

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 14 March 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

Resident Members: Fiona Plumridge (Tenant) (Vice-Chair), Len Saunders (Tenant) and Christine Anderson (Tenant)

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

In Attendance: Neil Baker (Community Development Manager), Dennis Panter (Asset Management & Major Works Manager), Katrina Shirley (Housing Policy, Performance & Improvement Manager) and Councillor J Thomas (Portfolio Holder – Housing, Health and Older People)

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Martin-Haugh, J Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment), L Storey (Tenant) and J Thurlow (Leaseholder).

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 21 FEBRUARY 2019**

Update on actions – The Community Development Manager informed the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) that the Older People thematic area had been assigned to the Community Development Officer (South). It was confirmed that Marriotts School did not have a representative on the Youth Council. Bedwell Ward was lagging behind in terms of diversity mix of forums for young people. The Community Development Manager informed the HMAB that an update will be provided on completion of the ongoing review of diversity in groups for young people.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the HMAB meeting held on 21 February 2019 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

HRA BUSINESS PLAN Q3 UPDATE

The Housing Policy, Performance & Improvement Manager updated the HMAB on Quarter Three Business Plan update. The update covered the following:

Housing Development

- 36 homes have been delivered since the beginning of this financial year
- The contractor for Burwell Court and Ditchmore Lane is on site and both schemes are on track for delivery in Q4 2019/20
- Architectural and site preparation work is currently being completed for the North Road, Symonds Green and Shephall Way schemes
- Work is now being carried out to identify the best route for delivery of the Kenilworth scheme (236 homes, retail shops and community centre)

Housing Investment

- At the end of December 2018, 82.6% of council homes were decent, meeting the Q3 target
- Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) works were in progress at blocks in the Broadwater area (Wates) including two large sheltered schemes (Pitt Court and Gladstone Court) and in Southend Close, Albert Street and Plash Drive (Mulalley)
- Works at the “amber” Fred Millard sheltered scheme are now complete and the Silkin Court project has been agreed following consultation and is currently out to tender

Housing Management and Maintenance Service

- In just under 18 months, fifteen out of 23 projects were completed under Phase One of the Housing All Under One Roof (HAUOR) programme
- The review of the 5th tier management structure for Housing and Investment was due for completion in April 2019
- An external review on how the Council could further enhance the use of its current digital housing system has been completed
- An Electronic Document Management system, mobile digital application and Northgate Task Manager were some of the digital services that are being implemented to enhance service efficiency
- The Repairs and Voids service continues to implement an ongoing programme of improvements

HRA Investment Strategy & Savings

- The revised HRA capital programme was approved by the Executive in February 2019
- Following the announcement of the lifting of the debt cap, there is scope to convert revenue to borrowing and so increase the size of the capital programme
- The HRA 2019/20 budget was approved by Council on 30 January 2019

The Housing Policy, Performance & Improvement Manager confirmed that local authorities will be eligible for funding under the recently announced affordable homes guarantee scheme. The Assistant Director (Housing Development) will be contacting Homes England to clarify the scheme's details.

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

4 **GAS CONTRACT UPDATE**

The Asset Management & Major Works Manager provided an update on the gas contract performance. The current gas contract is now entering the final 6 months of a 48 month contract. The procurement of a new contractor is now well underway and it is planned that the new contract will start on the first of October. The contract had several problems during the early stages. This led to the implementation of an improvement plan that covered issues to be resolved, objectives, milestones and completion dates. Since the introduction of the plan, improvements such as the following have been delivered:

- Complaints responded to usually the same day. Historically not responded to
- Greater communication between SBC Admin team and Liberty Admin team
- A dedicated engineer for voids
- Winter planning in place and running smoothly
- New phone line provider and Liberty's call back feature
- PDAs to enable engineers to order parts while they are still at the address. These orders are processed by an embedded Parts Centre member of staff
- Introduction of an MOT style servicing programme through 2019
- Overall the Liberty Contact centre has continued to improve month-on-month and during the period from 24th December – 2nd January - all calls being answered within 51 seconds
- Complaints have continued to fall most months and many are not upheld or only partially upheld

