

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**3 July 2018**

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**Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Clewer**

**Key Decision: No**

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#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2016 and November 2017 and comply with its Terms of Reference which requires an update to be provided to Cabinet.

Throughout this period, the Board has engaged in a range of activities to shape the service offered to residents and their families, further increase service quality via appropriate monitoring mechanisms, encourage resident engagement and protect the reputation of the council as a landlord by ensuring a robust Business Plan is implemented.

Areas focused on by the Board are detailed in the main body of the report, with the primary focus of the Housing Board being:

- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan
- Asset Management Strategy (AMS)

The Board is regularly updated about the budget position of the HRA and the implications of welfare reform and policy amendments, including the rent reduction of 1% per annum for 4 years. Members are also regularly updated about Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), with the targets for said indicators being decided between the service and a sub-group of the Board.

When considering the strategic direction of the service, and the main current and future strategic risks and actions, Board members act in such a way as to complement the council's corporate Business Plan and objectives.

There is engagement between the Housing Board and the Environment Select Committee (ESC), and the Board has a scrutiny group sitting below it comprised of volunteer residents – the Housing Assurance Panel, which recently changed its name to the Challenge and Change Group.

Reforms suggested by the Board and/or the scrutiny group, have been incorporated into our service plan monitor. Members have been involved in shaping the services' Forward Work plan.

The Board's Annual General Meeting included an overview of the year,

presented by the Chairman and an update on the budget position.

Board members operate in a fair and balanced manner, maintain their independence and make recommendations to Housing Services; the Board can also make recommendations to Cabinet; however, powers cannot and have not been conferred on the Board so as to enable it to make binding decisions, as outlined in the Paper passed by Cabinet on 22 January 2013.

The Housing Board is beginning its second cycle of 4 years, which is linked to the council's local electoral cycle.

### **Proposal**

For Cabinet to note this Annual Report.

### **Reason for Proposal**

Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to Cabinet.

**Alistair Cunningham**  
**Corporate Director**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2016 and November 2017 and comply with its Terms of Reference which requires an annual update to be provided to Cabinet.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. As part of their Away-Day's and their regular meetings, the Board set future priorities, which are constructed to complement the Council's Business Plan. In respect of the Business Plan 2017-2027, the Board contributes toward creating strong communities in Wiltshire, protecting those who are most vulnerable and being innovative and effective. There is emphasis on sustainable development, safe communities, personal wellbeing, community involvement, commercialism, people, change, digital, performance and delivering together.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

3. This report is for noting by Cabinet and provides an update on the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board. It does not require a decision to be made. The Environment Select Committee are to receive a statement from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts and Tourism at their 26 June 2018 meeting. The statement will provide a brief update to the Committee on the work of the Housing Board.

### **Background**

4. At its 22 January 2013 meeting, Cabinet resolved that it approved the setting up of a Management Board for the governance of council housing consisting of an equal number of Councillors, tenants and independents, with a recommendation that such a panel should be in place by April 2013.
5. Appointments to the Board were made in November 2013 and December 2013 and the Board held its inaugural meeting on 17 December 2013. In January 2014, the Board introduced 'Open Sessions' at the beginning of each meeting where residents could attend and put questions to Board members.

6. Board meetings are approximately held on a bi-monthly basis:
  - a) For the year 2017, meetings were scheduled and held in January, March, September and November. Meetings were not held in May and July due to appointments being linked to the local Government electoral cycle and a review of the Housing Board being undertaken.
7. The Board's Annual General Meeting was held on 27 November 2017.

