

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 20 June 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: **Councillors:** Liz Harrington, Lizzy Kelly, John Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh and Margaret Notley

Resident Members: Jon Thurlow (Leaseholder) (in the Chair), Fiona Plumridge (Tenant), and Len Saunders (Tenant)

Staff Members: J Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment) and C Miller (Assistant Director – Direct Services)

In Attendance: D Dharmasuriya (Service Delivery Manager), C Norton (Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer), N Baker (Community Development Manager) and Cllr J Thomas (Portfolio Holder – Housing, Health and Older People)

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.15pm

1 **APPOINTMENT OF HMAB CHAIR**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Len Saunders be elected to serve as Chair of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) for the municipal year 2019/2020.

2 **APPOINTMENT OF HMAB VICE-CHAIR**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Councillor John Lloyd be elected to serve as Vice-Chair of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) for the municipal year 2019/2020.

AT this juncture, it was agreed that Jon Thurlow who had opened the meeting should continue to Chair for this meeting only.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Christine Smith.

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **MINUTES - 14 MARCH 2019**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

5 **HOUSEKEEPING**

The Board was presented with the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct for the Board.

It was noted that reference to the Residential Involvement would be amended to the Community Development Team.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Terms of Reference be noted;
- (ii) The Code of Conduct be noted.

6 **HOUSING SERVICE QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE**

The HMAB received an update on Housing Service Performance for Quarter Four. The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer reported achievements and outlined improvement focus on the following themes:

Compliance Theme

Members were advised that although performance had dropped since the last quarter for the percentage of assets that were health and safety compliant, all high risk tasks left by the previous contractor had been completed including Gas and Fire. It was reported that the new contractor had mobilised well and had invested in the contract by training staff and improving their IT and reporting skills which should in turn improve results.

Customer Service

It was reported that since Customer Care training had been received, staff attitude complaints had substantially reduced. The Customer Focus Team continued to work with individual teams to assist further improvement.

Homelessness and Housing Support

Members were pleased to note the achievements in this area despite the challenges faced including the Homeless Reduction Act, a restructure in the Division and also an increase in the number of clients approaching the service for advice. The improvement in the number of households in temporary accommodation was also reported as 73 against a target of 100.

Income/Spend

Officers reported that although the measure for Aids and Adapts completion was red

due to an issue with works not being recorded promptly, in Quarter 4 this had improved to 100% (47 of 47) being completed on time.

In relation to Leaseholder Charges, it was noted that the Leaseholder Team had been unable to reach their target for collection of major works charges due to one of the leaseholders passing away and the estate going through probate.

Repairs and Voids

Officers reported that repairs were now being fixed promptly and exceeding target which had improved by 5 days this year. In terms of voids, Members were pleased to note that turnaround times were consistently reducing, partly due to the collaborative work taking place between the Project Officers and the Lettings Team to reduce unnecessary work.

Members were also pleased to note the improvement work going on to introduce a more modern/digital way of working for the caretaking/estate management team.

In response to a question regarding the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA), Officers advised that despite initial teething problems, an improvement plan was now in place and the Council had renewed the contract for a further 12 months with a review being undertaken in 6 months' time.

As a general point Members asked officers to reconfigure the performance reports to show one theme per page to ensure the information was clearer.

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

7 REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE

This item was considered under item 6.

8 HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF UPDATE

The Assistant Director Housing and Investment gave an update on Housing All Under One Roof (HAUOR) programme.

Members were advised that the appointments had been made to the 3 Operation Manager posts and the next phase of the restructuring would be focussing on the next layer of management. This would involve consultation with staff including workshops on how to work better with other business units across the Council including Direct Services and Community Development. It was noted that the formal consultation would commence with staff at the end of September.

The Assistant Director reminded Members of the Housing Investment Away Day which would be taking place on 3 July 2019 to which all Members of the Board were invited. Officers agreed to send out any information from the Away Day to those Members who were not able to attend. Feedback from the day would be given at the next meeting of this Board.

Members were advised that the recently introduced IT system had been showcased to Councillors at the Market Stall event in June. The system allowed Supported Housing Officers to work remotely without the need to return to the Council offices to complete any paperwork. The new digital platform which was being developed across the Council would also improve access for customers and allow them to see all information relating to them in one place.

It was noted that the Major Refurbishment Contract was now underway but that no invoices had yet been sent out.

In response to a question about how the Council measured success, Officers advised that Project Initiation Documents (PID's) were drawn up for all projects and schemes and would include how success was determined. A regular Tenant Satisfaction Survey was also distributed across the Town as well as a staff survey undertaken in alternate years.

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

9 **UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

Councillor Jeannette Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People gave an update from the last Executive meeting:

- HHIA – The Executive recognised that the performance of the contract with HHIA had been affected due to a number of reasons including dependency on temporary staff and variation in consistency and speed of delivery. A recovery plan had been put in place with the aim of improving productivity but it had been agreed that a report would go back to the Executive Leader and Portfolio Holder to ensure progress was being made.
- Decent Homes - The advantages and disadvantages of appointing a single contractor to undertake the works were discussed and the decision had been made that 2 contractors should be appointed to increase resilience across the length of the contract.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Neil Baker updated the Board on the latest activities within the Community Development Team including:

- Members from the Customer Scrutiny Panel had joined the Community Development Team at Stevenage Day;
- The Community Development Officers would be linking with the Neighbourhood Wardens and Resident Inspectors;
- Officers would come back to this Board with a presentation on the Community Development Framework for SBC;

The Board acknowledged the commitment by the Council to build new Council homes for people across the Town and requested that Ash Ahmed Assistant Director Housing Development be asked to provide a presentation to the Board at a future meeting on the current and future housing developments in the Town.

11 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

18 July 2019
15 August 2019
12 September 2019
24 October 2019
21 November 2019
6 January 2020
16 January 2020
20 February 2020
12 March 2020
April 2020 (to be confirmed – if required)

CHAIR