The Gas Manager also updated the HMAB on the following:

- Winter Plan
- Emergency Contacts & Escalation
- Temporary Heaters
- Customer Care
- Training Requirements
- Adverse Weather
- Parts & Boiler Supplies

The Asset Management & Major Works Manager that the Council was at market engagement phase for the new contract. SBC had invited Liberty for discussions regarding the contract demobilisation plan. The current gas servicing contract did not have a provision for re-procurement. It was confirmed that the contract will be procured in line with the Council's procurement guidelines on quality and price.

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

5 **REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services) informed the HMAB that repairs are being fixed promptly and exceeding target. Voids General Needs Major Works, Voids Sheltered Major Works and Voids Sheltered performed below target during the review period. Following the transfer of the caretaking service to Stevenage Direct Services, a pilot project was now underway to schedule work and report issues via the electronic platform (Northgate). Members were informed that the Council was tracking the potential implications of Brexit. It was confirmed that the Council was reviewing the supply chain and identifying alternative suppliers to mitigate any effects of Brexit. The Assistant Director reported that there were mixed approaches to the potential implications of Brexit among suppliers to the Council. Some of the Council's suppliers were proactive and had contingency plans and other suppliers appeared not to be planning ahead. The Council was planning for a possible Brexit-related increase in the price of fuel. Members were informed that it was unlikely that Brexit will have any effect on staff supply for Stevenage Direct Services.

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

6 **HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF UPDATE**

The Housing All Under One Roof (HAUOR) update was circulated to the HMAB before the meeting. The update highlighted the following:

Phase 1 on the HAUOR programme

- Tier 4 restructure completed
- Tier 5 restructure due for completion by end of March
- Business vision agreed
- Staff cohesion continues through newsletters annual away days and quarterly sessions
- Health checks on Northgate completed
- Housing Advice, Key details and task manager modules implemented
- Housing Options and Housing supply team in place
- Mobile working for supported housing in place

Seventeen (17) projects have been agreed for Phase 2 (Jan 2019 – March 2020). The Phase 2 projects include:

- Transformation of housing advice including Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) returns to Government
- Electronic document management system goes live in March
- Northgate self-serve for customers
- Start of tier 6 restructure including area focussed approach to delivering services to customers linked into Communities and Neighbourhoods (CNM) and Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)

- Housing Older Persons Strategy
- Delivery of the Major Refurbishment Contract
- Implementation of the Customer service module
- Northgate/Keystone interface
- Service charge review
- Estate management offer in conjunction with colleagues in SDS and CNM

Four sessions have been scheduled to brief staff on the progress of the transformation project and the outcome of the tier 5 management structure. HMAB members are welcome to come along to these briefings on 20 March 2019.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the update is noted
2. That the Assistant Director provides timings for the four Housing and Investment staff sessions

7 **UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

The Portfolio Holder (Housing, Health and Older People) informed Members that the following items were considered at the March meeting of the Executive:

- Third Quarter Monitoring Revenue report 2019/20 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account
- Third Quarter Capital Monitoring report 2019/20 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account
- Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy
- Summary of the delivery of the Co-operative Neighbourhood
- Management (CNM) Programme to date and the outline plans for 2019-20 delivery moving forwards

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

8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair informed Members that he was recently appointed to the Board of Directors for Groundwork East – a community charity that works to create better places, improve people's prospects and encourage greener living and working. The Community Development Manager informed the HMAB that Groundwork was currently not involved in any of the Council's projects. It was indicated that there was scope for a partnership between SBC and Groundwork.

Members were reminded to consider nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the HMAB for the 2019/20 Municipal Year. It was indicated that regular updates were the only items on the draft agenda for the April meeting.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Chair contacts the Community Development Manager to explore partnership options between the Stevenage Borough Council and Groundwork
2. That the April meeting of the HMAB be cancelled

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 20 June 2019, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, SG1 1HN (**subject to confirmation**)

CHAIR