### **Overview (December 2016 – November 2017)**

8. The Board did not have a meeting scheduled for December 2016.
9. Between January 2017 and March 2017, the Board considered the strategic direction of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) with particular emphasis on financial and budgetary matters, including:
  - a) The rent reduction of 1% per annum having reduced the Rental Income Budget by £0.366 million.
  - b) Increasing garage rents increased the Rental Income Budget by £0.006 million.
  - c) That the total reduction to the Rental Income Budget for 2017/18 was £0.359 million.
  - d) Increasing service charges increased the Income Budget by £0.016 million.
  - e) There was an allowance for 1% pay inflation of £0.040 million.
  - f) The amount Returned to Revenue Reserve was reduced by £0.383 million, from £0.975 million to £0.592 million.
10. Furthermore, between January 2017 and March 2017, the Board contributed toward creating, reviewing and refining the HRA Business Plan and new HRA model, in the context of the main current and future strategic risks. Short, medium and long term priorities served to strategically link the service with corporate objectives.
11. Also between January 2017 and March 2017, the Board received Budget Updates, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) data, focused attention and accountability on voids performance, and were updated around Building Maintenance Contract Procurement progress; as well as being presented with the Right to Buy Audit Report and reconfiguring Local Housing Panel arrangements to further strengthen resident engagement; Board members also enjoyed public attendance at their March meeting. The Housing Assurance Panel (HAP), which later changed its name to become the Challenge and Change Group, is comprised of volunteer residents who conduct scrutiny exercises; the Board received:
  - a) The HAP's report on 'Grounds Maintenance (particularly grass cutting)'.  
b) The Management Response to the 'Grounds Maintenance (particularly grass cutting)' report.

- c) Research findings in relation to the residents' magazine 'Housing Matters' (the Board had previously suspended making recommendations about the HAP's report on 'Housing Matters' pending further research being conducted by the service, as requested by the HAP).
  - d) The HAP's report on 'Leaseholder Involvement in Maintenance Matters and Leaseholder Handbook'.
  - e) The Management Response to the 'Leaseholder Involvement in Maintenance Matters and Leaseholder Handbook' report.
  - f) General update.
12. Participants also considered and made recommendations, between January 2017 and March 2017, on the formulation of an Asset Management Strategy (AMS) and the range of works and developing of internal tools to further this objective. The AMS had previously been selected as a strategic priority for the Board, along with the Business Plan. An independent consultant was present as part of the review of the Housing Board.
13. Throughout April 2017 and June 2017, there were no formal Board meetings. A small number of members met in April for a sub-group to set targets for the services' Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the year 2017/18, with an independent consultant also being present. Attendees were presented with an End of Year Performance Report alongside the proposed targets, some of which were amended.
14. Board members, HAP members, officers and councillors met with the consultants to inform the review. Board appointments officially terminated in line with the local Government electoral cycle. Shortly after, a new Cabinet Member and new Portfolio Holder were confirmed.
15. Between July 2017 and September 2017, the review of the Housing Board was concluded with Board members being verbally informed of the services intentions to approach the Environment Select Committee with a recommendation to continue with the Board, to continue payment and to rework the terms of reference. The Environment Select Committee was presented with the report and services' recommendations on 19 September 2017 and resolved that they supported the Board continuing, supported maintaining payment and supported reworking the terms of reference. Board members were informed, reappointed and a Board meeting arranged.
16. At its September meeting, the Board considered the outcome of the Governance Review and the views of the Environment Select Committee; a sub-group was established to rework the Terms of Reference (which met in October). Members also considered the risk register, regulatory standards compliance and fire safety; the service updated around amendments to customer services opening times. The KPI 2016/17 End of Year report was presented to all members, along with the sub-group reporting back, which included agreed targets for the year 2017/18 which were constructed to complement the Board's priorities, and the KPI outcomes for 2017/18 Q1.
17. The Board's September 2017 meeting included:

- a) A Management Update Report in respect of the HAP's 'Housing Matters' report.
- b) A Management Update Report in respect of the HAP's 'Grounds Maintenance (particularly grass cutting)' report.
- c) The HAP's 'New Ways of Working: Recruitment and Collaboration' joint report (this was the HAP's first joint scrutiny project and report, which was conducted in collaboration with Paragon Community Housing, which is now PA Housing – one of the recommendations included changing the name of the scrutiny group to the 'Challenge and Change' group to help make it more accessible and meaningful to residents).
- d) The Management Response to the 'New Ways of Working: Recruitment and Collaboration' joint report.

18. Furthermore, at their September 2017 meeting, Board members evaluated the 2016/17 End of Year Report for the HRA Budget and Housing Income, as well the position for 2017/18 Q1 and the effects of welfare reform on Wiltshire Council residents and were verbally updated about Building Maintenance Contracts.

19. In November 2017, the Board held its fourth Annual General Meeting, which included a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update and the Chairman's overview of the year. Opportunities were provided for questions to be put to the Chairman. There were no public attendees beyond the members of the Challenge and Change Group.

