benefit;
- (ii) The cost to the Council of introducing de-pooled rents had not yet been looked into, but would include the costs of the consultation, officer time and administrative/system changes.
- (iii) If de-pooled rents had been introduced a number of years ago, the Council would now be in a significantly better financial position.
- (iv) What other authorities had done in de-pooling rents had been looked at. De-pooling of rents was considered good practice and there was plentiful guidance on the matter.
- (v) The Board discussed how the matter might be most appropriately consulted upon, in particular the importance of information being clearly set out and consideration being given to the questions tenants were most likely to ask and answering those in the information sent out (a "Frequently Asked Questions" section). For example, tenants would wish to know whether the change would result in them paying more. The Board considered that the consultation should extend beyond writing to tenants, perhaps holding events in communities and making use of community notice boards. If the Council worked to reach as many tenants as possible and to provide clear information via a variety of methods, there would be less anxiety about and fewer negative responses to the proposal. **The Head of Landlord Services agreed to send, to members of the Board as soon as possible following**

the meeting, an example of consultation information sent out to tenants in respect of de-pooling of rents.

- (vi) A member of the Board wished to highlight the importance of the Council's Contact Centre being fully briefed on any consultation, so that it could deal with any queries from tenants. Also, that there would be a small number of tenants
- (vii) Whether or not the Council proceeded with de-pooling of rents would be a matter for its Cabinet to decide, taking account of consultation.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the report on de-pooling of rents, and the Board's comments on any consultation with tenants in that respect, be noted;
- 2. that the Head of Landlord Services be asked to take any draft consultation prepared in respect of de-pooling of rents to the Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum for its views on that.

Reasons

- 1. To acknowledge the Board's consideration of this matter and to ensure that the issues raised by the Board in respect of consultation are taken into account.
- 2. The Board considers that it would be useful for the Forum to act as a sounding board in respect of the information that would be provided to tenants and the wider consultation proposals, with the aim of ensuring that those were as effective as possible.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

In accordance with the Board's decision at its last meeting, members of the Board had been asked in advance of the agenda being published whether they had any questions on matters within the remit of the Board that they wished to ask, for response at this meeting. On this occasion, no questions had been submitted.

It was noted that the Democratic Services Officer sent out the deadline for the submission of questions for the each meeting by email, with the minutes of the previous meeting.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report of Head of Landlord Services to enable the Board to agree its Work Programme (item 9 on the agenda).

Members of the Board could identify matters that they considered required looking at over the next few meetings of the Board, including any already listed on the Work Programme but not yet scheduled. Officers present could

provide advice as to whether items might be appropriately considered at the time proposed.

Reference was made to the current position with the Open Spaces Contract. The issue had been listed on the Board's Work Programme since August 2014. **The Head of Landlord Services agreed to send, to members of the Board as soon as possible following the meeting, an update on the current position with the Open Spaces Contract.**

In response to questions, the Head of Landlord Services provided a brief verbal update on the position with both the gas contract and the new Tenancy Agreement.

RESOLVED

1. that the Board's consideration of the work undertaken by Council's Contact Centre to assist the Landlord Services function, added to the Board's Work Programme earlier in the meeting, be scheduled for the Board's meeting on 13th September 2017, as a priority item for that meeting, but subject to an appropriate officer being available to attend to assist the Board;
2. that, further to resolution 1. above, arrangements be made for members of the Board to undertake a short visit to the Council's Contact Centre prior to the Board's meeting, if possible;
3. that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Board (13th September 2017) setting out the current position with void (empty) properties, the cost of those properties to the Council, the work being done to address the matter and associated budgets;
4. that an update on the position with the Planned Maintenance Programme (including Charnwood Standard) be rescheduled from the Board's meeting on 8th November 2017 to the Board's meeting on 13th September 2017;
5. that an update on the Housing Repair Services – Breakdown of Complaints be considered at the next meeting of the Board (13th September 2017);
6. that the Board's Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions made above and earlier in the meeting.

Reasons

1. The Board wishes to consider the matter as soon as possible.

2. The Board considered that such a visit would be useful to its consideration of the work undertaken by Council's Contact Centre to assist the Landlord Services function.
3. The Chair wished to include this matter for consideration by the Board, to assist the Board in better understanding the matter.
4. The Board agreed previously that an annual report be submitted to it on this matter, in November each year (see HMAB Minute 14.8, 9th November 2016), but wishes to consider the matter earlier, following the Chair raising the issue as part of this item.
5. To ensure that the Board is aware of the current position. The Board considers updates on this matter on an ongoing basis, having last done so on 14th September 2016.
6. To ensure that the information in the Work Programme is up to date.

