Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Date: Thursday, 12 March 2020
Time: 6.00pm,
Location: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete
Contact: Fungai Nyamukapa
Email: fungai.nyamukapa@stevenage.gov.uk Tel: 01438242707

Members:

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

Councillors: John Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Liz Harrington, Lizzy Kelly, Lin Martin-Haugh and Margaret Notley

Staff Members: David Brown (Interim Assistant Director - Stevenage Direct Services) and Jaine Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment)

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AGENDA

PART 1

Item no.	Subject	Lead	Mins allocated	Time
	Refreshments		15 Minutes	5:45pm to 6:00pm
1.	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** To receive apologies for absence and declarations of interest	Chair	2 Minutes	6.00pm to 6.02pm
2.	**MINUTES – 20 FEBRUARY 2020** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 20 February 2020 Pages 3 - 8	Chair	3 Minutes	6.02pm to 6.05pm

3.	**NORTHGATE SYSTEM DEMONSTRATION** To receive a demonstration of the Northgate Housing System	Patrick Dewale	25 minutes	6.05pm to 6.30pm
4.	**UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS** To receive update from Executive meetings	Cllr J Thomas	5 Minutes	6.30pm to 6.35pm
5.	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS** To consider any business accepted by the Chair as urgent	Chair	10 minutes	6.35pm to 6.45pm
6.	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** **Wednesday 17 June 2020**, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room **(to be confirmed)**	Chair		

Agenda Published 04 March 2020

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 20 February 2020
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: **Councillors:** John Lloyd (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Liz Harrington, Lin Martin-Haugh and Margaret Notley.

Resident Members: Len Saunders (Chair) (Tenant) and Jon Thurlow (Leaseholder).

Staff Members: Dave Brown (Interim Assistant Director – Stevenage Direct Services) and Jaine Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment)

In Attendance: Di Dharmasuriya (Service Delivery Manager – Property Repairs), Kelly Holland (Specialist Support Services and Contracts Manager), Denis Kinyera (Resident and Estates Manager), Karen Long (Operations Manager - Managing Homes), Chloe Norton (Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer) and Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Portfolio Holder – Housing, Health and Older People)

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.35pm

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

Councillor John Lloyd (Vice-Chair) in the Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Kelly and Fiona Plumridge (Tenant).

There were no declarations of interest.

2   **MINUTES - 16 JANUARY 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 16 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

3   **Q3 HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented an update on the Housing Service Performance report for the third quarter (Q3) of 2019/20.

Compliance

In Q3, 100% of certificates for the service and inspection of General Fund assets were available. All other measures relating to residential dwellings met the 100% target and all mutual exchanges were completed within statutory timescales. All 111 Right To Buy notices were issued within the timescales.

Customer Service

In the year to date, there was a significant improvement in complaints closed within target. In the first three quarters of 2019/20, there was further improvement from last year in the measure of Stage 2 and 3 complaints upheld.

Homelessness and Housing Support

The homelessness prevention measure exceeded its target for the quarter. The measure for the number of households in temporary/emergency was red. An improvement plan was in place for this measure. Currently no targets have been set for cases completed within relief duty and cases where housing duty was reported.

Income/Spend

In Q3, both recharge measures, percentage of leaseholder service charges collected and leasehold major works charges collected exceeded target. An income and arrears collection action plan is in place to improve the rent collection rate.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder indicated that some of the rent arrears were due to delays in Universal Credit payments. Some of the affected customers ended up paying rent in arrears rather than paying one week in advance.

Repairs and Voids

Improved performances were recorded for repair time, percentage of repairs fixed first time and percentage of repairs appointments made and kept. Improvement focus would be on Voids Sheltered and Voids Loss in year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Housing Service Performance Report for the third quarter of 2019/20 be noted.

4   **HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY**

The Operations Manager (Managing Homes) and the Specialist Support Services and Contracts Manager presented an update on the draft Housing for Older People Strategy. The strategy set out the Council's approach to ensure that suitable housing was on offer for older people in Stevenage, now and in the future. The strategy focussed on people over the age of 55, although it was acknowledged that people may need care and support at different times in their lives depending on individual circumstances. The strategic objective was to enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing offer.

