

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 22 February 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:**           **Resident Members:** J Thurlow (Leaseholder) (Chair),  
C Anderson (Tenant), K Gibson (Tenant),  
L Saunders (Tenant) and L Storey (Tenant)

**Councillors:**       P Bibby (Vice Chair) and J Mead

**Staff Members:** C Miller (Assistant - Director Direct Services)

**In Attendance:** A Brueckner (Housing Performance Manager), P Caine (Housing Operations Manager), D Dharmasuriya (Service Manager – Repairs), Andrew Garside (Housing Operations Manager - Investing in Homes & Properties), Katrina Shirley (Corporate Strategy Manager - Corporate Services and Transformation) Councillor J Thomas (Executive Councillor – Housing, Health and Older People) and E Wright (Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager)

**Start / End**       Start Time:   6.00pm  
**Time:**           End Time:    8.05pm

**1       APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from J Cresser (Assistant Director Housing & Investment), F Plumridge and Councillors L Martin-Haugh and S Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2       MINUTES - 25 JANUARY 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting of 25 January 2018 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the inclusion of Councillor J Thomas (Executive Councillor – Housing, Health and Older People) on the list of attendees.

**3       HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF**

The Housing Operations Manager gave a presentation on the “Housing All Under One Roof” programme.

The presentation covered an update on the current status of the programme, and in particular, touched upon the business vision, knowing customers (Big Knock),

service and personal development and digital housing. The Board was updated on arrangements of the Housing and Investments Away Day. Members were informed that the Council had purchased four additional modules of the Northgate housing management system. The modules would improve case management, capture more housing-related information and enable a consistent approach to handling customer queries. The Housing Operations Manager informed Members that an officer had been recruited to ensure that the database was utilised to full capacity and to work with corporate team and other service providers regarding interpreting technology and service delivery issues.

The Board was informed that the Housing & Investment team was encouraging customers to use the self-service facility. This was aimed at re-assigning the extra resources to focus on assisting customers who were unable to access online services.

The Members were informed that the main issues raised by residents during the Big Knock were repairs, investment in new homes and the need for regular and up-to-date communication between the Council and residents. The Assistant Director reported that the team was now collating and analysing information gathered during the Big Knock. The Committee was informed that the Housing Operations Manager posts for Providing Homes, Managing Homes and Investing in homes and properties had now been filled.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation is noted.

#### 4 **Q3 HRA BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE**

The Board noted the HRA Business Plan update. The Corporate Strategy Manager, K Shirley informed Members that a quarterly report was produced in line with commitments made by the Executive in November 2016.

The update covered the following issues:

- Housing Development
- Housing Investment
- Housing Management and Maintenance Services
- Financial Assumptions

Members were also informed that the Council was working collaboratively with Housing Associations regarding Housing development and that plans were under way to engage contractors for internal work. The Corporate Strategy Manager indicated that the Major Refurbishment Contract had been discussed at the January 2018 meeting of the Executive. It was stated that the timescale for the Asset Management Strategy had been revised to allow further work to be undertaken to establish the way forward on a number of key areas.

In response to questions from Members regarding funding for 12 North Road, the Corporate Strategy Manager indicated that she did not have the funding details at hand.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Strategy Manager provide funding details for 12 North Road to the HMAB.

## 5 **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - Q3**

The Board considered the Q3 Housing Service Performance report. The Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager indicated that the Council was in a transition phase in terms of performance reporting. Members were informed that the standardisation of the corporate approach to reporting was aimed at enhancing the quality of information. The Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager informed the Board that features of the new InPhase corporate performance system enabled the creation of detailed reports and the grouping and linking of charts to commentary on corporate performance. It was indicated there was a recommendation to show the trend in reported areas and to provide a detailed analysis and commentary for those areas that had performed below expectations (red and amber).

Members sought clarification on the details that would be included in the reports and connection of data from a variety of sources. In response to the questions, the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager indicated that the new reports would clearly show poorly performing areas, provide an explanation of why poor performance had been reported and highlight any corrective measures. It was highlighted that data connectivity was a complex issue and that data analysts were being recruited to deal with the issue.