20. Immediately following the AGM meeting, the Board held its regular meeting, which was dedicated to 6 significant priority items:

- a) Fire safety, which included reassuring attendees, in respect of a number of properties that had been discussed, that we do not use the type of cladding involved in the tragic Grenfell Tower fire.
- b) KPIs for 2017/18 Q2 and the arrears figures including and excluding Universal Credit (impact of the waiting period).
- c) Challenge and Change Group:
  - i) Project #7 – 'Anti-Social Behaviour'.
  - ii) Management Response to the 'Anti-Social Behaviour' report.
  - iii) General update.
- d) Budget Update (2017/18 Q2).
- e) Asset Management Strategy, which included a review of the final document, as well as the Wiltshire Homes Standard, and a Year 2 Progress Report, plus verbal updates around:
  - i) Progress and actions toward realising 100% of our dwellings meeting the decent homes standard.
  - ii) Increasing satisfaction with planned maintenance.
- f) Sheltered Housing Review, which included a strategic overview of the schemes.

21. Other matters considered at the November 2017 meeting included potential changes to the pets' policy, options for the future of 6 week visits and a verbal update around Building Maintenance Contracts.

22. The Challenge and Change Group (formerly the Housing Assurance Panel) sits below the Housing Board. To date, the group has produced a number of reports:

- (a) **Project #1 – ‘Introduction to a Tenancy’ (July 2015).**  
The report was presented at the Board meeting held on 27 July 2015. The management response was presented at the Board meeting held on 5 October 2015. A management response update was presented at the Board meeting held on 25 January 2016.
- (b) **Project #2 – ‘Voids’ (October 2015).**  
The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 30 November 2015. A management response update was not required.
- (c) **Project #3 – ‘Planned Maintenance: Kitchens and Bathrooms’ (March 2016).**  
The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 21 March 2016. A management response update was presented at the Board meeting held on 5 September 2016. At the September 2017 meeting, it was agreed that a further management update report would be circulated, along with the original report. This was circulated in December 2017.
- (d) **Project #4 – ‘Housing Matters’ (June 2016).**  
The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 5 September 2016. The Board placed the recommendations on hold, pending the outcome of a residents’ survey. The findings of the research were presented to the Board on 27 March 2017 and a management response update was presented on 25 September 2017.
- (e) **Project #5 – ‘Grounds Maintenance (particularly grass cutting)’ (November 2016).**  
The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 27 March 2017. A management response update was not required.
- (f) **Check-Back #1 – Verbal Exercise (November 2016).**  
The group spoke with the appropriate officers, to establish if their recommendations had been implemented, the impact of their recommendations and to gain the feedback of officers. The group provided a verbal update to the Housing Board on 27 March 2017.
- (g) **Project #6 – ‘Leaseholder Involvement in Maintenance Matters and Leaseholder Handbook’ (March 2017).**  
The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 27 March 2017. A management response update was later provided verbally.
- (h) **Joint Project #1 – ‘New Ways of Working: Recruitment and Collaboration’ (June 2017).**

The group worked in collaboration with Paragon Community Housing's scrutiny team (now PA Housing). The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 25 September 2017. A management response update has been timetabled for January 2018. The report was formally 'launched' by the partners at a TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) regional event on 27 September 2017.

- (i) **Project #7 – 'Anti-Social Behaviour' (November 2017).**  
The report and management response were presented at the Board meeting held on 27 November 2017. A management response update has been timetabled.
- (j) **Quick Look Exercise #1 – 'Fire Safety' (November 2017).**  
The short viewpoint report has been presented to the service.

## **Priorities**

23. The Board has previously recommended to the service that the following strategic matters be prioritised, as noted in the minutes of their meeting held on 23 May 2016:

- a) "That the main 2 priorities, in respect of the Housing Revenue Account, be:
  - Asset Management Strategy.
  - Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

Furthermore, in respect of the 2 priorities, above:

- The Board endorses the service having the flexibility to utilise additional resource, as and when required, within the overall finances of the Housing Revenue Account.
- That when the first version of the Asset Management Strategy is presented, it will include proposals for resident consultation, and the full Asset Management Strategy is to be delivered over the coming 12 to 18 months."

24. Board members operate in a fair and balanced manner, maintain their independence and make recommendations to Housing Services; the Board can also make recommendations to Cabinet; however, powers cannot and have not been conferred on the Board so as to enable it to make binding decisions, as outlined in the Paper passed by Cabinet on 22 January 2013.

