

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 15 August 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: **Councillors:** John Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Margaret Notley and Liz Harrington.

Resident Member: Len Saunders (Chair).

Staff Member: Jaine Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment)

In attendance: D Dharmasuriya (Service Delivery Manager), K Long (Operations Manager – Managing Homes), C Norton (Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer), K Potts (Specialist Support Services & Contracts Manager – Independent Living) and Councillor J Thomas (Portfolio Holder – Housing, Health and Older People).

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.08pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lin Martin-Haugh, Fiona Plumridge (Tenant), Christine Smith (Tenant) and Jon Thurlow (Leaseholder).

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 18 JULY 2019

That the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) held on 18 July 2019 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

3 HOUSING FOR OLDER PERSONS STRATEGY

The Operations Manager (Managing Homes), assisted by the Specialist Support Services & Contracts Manager (Independent Living) introduced the Housing Older Persons Strategy (HOPS).

In terms of the rationale for the Strategy, the Specialist Support Services & Contracts Manager (Independent Living) advised that, of a population of 84,000, there were over 20,000 people in Stevenage aged over 55, with 36.53% of households containing at least one person aged 65 or over. In 2017, it was reported that 1,000+ over 65s had dementia, expected to increase by 24% by 2024. There

were 8,550 unpaid carers in the town and, again in 2017, 5,638 over 65s were unable to manage one domestic task.

The Specialist Support Services & Contracts Manager (Independent Living) stressed that, if appropriate housing was provided, injuries such as broken hips or cold-related illnesses could be prevented. This in turn would save money on emergency services, operations, medicines, aftercare, rehabilitation and social care treatment.

The Board noted that the aim was to provide a 10 year Strategy for Older People's Housing in Stevenage relating to people over 55; existing independent living/extra care schemes including adaptations and new provision; a range of tenures; links to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and its Extra Care Strategy; inform emerging care strategies and provision; and look at existing properties, void standards, care capacity and levels within extra care.

The Specialist Support Services & Contracts Manager (Independent Living) stated that the outcome would provide an understanding of current and future needs of older people; gaps in service provision and what future services were needed; capacity of specialist housing in Stevenage; future demand for specialist housing – rent/sale; and future support service needed for older persons housing delivered by SBC.

In reply to a question regarding the number of older people in Stevenage Sheltered Housing that required additional care, the Board was informed that, although this figure fluctuated, it was estimated that about a third required such care.

The Operations Manager (Managing Homes) advised that evidence gathering had been organised through a public survey; social media; desktop review of SBC and HCC data; reviewing National best practice and research; conversations with local groups; professional survey; and Stevenage Day. Statistics included:

- Council Homes comprised 11% (880) of Older Persons housing in Stevenage;
- 12% of Council homes with tenant(s) aged 55+ may be under-occupying by at least one bedroom; and
- 24% of housing register applicants were aged 55 and over.

The Operations Manager (Managing Homes) referred to the highlights of the professional and public surveys on the Strategy. In respect of the public survey, a high number of responses were received from those in the 45-54 and 70-75 age ranges; the majority of respondents were female; the top 3 health conditions were mobility, hearing loss and breathing problems; the reasons for people wanting to move to Stevenage were to be closer to family/return to where they grew up and the provision of new housing, better transport links and regeneration of the town. A significant majority of respondents would either prefer to remain in a property with the same number of bedrooms or reduce the number of bedrooms by one. In terms of tenure, 45% would prefer to rent a property from SBC.

The Board noted that the Public Survey responses had revealed that the top four aspects that respondents wished to see in a new scheme for older people would be access to shops, buses, leisure and greenspace; gardens; safe and secure homes;

and location. In terms of support to help them move home, the top four responses were advice and information about housing options; physical help with the move; provision of handyperson services; and support to help find a new home. In respect of features of the scheme, the top four responses were car parking; shops, cafes, library, gym etc.; communal space, including outdoor; and individual gardens.

The Operations Manager (Managing Homes) commented that, at the first stakeholder event, the following four key areas were identified:

- Support, early intervention and incentives to move;
- Informing and educating residents, families and professionals;
- Multi-disciplinary working; and
- Mixed tenure developments.

The second stakeholder event explored the above areas further and some of the responses received from professionals were:

- Recognition that the client group had complex support needs and required an approach that differed from other client groups;
- A co-ordinated process between services dealing with different parts of the customer journey;
- The need to consult with customers when planning services and make information available to them; and
- If considering inter-generational living, the need to manage any difficulties that come in hand with differing lifestyles.

