

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 21 February 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: **Councillors:** Philip Bibby CC (Chair), Sandra Barr, Lizzy Kelly,
Lin Martin-Haugh and Sarah-Jane Potter

Resident Members: Len Saunders (Tenant), Lesley Storey (Tenant)
and Jon Thurlow (Leaseholder)

Staff Members: Craig Miller (Assistant Director – Stevenage Direct
Services)

In Attendance: Neil Baker (Community Development Manager), Di Dharmasuriya
(Service Manager – Repairs), Greta Gardiner (Investment Project Co-
ordinator), Chloe Norton (Corporate Performance & Improvement
Officer) and Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Executive Portfolio Holder -
Housing, Health and Older People)

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.25pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from J Cresser (Assistant Director- Housing
and Investment), C Anderson (Tenant) and F Plumridge (Tenant).

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)
meetings held on 25 October 2018 are approved as a correct record and
signed by the Chair
2. That the Minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)
meetings held on 20 November 2018 are approved as a correct record and
signed by the Chair
3. That the Minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)
meetings held on 17 January 2019 are approved as a correct record and
signed by the Chair

Update on Actions – The Chair informed the HMAB that he had recently spent an hour shadowing the Housing Allocations team. It was a worthwhile experience. The Chair encouraged the Board to take up the offer to shadow Housing and Investment teams.

3 **MAJOR REFURBISHMENT CONTRACT**

The Investment Project Co-ordinator provided an update on the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC). Members were informed that:

- The programme was on schedule and on budget
- Spend to date is low in view of the stage of the financial year
- Productivity levels have now increased to levels that support the total spend requirement for the year
- Following lessons learned from previous contracts the project team took a deliberate decision to mobilise slowly in order to ensure that the process was as effective as possible
- Processes and procedures were agreed and benchmarking had been done
- Works are in progress in Broadwater area blocks (Wates) and in Southend Close, Albert Street and Plash Drive (Mulalley)
- The standard of works completed to date is considered by SBC to be high
- Tenant satisfaction surveys based on 44 returns are currently running at 100%

The MRC programme had achieved a number of major deliverables including the following:

- Completion of all Year 1 surveys
- Resident consultation events held for all open blocks and nine further blocks due to commence in February 2019
- First set of section 20 (s20) Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 consultations complete
- Further s20 consultations ongoing at various addresses

The MRC programme had faced delays related UK Power Network (UKPN) work scheduling and suspected bat roosts on properties. The Investment Project Co-ordinator informed the HMAB that SBC work requests were not prioritised by UKPN. UKPN were expected to be on site towards the end of March. Members were informed that work was suspended following the discovery of suspected bat roosts in Albert Street. Scaffolding will be removed at a cost to the Council and will be re-erected in June/July after bat emergence surveys.

The Executive Portfolio Holder (Housing, Health and Older People) assured the HMAB that the MRC will not be affected by any changes in the MRC programme management team.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the update is noted
2. That the report on lessons learned on the MRC to date be shared with the HMAB

4 **HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented the Housing Service Performance Report for Quarter 3. The report provided performance highlights for Compliance, Customer Service, Homelessness and Housing Support, Income/Spend and Repairs & Voids.

Compliance – The percentage of Council assets known to be Health and Safety compliant (statutory) and percentage of Council assets known to be Health and Safety compliant (as per SBC enhanced definition) were below target. A new contractor was engaged in January 2019. The new contractor has more robust IT processes and the upload of compliance certificates is expected to improve.

Customer Service – Feedback indicates that customer experience regarding the approach and outcome of internal works being carried out on housing properties is improving significantly. Percentage of complaints closed on target, percentage of MP and Members enquiries within 10 days and percentages of stage 2 & 3 complaints upheld fully or partially were below target. Housing and Investment will not achieve their targets by the end of the financial year as they would need exceptionally high volumes to compensate for poor performance in earlier quarters.

Homeless and Housing Support – The newly formed Housing Options and Supply Team have worked hard to deliver homelessness preventions in excess of the quarterly target. It is expected that there will be a noticeable increase in footfall in Quarter 4.

Income/Spend – Rent collection has been consistently increasing since April 2018. Although the measure for Aids & Adaptations completion is below target (red) year-to-date due to an issue with works not being recorded promptly, in Quarter 3 they completed 100% on time (53 of 53).