Members noted improvements in the collection of rent arrears from former tenants.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That performance reports include narrative behind the statistics
2. That the Housing Performance Manager provides an update on the report structure at the next Performance meeting

## 6 **REPAIRS AND VOIDS PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Assistant (Director Direct Services) presented the Repairs and Voids update. The presentation highlighted Projects fully delivered, Projects partly delivered and ongoing, actions implemented between Phase One and Phase Two and plans for Phase Two.

With regard to the partly delivered and ongoing projects, the Assistant Director (Direct Services) informed members that:

- Improvements in department cohesion and staff culture had been noted but there was room for improvement on the issue of embedding good work ethic and provision of good customer service to tenants at all times
- An independent Health and Safety auditor had been commissioned to assess all aspects of Health and Safety for SBC Direct Services
- Plans were in place to improve connectivity with the charging and billing

- aspects of the Northgate system
- There was an active process to recruit a Commercial Contract Manager to oversee all contracts and deliver value for money
- Direct Services were utilising the services of an in-house analyst to ensure Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) were as reliable for Voids work as they were on Repairs
- Development work was in progress to enable customers to use the self-service facility

Members sought clarification on quality of customer service, average responsive cost per dwelling, average re-let times, average repair cost per void property. In response to these questions, the Assistant Director (Direct Services) informed Members that there had been improvements in customer satisfaction but there was room for improvement. The Assistant Director indicated that re-let times and average repair cost per void property had been affected by the performance of some sub-contractors.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Assistant Director (Direct Services) to present the Health and Safety audit report to HMAB
2. The Assistant Director (Direct Services) to report to HMAB after analysing data for average repair cost per dwelling

## 7 **REPORT ON SPRINKLERS IN HIGH RISE FLAT BLOCKS (NOT FOR PUBLICATION)**

The Board considered a Report on Retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler systems to residential tower blocks. Details of the discussion are in Restricted Minutes.

## 8 **AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS REPORT**

The HMAB noted the Aids and Adaptations Report.

The Housing Operations Manager (Investing in Homes & Properties) informed Members that a review had been carried out to improve the adaptations service. It was indicated that as part of the improvements, the team had hired new permanent staff, carried out a data cleanse exercise, reviewed the backlog of adaptation cases and contacted tenants to discuss referrals and establish the work that was still outstanding. The Housing Operations Manager (Investing in Homes & Properties) stated that a bespoke Northgate IT based module that had been designed for aids and adaptations cases was being tested on new cases and would be rolled out to all cases in the new financial year. Members were informed that the Council had engaged new contractors for internal work and minor work related to adaptations.

Members noted that previous reports had indicated poor communication with tenants regarding progress of adaptation work. In response to this issue, the Housing Operations Manager (Investing in Homes & Properties) confirmed that changes had been made to ensure that tenants were kept informed.

It was **RESOLVED** that an update on Aids and Adaptations tenants' feedback be presented at the next HMAB performance meeting.

9 **ALLOCATIONS REVIEW**

Members were informed that the recommendations in the Housing Allocations Review Report had been supported by the Community Select Committee during a meeting held on 7 February 2018. It was stated that a meeting to discuss had been scheduled between the Council Leader, Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) and the Empty Homes Manager.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Housing Operations Manager circulate the Allocation Review update.

10 **FEEDBACK FROM EXECUTIVE**

The extract from the Executive meeting held on 23 January 2018 was noted.

The Executive Councillor (Housing, Health and Older People) informed Members that work on the Major Refurbishment Contract had been scheduled to commence in properties in the southern parts of the Borough.

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

11 **HMAB WORK PLAN AND TRACKER UPDATE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the HMAB Plan and Tracker Update be deferred to the next meeting.

12 **ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

Members were informed that two staff workshops were held in February to investigate how SBC can make 'engagement with residents' - 'part of the day job' and a 'core competency for employees'. The results from these workshops are now being collated. The next stage of the review will be agreed once these results are clear. CSP have agreed to review each stage of this review as we move forward and regular reports will be discussed at HMAB.

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

13 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair informed Members that at the next meeting, the HMAB would discuss possible ways of working with Select Committees including the Community Select Committee.

14      **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Thursday 15 March 2018**, 1800hrs, Shimkent Room

**CHAIR**