

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 15 March 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:**           **Resident Members:** J Thurlow (Leaseholder) (Chair) and F Plumridge (Tenant)

**Councillors:** Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair) and Lin Martin-Haugh

**In Attendance:** P Caine (Housing Operations Manager),  
D Dharmasuriya (Service Manager – Repairs) and Councillor J Thomas (Executive Councillor – Housing, Health and Older People)

**Start / End**        Start Time:    6.00pm  
**Time:**            End Time:      6.45pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from J Cresser (Assistant Director Housing & Investment), C Anderson, K Gibson, L Saunders, L Storey and Councillors J Mead and S Mead.

The Members present recognised that the quorum for meetings is six HMB members, with three customers, two councillors and one member of staff. Given the absence of four Resident Members, the numbers in attendance did not constitute a quorum. However, given that most of the items on the agenda did not require a decision, it was agreed that it would be worthwhile to receive updates and to comment as appropriate.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2            MINUTES - 22 FEBRUARY 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the approval of Minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting of 22 February 2018 be deferred to the next meeting given that the meeting was inquorate.

**3            REPAIRS AND VOIDS PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Direct Services) provided an update that included benchmarking data for voids loss and repairs and voids performance.

Members were informed that the preferred candidate for the position of Contracts Manager had been offered a contract of employment. It was highlighted that the

Repairs and Voids Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Review for 2018/19 had been agreed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

The Assistant Director expressed satisfaction with the general trend of Repairs and Voids performance and collaboration efforts between Repairs and Voids and other units. The following highlights were noted:

- Repairs on 44 properties in February 2018 and a voids purge so as to start the new financial year on a clean slate
- 22 voids let in February 2018 – the highest number for 2017/18
- Scheduling work on one Saturday to focus on minor tasks such as guttering
- Improvements in customer service satisfaction in 3 of the 4 reporting areas
- Improvements in sheltered accommodation lets

Members were informed that Stevenage was now part of the HouseMark network. It was indicated that the team was analysing benchmarking data with the aim of comparing similar data items. The Assistant Director pointed out that updates on benchmarking data analysis would be provided at future HMAB meetings.

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

#### 4 **MAJOR REFURBISHMENT CONTRACT UPDATE**

The Housing Operations Manager provided an update on the Major Refurbishment Contract. It was indicated that 15 March 2018 was the last day of Phase Two of the Project. Members were informed that the next stage would involve signing of Contracts between Stevenage Borough Council and contractors. It was stated that mobilisation meetings between the Council staff, contractors and tenants had been scheduled for the next few weeks. It was highlighted that project progress updates would be provided at future HMAB meetings.

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

#### 5 **AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS SERVICE CHARGE UPDATE**

The Board was informed that Capital Programme Manager was still analysing aids and adaptations data that had been received in recent weeks.

It was **RESOLVED** that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

#### 6 **ALLOCATIONS REVIEW UPDATE**

Members were informed that the Housing Allocations Review had flagged a number of connected issues. It was indicated that as a follow up to the Review, the Housing team was reviewing the Under-occupation Policy and the parts of the Housing Allocations Policy that dealt with households with occupants over the age of 18.

It was highlighted that the current Housing Allocations Policy had provisions for 18 years old in full time education only. It was explained that such an arrangement resulted in the splitting of some families. Members were informed that there were

proposals to change the policy. Members indicated that changes to the policy would be welcome given that most 18 years olds did not have the resources to live independently.

Members considered the draft policy aimed at supporting under-occupying tenants who wished to downsize. Members suggested the following changes to the draft policy:

Paragraph 4.5 Clarify the arrangements for tenants with no rent arrears or outstanding charges

Paragraph 4.7 Rephrase paragraph to read, "We may consider offering under-occupiers other incentives to downsize. This will be considered on a case by case basis at the discretion of Stevenage Borough Council."

Paragraph 6.1 Insert a statement clarifying that the Empty Homes Manager would be responsible for minor changes and major policy changes would be referred to the Executive.

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

## 7 **FEEDBACK FROM EXECUTIVE**

The Housing, Health and Older People Executive Portfolio Holder provided an update on the Executive meeting of 13 March 2018. Members were informed that the Executive had agreed to changes to the Housing Allocations Policy and the retrofitting of fire suppressant sprinklers to residential tower blocks. The Portfolio Holder also highlighted SBC membership to the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA). Members were informed that SBC had joined the HHIA on condition that the contract would be reviewed after 12 months and 12 months' notice would be given if the HHIA service was unsatisfactory.

With regard to the retrofitting of fire sprinklers, it was indicate that the Executive acknowledged the risk of proceeding with the project before the conclusion of the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower Block fire. However, it was noted that any delays were likely to have financial implications. In response to a question about the quality of doors fitted on tower block properties, it was confirmed that the doors were subject to BRE specifications but there are other factors that could affect the resistance of doors to fire after fitting.

It was indicated that the HHIA would combine SBC's role in allocating Disability Facilities Grant with HCC's referrals process. It was noted that such an arrangement would provide a streamlined service for residents. The service residents receive will also be quicker and more resilient. It was reported that the HHIA offers Stevenage residents more services including a handyman option. Members were informed that SBC had requested that the Repairs and Voids Team will be able to bid for HHIA work if core activities were being delivered well and there was a business case to undertake such work.

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

8 **HMAB WORK PLAN AND TRACKER UPDATE**

The Chair explained that as part of the discussion, Members would explore ways of supporting and collaborating with the Community Select and other committees.

It was **RESOLVED** that the HMAB Work Plan and Tracker update be discussed in detail at the next meeting.

9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date of Next Meeting: **19 April 2018**, 6:00pm, Shimkent Room

**CHAIR**