In response to questions, officers stated that:

- The Older Persons Network played a similar role to the Older Persons Forum.
- The Network gave older persons a collective voice and influenced decision-makers on matters that impacted on everyday life
- Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) were collaborating in an ongoing review of the network
- SBC had established a good relationship with owner-occupiers via the Careline service and engagement events such as the Landlord Forum
- There was an understanding that some owner-occupiers were not keen to move from existing properties due to local connection to the area
- Some owner-occupiers had indicated a willingness to consider down-sizing and move into social housing
- Support would be provided to those who want to move into smaller private properties
- The Council was actively working with housing providers to ensure that there was a provision for suitable properties for older persons
- Support for aids and adaptations in privately owned homes was available via the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency and the Disabled Facilities Grant as well as the Aids and Adaptations budget for council tenants

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

5   **TENANCY AGREEMENT**

The Resident and Estates Manager presented the draft Tenancy Agreement. He stated that the last review of the Tenancy Agreement was carried out in 2013. The current review was an opportunity to incorporate changes to legislation, align with best practice and strengthen key areas of the Agreement.

The Resident and Estates Manager informed the HMAB that the revised Tenancy Agreement would be published on the SBC website. Existing tenants would be served with hard copies of the Tenancy Agreement Variation. New tenants would receive a hard copy of the new Tenancy Agreement. The Tenancy Agreement would also be accessible via the new housing customer portal.

In response to questions, officers indicated that:

- Tenants have always had the responsibility for maintaining the gardens, trees and front fences. However, some customers appeared not to be aware of this responsibility
- In the first instance, the Council approached tenants to take responsibility
- The Council would maintain front fences in exceptional cases – particularly for health and safety considerations
- The 8 month visit applied to Introductory Tenancies and not Secured Tenancies. The annual visit for Secure Tenancies would be scheduled to coincide with the proposed MOT-style gas safety check
- Plans were in place to consider if a a computer programme for scheduling annual visits would be viable

- Operatives would be able to access relevant property documents via tablet computers or similar devices

The HMAB welcomed the use of photographs in the property inspection process.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Strategic Housing lead (IT & Digital transformation) be invited to the next HMAB meeting to demonstrate the housing customer portal (Northgate).

6   **HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF UPDATE**

The Assistant Director provided an update on the new housing customer portal and the ongoing Business Unit Review. She stated that the new customer portal had features for reporting repairs, rents and account enquiries, updating contact details and giving feedback. A soft launch of the portal was due imminently and full launch was planned for April 2020, subject to the successful delivery of the soft launch..

The Business Unit Review for Housing and Investment was underway. The process was open and transparent and staff had the option to express interests in ring fenced posts initially and then any unfilled posts in the new structure including posts outside their current line of work. Staff were receiving support throughout the process.

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

7   **REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

The HMAB received an overview of repairs and voids performance since 2018. In April 2018, one of the 11 reporting measures was green, one was amber, three were grey (no data/targets) and six were red.   Performance had significantly improved by April 2019 with eight measures being green/super-green and three below target (red). Two of the 11 measures were in red as of end of January 2020.

Current Stevenage Direct Services (SDS) projects included financial management, end of year budget reviews, review of policies and procedures, business process mapping, Phase two of the CSC/repairs pilot, Insourcing project and Digital review. The Service Review and Caretaking review were due to start soon. The Business Unit had plans to introduce a self-serve customer portal and paperless working.

Officers informed the HMAB that:

- The number of voids properties in any given month had fluctuated over the past three years
- SDS were analysing the fluctuations
- The main issues for consideration when managing voids are the number of voids and the void turnaround time
- Current performance measurement is based on an average of 40 voids per month. The average for 2018/19 was 67
- Customers were expected to move into properties as early as was practically possible within the first week of accepting a property offer. In exceptional

cases, such as hospitalisation or other social factors, customers were given more time to move in

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that high tenant turnover combined with a high void turnaround time would result in more people being housed.

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

8   **UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

The Portfolio Holder provided an update from the January and February meetings of the Executive. Proposals on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2020/21, draft Capital Strategy 2019/20 – 2024/25 and the appointment of a development partner at the development site of Kenilworth Close were on the Executive agenda in January 2020. It was noted that 2020/21 budget included a rent increase for all council homes for the first time in four years. The 30-year Business Plan had been updated to include additional borrowing that would go towards house building. In February, Executive received updates on the draft Climate Change Strategy, Charter and Community Pledges and the co-operative engagement with Businesses and the Citizens Panel.

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

9   **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The HMAB welcomed the publishing of frequently asked questions (FAQs) relating to the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) on the Council website. The Board also discussed the significance of online communities on council housing matters.

10   **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 12 March 2020, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room

<u>**CHAIR**</u>

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