## **Membership**

25. In January 2017, a tenant member alerted the service to her departing the Board with immediate effect.

26. In May 2017, a councillor member was not re-elected as part of the local Government election.

27. Given the review of the Housing Board had already been timetabled, recruitment did not commence. Agreement from the Environment Select Committee was sought to commence recruitment, when the Governance Review was presented to them. This agreement was received.

28. During October and November, the vacancies were promoted, with applications received from 1 councillor and 5 tenants. Interviews were held in the week commencing 6 November 2017, with the successful applicants being informed on 13 November 2017.

### Attendance Record (December 2016 – November 2017)

29. Attendance relates to Board meetings only (that is, the figures exclude Away-Days, sub-groups, etcetera).

30. Of the 4 meetings held in 2017, attendance was:

WCHB Member	30/01	27/03	May	July	25/09	27/11	Total
Councillor Richard Clewer	✓	✓	Became Cabinet Member				2 (100%)
Councillor John F. Smale	Not Appointed		Governance Review		✓	✓	2 (100%)
Rachael Arnott (Tenant Member)	Appointed November 2017					✗	0 (0.0%)
Angela Britten (Tenant Member)	✗	✓	Governance Review		✓	✓	3 (75.0%)
Robert Chapman (Independent Member)	✓	✓	Governance Review		✓	✓	4 (100%)
Cindy Creasy (Independent Member)	✓	✗	Governance Review		✓	✓	3 (75.0%)
Councillor Brian Dalton	Appointed November 2017					✓	1 (100%)
Jacqui Evans (Independent Member)	✓	✓	Governance Review		✗	✗	2 (50.0%)
Lorraine Le-Gate (Tenant Member)	✓	✓	Governance Review		✓	✓	4 (100%)
Emma Powell (Tenant Member)	Stepped down in January 2017						N/A (N/A)
Councillor Ian Tomes	✓	✓	Not re-elected				2 (100%)
Councillor Fred Westmoreland	✓	✓	Governance Review		✓	✓	4 (100%)

31. Of the 6 meetings held in 2016, attendance was:

WCHB Member	25/01	21/03	23/05	05/09	03/10	28/11	Total

Councillor Richard Clewer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6 (100%)
Angela Britten (Tenant Member)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	4 (66.6%)
Robert Chapman (Independent Member)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6 (100%)
Cindy Creasy (Independent Member)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	5 (83.3%)
Jacqui Evans (Independent Member)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	2 (33.3%)
Lorraine Le-Gate (Tenant Member)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	4 (66.6%)
Emma Powell (Tenant Member)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	4 (66.6%)
Councillor Ian Tomes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6 (100%)
Councillor Fred Westmoreland	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5 (83.3%)

### **Safeguarding Implications**

32. There are no significant safeguarding implications associated with this report.

### **Public Health Implications**

33. There are no significant public health implications associated with this report.

### **Procurement Implications**

34. There are no significant corporate procurement implications associated with this report; although should the Board make recommendations regarding procurement of services to be delivered to residents, then this will become a consideration.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

35. All Board members operate in and treat all residents in a fair and balanced manner, maintain their independence and make recommendations to Housing Management. Board members do not represent a particular area; they represent all council residents in the county of Wiltshire and make recommendations in the best interests of all council residents in Wiltshire.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

36. There are no significant environmental or climate change implications associated with this report.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

37. Wiltshire Council's Housing Board would fail to meet the requirements of its Terms of Reference, namely to provide an Annual Report to Cabinet and potential deterioration of or missed opportunity to improve services if the

Board were not to focus their efforts on the identified priorities. This paper is only for noting.

**Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

38. Wiltshire Council's Housing Board may fail to make recommendations which improve services for residents and their families, missing an opportunity for improvement, or make recommendations which leads to a deterioration of service quality. This paper is only for noting.

39. Powers cannot and have not been conferred on the Board so as to enable it to make binding decisions, as outlined in the Paper passed by Cabinet on 22 January 2013. The Board makes recommendations to Housing Management and can make recommendations to Cabinet.