Notes:

1. An updated work programme for the Board following this meeting is appended to these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Board on 13th September 2017.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD - WORK PROGRAMME

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
SCHEDULED:			
Every Meeting	Work Programme		To review the Board's Work Programme.
Every Meeting	Questions from Members of the Board		<p>Questions on matters within the remit of the Board (if any), for response at the meeting.</p> <p>Members will be asked in advance of the agenda being published for each meeting whether they have any such questions, for listing on the agenda.</p>
Every Meeting	Performance Information – Questions		<p>See HMAB minute 14.4, 9th November 2016.</p> <p>To enable the Board to ask questions, if any, on the performance information pack* sent out with the agenda for the meeting.</p> <p>To be last item on agenda.</p>

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
13th September 2017	Work undertaken by Council's Contact Centre to assist Landlord Services Function	Head of Landlord Services	<p>See HMAB Minutes 4.2, 8.1 and 8.2, 7th June 2017.</p> <p>To be considered as priority item for this meeting (13th September 2017), but to be considered subject to appropriate officer being available to assist the Board.</p> <p>Report to include information on telephone call waiting times and script(s) followed.</p> <p>Board has requested a short visit to the Contact Centre prior to the meeting, if possible.</p>
13th September 2017	Planned Maintenance Programme (including Charnwood Standard)	Head of Landlord Services	<p>See HMAB minute 14.8, 9th November 2016. Board decided that this would be Annual Report in November each year</p> <p>See HMAB minute 8.4, 7th June 2017. Board subsequently rescheduled to 13th September 2017.</p>
13th September 2017	Housing Repair Services – Breakdown of Complaints	Head of Landlord Services	<p>Six-monthly update reports are considered by the Performance Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Last submitted to Board 14th September 2016.</p>

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
13th September 2017	Void (Empty) Properties	Head of Landlord Services	See HMAB Minute 8.3, 7th June 2017. Report on current position, cost of such properties to Council, work being done to address and associated budgets.
17th January 2018	2018/19 Draft Budgets (Revenue and Capital)	Head of Landlord Services	2017/18 Draft Budgets were not considered by the Board as meeting (18th January 2017) was inquorate. Annual Report.
June 2018	Election of Chair and Vice-chair		Annual Item.
June 2018	HRA Revenue and Capital Outturn (2017/18)	Head of Landlord Services	Annual Report.
TO BE SCHEDULED:			
To be scheduled	New Decent Homes Contract - Update	Head of Landlord Services	Updates as and when there are matters to report. Last considered 7th June 2017.
To be scheduled	Review of HRA Business Plan	Head of Landlord Services	See HMAB minute 14.6, 9th November 2016. Cannot be reviewed until regulations to enable this have been received from the DCLG. Annual report.
To be scheduled	Housing Asset Management Strategy	Head of Landlord Services	Annual report.

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
To be scheduled	Role of Board in Budget Consultation and Monitoring	Head of Landlord Services	Added to work programme 8th June 2016.
To be scheduled	Housing and Planning Act 2016 - Update	Head of Landlord Services	Last considered by the Board on 17th February 2016. (Report on Pay to Stay and Flexible Tenancies provisions in Housing and Planning Act 2016 considered 9th November 2016). Awaiting Government Regulations.
To be scheduled	Review of Repairs Standards and Response Times for Repairs, following consultation with Tenants	Head of Landlord Services	Added to work programme 1st April 2015.
To be scheduled	Storage of Gas or Propane Cylinders (Clause 9.2.30 of the consultation draft of the Revised Tenancy Agreement for Secure, Introductory and Demoted Tenants)	Head of Landlord Services	Added to work programme 4th February 2015.
To be scheduled	Welfare Reform (Impact of) - Update	Head of Landlord Services	Last submitted to Board 10th December 2014.
To be scheduled	Service Area Delivery Plan	Head of Landlord Services	Added to work programme 13th August 2014.

MEETING DATE/ FREQUENCY	ISSUE	INFORMATION REQUIRED/ INVITEES/ OFFICERS	NOTES
To be scheduled	Housing Strategy	Head of Planning and Regeneration	Added to work programme 2nd April 2014.
To be scheduled	Housing Capital Programme Monitoring	Head of Landlord Services	Last considered 16th October 2013.

Notes to Work Programme:

1. All reports must include an explanatory list of any acronyms used.
2. *Performance information pack will include (i) Decent Homes Contractor Performance; (ii) Landlord Services Performance; (iii) Compliance Performance (Fire Safety, etc.); and (iv) Anti-social Behaviour (relating to Council's housing stock) Information.