

LANDLORD SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

28 July 2022

NOTES

Present:

Cllr Paul Rivers (Chairman)
Terry Daubney, Waverley Tenants' Panel
(Vice Chairman)
Cllr Jacquie Keen
Cllr Stephen Mulliner
Cllr John Robini
Gillian Martin, Waverley Tenants Panel

In attendance:

Councillor Paul Follows,
Chris Austin, Lucas Field Residents' Group
Dave Meadows, Waverley Tenants Panel
Sally Purcell, Waverley Tenants Panel
Rob Stratford, Waverley Tenants Panel
Simon Telling, Waverley Tenants Panel

Officers:

Annie Righton, Strategic Director
Andrew Smith, Head of Housing Delivery and Communities
Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations
Louise Cotton, Operational Support Officer (Commissioning)
Candice Keet, Senior Accountant
Jeanette Englefield, Tenant Involvement Officer
Amy Walton, Housing Graduate Management Trainee
Kisi Smith-Charlemagne, Senior Governance Officer

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absences were received from Councillor Wicks, Danielle Sleightholme and Annalisa Howson.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 30 June 2022 were agreed.

4 Financial Outturn report 2021/22 - Housing Revenue Account and Business Plan

Officers provided the Board with a report on the financial outturn (performance against budget) for the year 2021/22 for the Housing Revenue Account against

revenue and capital budget. Officers focused on areas such as housing and core capital budget underspend. Officers also highlighted risks and pressures for 2022/23 such as the cost of living, inflation and housing rents.

Board members raised questions concerning the staff shortage and queried what was being done to address the issue. The Head of Housing Operations advised the Board members that it was a housing and council-wide issue, and the Housing team was working with the HR Manager to develop a strategy to promote and advertise jobs more widely. Officers acknowledge that the staff shortage had impacted service delivery.

The Chairman sought further clarification regarding the variance in rental income. Officers informed the Board there had been challenges in forecasting the budget. Board members noted that the capital expenditure outturn was substantially lower than budget. Offices responded to the query and advised the Board members that there had been challenges delivering the programme.

5 Property Services procurement update presentation

Officers provided a presentation on procurement of contracts withing Housing and outlining the new role of the Operational Support Officer. Board members queried the timeline for noticeable improvements, the average length of the lease for council properties, and Section 20.

6 HRA Hardship Fund Update

Officers introduced a report on the HRA Hardship fund, Officers advised the Board members that this was a framework fund of £30,000 and officers had produced guidance as to who is entitled. However, the guidance required updating to allow the document to be used more widely by council officers.

The Vice-Chairman addresses the Board members and read a statement from co-opted member Danielle Sleightholme. Board members noted tenants are struggling with finances and renting, however, are reluctant to admit it and find themselves in difficulties. Members discussed the tenants on the cusp of financial difficulties and acting proactively to avoid financial hardship.

Board members discussed the low numbers of take-ups and discussed the application process. Board members also discussed advertising and raising the profile of the fund in places like food banks. Offices reminded members that the fund was only to be used as a last resort once other available funds routes had been exhausted.

7 Board terms of reference

The Chairman addressed the Board members and advised that the terms of references had been amended, he noted the increase in councillor numbers and that the Board needed to meet more often.

The Board members discussed how often Board members should be elected and agreed that this should be done on an annual basis. Councillor Follows took away a query regarding the political proportionalities.

8 Q1 Performance report

The Head of Housing Operations presented a report on the Q1 performance. Officers advised that the new maintenance contract had been challenging with 238 jobs currently overdue. Board members discussed the new Anti-Social Behaviour. Officers advised that the new antisocial behaviour officer had made a difference given advice, handling difficult cases, and supporting early intervention.

Board members queried responsive repair times. Officers responded to queries advising Board members that there was a large range of jobs. It was also noted that a large proportion of the contractor's time was spent travelling between jobs, gaining access was also another challenge to ensuring that jobs are completed promptly.

9 Co-Portfolio Holder Verbal Update on Garden waste charges

The Chairman gave a brief verbal update on the garden waste options. The Chairman noted the green waste collection service review and its approach to make the service cheaper and encourage more take-up. The Chairman referred to the discussions with council officers and highlighted the suggested options.

The Board members discussed a reduction in costs, operated as a rebate from the housing revenue. The Board members also discussed sharing green waste bins. It was noted that the re-contracting of the waste services could not take place until at least 2027 and the current subscription cost for garden waste services were a source of income for environmental services.

Members felt that shared, waste bins could be problematic and suggested larger bins. Officer noted that larger bins would require a new contract as the current waste trucks could not lift a larger bin.

10 Work programme

The work programme was noted.

11 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 29 September 2022.