Repairs and Voids – Repairs are being fixed promptly and exceeding target. Voids General Needs Major Works, Voids Loss, Voids Sheltered Major Works and Voids Sheltered performed below target during the review period. Repairs and Voids team were reviewing key performance indicators with the aim of removing hard to let property performance figures from the overall performance report. This will provide a true representation of repairs and voids performance. The properties will still be tracked.

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

COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS UPDATE

The HMAB considered the community development aspect of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Business Unit review and the outcomes. The Community Development Manager's presentation covered the following:

- Communities and Neighbourhoods vision
- Three new Service Groupings
- Proposed structure
- Delivering positive change
- New Community Development approach
- New way of working

The Community Development Manager informed the Board that the Council had an objective to deliver better outcomes and a smoother service for residents. The soon-to-be launched Community Engagement Framework will enable a council-wide approach to community engagement and involvement. Community Development has introduced new patch-based teams involving a Community Development Officer and Neighbourhood Warden per area. The Community Development Manager highlighted the new way of working across the town creating a more locality-focused team who could work in unison with other council teams to develop locally driven solutions to community needs. In addition to the current roles within the team, Community Development would introduce a fixed term Community Inclusion Officer who would develop a more integrated approach to social inclusion within Community Development.

Members sought clarification on plans to engage young people who would not normally participate in local decision making. The Community Development informed the members that restructure of the Youth Council had recently taken place, increasing membership from 8 to 18 young people from a wide variety of backgrounds. This transformation was continuing over the next year, with young people working hard to ensure the voice of young people was heard and actioned. The Community Development Manager acknowledged that the Youth Council had not always submitted questions for consideration at Council meetings, but that the transformation of the Youth Council would make this more likely moving forward. Questions were also raised around the support needed for older people and the need to ensure that this was a clear thematic area for Community Development Officers. The Community Development Manager informed the members that older people's needs were covered under diversity themes, but was open to making this more clear.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the update is noted
2. That the Community Development Manager provides an update on arrangements for Older People in relation to Community Development Officer tasks
3. That the Community Development Manager updates the HMAB on revised

plans to engage young people including those not normally involved in local democracy

6 **REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Service) provided an update on the Repairs and Voids service. Members were informed that Stevenage Direct Service had taken on responsibility for the caretaking service. The Service Delivery Manager had scheduled a familiarisation visit with the caretaking team. The Assistant Director informed the HMAB that plans were in place to introduce an estate management offer. The offer will provide a single point of contact to signpost residents to relevant Council services.

Members welcomed plans to exclude hard-to-let properties from performance statistics. A Member highlighted the case of repair work going on for more than ten weeks at one three-bedroom property. The Service Delivery Manager informed the HMAB that repair turnaround times were dependent upon the state of the property and complexity of the repair request. On average it took seven to ten days to complete minor repairs on three-bed properties. The most complex cases were encountered in properties that had structural damage or required environment cleans or asbestos removal. The Assistant Director informed the Board that there was a mix of one bedroom and studio properties in the hard-to-let category. The Repairs and Voids team worked with Finance teams to appraise options for hard-to-let properties.

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

7 **UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

The Executive Portfolio Holder (Housing, Health and Older People) informed the HMAB that the 2019/20 General Fund and Council Tax Setting, Capital Strategy 2018/19 – 2023/24 and Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2019/20 were the main items on the February Executive meeting agenda. The Executive had recommended that the items be approved at the February Council meeting.

8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair reminded Members to start thinking about the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair for the next Municipal Year. The positions of Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually at the Away Day or the first meeting after Annual Council whichever comes first. The next Chair will be a tenant/leaseholder and the Vice-Chair will be a councillor.

The Chair sought clarification on the Council's position regarding review of tenancies. The Executive Portfolio Holder (Housing, Health and Older People) informed the HMAB that the Council was awaiting government guidance and will consider options after the guidance is published.

The leaseholder member reported that he recently attended a leaseholders meeting.

Some leaseholders had suggested that the Council should follow up on Survey of tenants and residents (STAR) responses if respondents waived anonymity and consented to being contacted. Members were informed that the MRC was a topical issue among leaseholders. Leaseholders sought more openness on the nature of work to be carried out on properties under the MRC programme and the related costs. It was acknowledged that trust is built over time through initiatives such as the scheduled MRC Residents' Consultation meetings.

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

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 14 March 2019, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, SG1 1HN

CHAIR