**Financial Implications**

40. There are no significant financial implications associated with this report.

**Legal Implications**

41. There are no significant legal implications associated with this report.

**Options Considered**

42. A formal report to Cabinet is required. No alternative options were considered.

**Conclusions**

43. There is increasing evidence that Wiltshire Council's Housing Board is having a positive impact on the quality of service provision to residents and their families, has itself created an additional opportunity for residents to engage with the service and shaped further engagement opportunities.

**Proposal**

44. For Cabinet to note this Annual Report.

**Reason for Proposal**

45. Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to Cabinet.

**Alan Richell (Interim Director - Housing and Commercial Development)**

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3 May 2018

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Housing Priorities and Workplan (April 2016).

Appendix 2 – Service Plan Monitor (external Excel file).

## **Background Papers**

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None.

## Appendix 1

(please note: document relates to multiple housing services, not just the council's landlord business which are highlighted in orange)  
Please also consider Appendix 2: Service Plan Monitor (external Excel file).

### Housing Priorities and Workplan (April 2016)

Priority	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Target date	Notes
1 Ensure residents are able to access a range of housing and care options to meet needs	a) New Build programme and delivery of new affordable housing to meet need I. Council house build programme	Tim Bruce	March 2018	
2 Make best use of existing housing stock in Wiltshire	a) Develop an asset management strategy for council housing stock to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Options for regeneration of The Friary (security doors)</li> <li>ii. Disposal strategy and strategy for high value stock</li> <li>iii. Sheltered housing review/remodelling proposals</li> <li>iv. Strategy for garages</li> <li>v. General stock issues e.g. Bemerton</li> <li>vi. Approach to adapted properties</li> <li>vii. Void standard</li> </ul>	Tim Bruce	March 2017	Needs to be completed within next 12 months

3 Review services to ensure they meet need, deliver good value for money and deliver good quality outcomes	a)	Review and procure planned and responsive maintenance contracts  (i) Consult with managers (ii) Agree how to involve staff & residents (iii) Clarify timeline/project plan (iv) Review policies and procedures	Janet O'Brien	September 2017	Interim options followed by long term options going forward
	b)	Review HRA Business Plan  (i) budget (ii) impact of housing & planning bill and welfare reform (iii) update policies e.g. tenancy policy (iv) Review service charges including leaseholds  (i) Review staff structure in line with agreed priorities	Nicole and Janet – along with finance	April 2017	
	c)	Explore options for delivering ongoing efficiencies and savings across HRA and general fund	All managers	April 2017	
	d)	Review of the Housing Board	James	October 2016	Looking to appoint a consultant

4 Ensure robust strategies and policies are in place supported by a robust evidence base to enable successful delivery of projects and services	a) Review and develop statutory strategies and policies (iii) Tenancy Strategy (iv) Update of policies including Debt policy to reflect legislative changes and audit requirements (v) Update of procedures to reflect changes of policy	Helen Taylor and Ian Seeckts	Review by December 2016	JC to discuss with Robin
	b) Review and consider the impact of any legislative or policy changes (i) Impact of Welfare Reform on existing Wiltshire Council tenants (ii) Response of other providers to these changes – understand the impact of this (iii) Support and options for tenants impacted by these changes (iv) Impact on Under 35s – affordability and options (v) Housing and planning bill (vi) Consideration to councils response in creating fixed term tenancies – creation of a tenancy policy	Jamie Peters (council tenants / Wiltshire Money)	September 2016	Research and reports underway. UC rollout likely in March 2017.  Welfare Reform Report With NS  UC report being drafted.
5 Implement effective systems for management of the whole	a) Ensure robust systems are in place for; (i) Risk management (ii) Information management/filing (paperless) (iii) Performance management (iv) Budget management	Janet / Nicole / Simon	April 2017	Documents to be reviewed and ready by April 2017

housing service & deliver efficiency savings	(v) Communication (vi) Data sharing			
	b) Building a strong landlord service with our residents through effective resident engagement (regulatory framework) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Work towards a quality mark for resident engagement</li> <li>(ii) Implement audit and ESC recommendations on engagement</li> <li>(iii) Revenue budget to encourage resident engagement</li> </ul>	Dot Kronda	September 2017 April 2017 December 2016	
	c) Review or service level agreement with Legal to ensure an efficient and effective legal service can be provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. HRA – efficiencies / SLA</li> <li>II. General fund process</li> </ul>	Nicole Smith	September 2016	