The Operations Manager (Managing Homes) explained that the next steps were to draft the Strategy document and formulate the action plan. The aim was to submit the Strategy for consideration by the Executive at its meeting on 9 October 2019, although there was the possibility that this might be delayed due to the amount of information that needed to be assimilated into the document.

A Member of the Board asked about any plans for increasing the provision of houses for life and where in the Borough that these could be built. The Operations Manager (Managing Homes) advised that officers would be working closely with HCC and the SBC Housing Development Team to identify suitable sites. However, it should be borne in mind that it would be difficult to build new units in every area of Stevenage and that the need would be to focus on what was realistically achievable.

In reply to a question regarding the care provision at Silkin Court, the Operations Manager (Managing Homes) explained that the contract of the current care provider ended in March 2020, and that HCC would be conducting a tender exercise for the new contract in advance of that time.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation on the Housing Older Persons Strategy be noted.

4 HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented the Housing

Service Performance report for the First Quarter of 2019/20 (April – June 2019). Of the 42 performance measures, 4 were at red status and 3 were at amber status, with the remaining 35 at green status, having achieved or exceeded their targets.

Compliance

Of the various performance measures, the reasons for the two at red status (Asset 5b: Percentage of assets known to be health & safety compliant and RTB1: Percentage of Right To Buy notices responded to within statutory timescales) were explained. It was hoped that 5b would be at green status in the next Quarter. In respect of RTB1, 8 of the 10 notices had been sent out on time, but delays had occurred with the other 2 due to external reasons. Attention was drawn to 100% complete rate with the timescale for mutual exchanges.

In relation to a query regarding ECHLF1: Percentage of Homes maintenance as decent, the Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) confirmed that this was a figure for the current year, rather than a cumulative figure for the Decent Homes scheme (ie. the performance measure target was re-set each April). She undertook to provide Board members with details of how many properties had not been refurbished at all under the Decent Homes Programme.

Customer Service

Of the performance measures, Compl2: Percentage of MP and Members enquiries answered within 10 days, was at amber status as 122 of 133 complaints (91.73%) had been closed within deadline, against the target of 95%. However, customer satisfaction for internal works completed was 100% for the First Quarter.

Income/Spend

The one performance measure at red status was LHMW1: Leasehold major works charges collected as a percentage of charges due. This was due to delays caused by the probate process following the passing away of a leaseholder. The measure at amber status (FTA2: Former tenants arrears collected) was marginally below target (£19,635 collected against the target of £21,000).

Repairs/Voids

The performance with void turnarounds had improved, although there was still one measure at red status and one at amber status.

A Member questioned the level of rent loss and council tax loss as a result of voids not being returned to the housing stock for re-letting within approved deadlines. The Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) confirmed that the statistics included a proportion of management voids (ie. properties held as empty), such as those in Asquith Court. It was agreed that future performance reports should include a commentary on management voids as a mitigation against the red or amber status of relevant performance measures.

In relation to RepCost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling, the Board was

pleased to note that the average cost had been significantly reduced against target for Quarter 1.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Housing Service Performance report for the First Quarter of 2019/20 (April – June 2019) be noted.

5 **REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

The Service Delivery Manager (Stevenage Direct Services) advised that the update on Repairs and Voids performance had been covered by the Performance and Improvement Officer under the previous item. She informed the Board that a pilot scheme was about to be introduced for the appointment of four Maintenance Operatives to assist the Repairs Team in carrying out small-scale jobs, leaving the existing operatives to focus on major elements of repair and voids work.

In response to a question, the Service Delivery Manager replied that, should the pilot scheme prove to be successful and commercially viable, consideration would be given to extending it to other residents on a commercial basis.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

6 **HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Housing and Investment) presented an update on the Housing All Under One Roof (HAUOR) programme. She commented that the latest stage of the Housing & Investment Business Unit Review had not been considered at the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) meeting held on 13 August 2019. The Future Council Board had asked for further work to be done in respect of the Corporate Landlord Function. Two options would be worked up for submission to the SLT meeting on 10 September 2019. Assuming an option was agreed, pre-implementation work would be carried out with a view to the new structure coming into place on 1 April 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Frequency of Reports

In response to a suggestion from the Assistant Director (Housing and Investment), it was agreed that, in future, the update reports relating to Repairs and Voids and Housing All Under One Roof would be submitted to every second Board meeting.

8 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 12 September 2019, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room

CHAIR