

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

The Board was advised of the pre-scrutiny (policy development) work that Members undertook which involved consulting with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and considering emerging policies and strategies before they are submitted to the Executive.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Members that some officers – particularly those from the health sector – were not always keen to have their work scrutinised. Some local authorities had resorted to Freedom of Information requests to get information. The Scrutiny Officer indicated that Scrutiny Committees were involved in the ongoing Housing Allocations Policy review. Members were informed that a scrutiny review had influenced a change in the Council's position regarding the causes of damp and mould in Stevenage housing stock. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Housing, Health and Older People Portfolio Holder and other portfolio holders were consulted during reviews. It was indicated that Portfolio Holders were obliged to respond to recommendations within two months of the conclusion of a review. The Board noted the principles of good scrutiny and were also advised of two high profile cases in Mid Staffs and Rotherham where scrutiny had not succeeded and the lessons learnt from these cases.

#### **4. RENT LETTERS**

The Tenancy and Income Manager, Elizabeth Ddamulira, presented the draft Rent Letters and indicated that it was a statutory requirement to send the letters to tenants annually. Members were informed that the Estate Charge had been introduced for the 2018/2019 Municipal year. It was clarified that this charge affected some tenants in new developments and in areas around Archer Road.

Members sought clarification on the format of the letters and suggested the following:

- inclusion of details of changes in monetary terms
- a comparison with charges from the previous year
- tailoring the letters to specific circumstances of the tenants, for example, sending targeted letters with references to the Department of Work and Pensions to those in need of income support only, and
- editorial changes

It was **RESOLVED:**

- That the suggestions be noted
- That Tenancy and Income Manager liaise with C Anderson with regards to editing the letters.

## **5. ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY PROJECT PLAN**

The Resident Involvement Manager briefed Members about the “Working Together – Resident and Community Engagement Strategy”. It was noted that currently Stevenage had two engagement strategies - a Housing Services Resident Involvement Strategy and a Consultation and Engagement Strategy. Members were informed that, in line with the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) programme, the Council is planning to have one council-wide strategy focussing on engaging with Stevenage residents and communities. Members were informed that the first meeting of the strategy working group was held on 22 January 2018.

It was highlighted that one of the key considerations of the strategy would be to encourage a culture where staff automatically engaged with residents as a matter of course. Members expressed concerns that such a strategy could increase workload. The Assistant Director (Direct Services) indicated that aspects of this strategy had been adopted by his unit resulting in improved communication across teams and better engagement with residents.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Resident Involvement Manager provide a short monthly briefing about the Resident and Community Engagement Strategy to the HMAB.

## **6. CHAIR’S HMAB PRESENTATION**

The Chair informed the Board that he would be presenting a briefing about the work and role of the Housing Management Advisory Board to all Members on 14 February 2018. It was noted that the All Member Briefing would be a good opportunity to highlight the work of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) and Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP). It was indicated that some Resident Members of the HMAB and CSP were interested in attending the Briefing.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Resident Involvement Manager invite the Resident Members to the Briefing.

## **7. REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Direct Services) informed the Board that the Repairs and Voids Improvement Programme was now in the second phase and a draft programme was now available. Members were informed that the programme would be presented to the HMAB after the Assistant Director’s consultations with the Housing, Health and Older People Portfolio Holder and officers from other business units.

The Assistant Director (Direct Services) informed Members that during the review of key performance indicators (KPIs), concerns had been raised about sources of information for the KPIs. As a follow up to this issue, the unit had initiated manual methods of analysing the information. This process started with Voids KPIs. Members were informed that initial assessment indicated positive performance towards target levels.

Members were informed that the unit had adopted an end-to-end case management approach that gave full responsibilities to project officers. The Assistant Director highlighted the cultural shift that focussed on transparency and greater visibility of officers. It was indicated that there had been improvements in turnaround times for voids with 27 out of 28 voids managed in December 2017 and 31 out of 35 in January 2018.

Members raised questions about voids and repairs statistics, work ethics and KPIs. In response to questions, the Assistant Director informed Members that KPIs were now linked to team and individual objectives and that he was liaising with the Portfolio Holder on the provision of accurate statistics. Members were informed that the use of several sources of information might have contributed to discrepancies in figures. The Assistant Director indicated that robust contract management had resulted in officers taking the initiative to improve delivery times for supplies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Assistant Director report to a future HMAB meeting following his review of KPIs.

## **8. FEEDBACK FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

Officers suggested that future updates could be provided by circulating the Notice of Decisions from Executive meetings. Members were informed that the 2018/2019 Housing Revenue Account rent setting and budget and the award of the Major Refurbishment Contract were some of the issues discussed at the Executive meeting of 23 January 2018.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Housing, Health and Older People Portfolio Holder provide feedback from future Executive meetings following circulation to Members of the Executive Notice of Decisions.

## **9. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Resident Involvement Manager presented the draft Terms of Reference for the Resident Led Safety Compliance Panel. Members suggested amendments to the Membership and Decision-Making sections of the Terms of Reference.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference are adopted subject to the following changes:

3.2 “Tenants and leaseholder representatives on the Panel include: The Chair of the Customer Scrutiny Panel or HMAB” to “Tenants and leaseholder representatives on the Panel include: Member of the Customer Scrutiny Panel or HMAB”

7.1 “The Panel does not have direct decision making powers, but recommendations agreed by the Panel will be fully considered by the Leader of the Council, who in turn will send a report back to the Panel on action taken against each recommendation” to “The Panel does not have direct decision making powers, but recommendations agreed by the Panel will be fully considered by the Executive, who in turn will send a report back to the Panel on action taken against each recommendation”

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date of next meeting: Thursday 22 February 2018, 1800hrs, Shimkent Room

**CHAIR**