

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 March 2016

**Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board –
Annual Report to Cabinet**

**Cabinet member: Councillor Jonathon Seed
Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure,
Libraries and Flooding**

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2014 and November 2015 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 have included the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), including the 30 year Business Plan and the Decent Homes Standard, Asset Management, rent and service charges, council house building and resident engagement arrangements, including implementation of entirely new engagement opportunities for residents. Members revised Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the service and monitored these on a quarterly basis, received updates on the new Allocations Policy, 'Right to Buy' changes and the associated split, and considered a new Responsive Repairs Delivery Model, specifically the establishment of a Wholly Owned Subsidiary (WOS), which was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.

Investment Works programme details were considered, a suite of new policies and procedures were implemented and members approved an Income Management strategy and received a Housing Income Performance Report, whilst also completing their training and the agreed Appraisal System.

Via a working group, participants reconfigured the services' Risk Register

and ensured it was brought into line with corporate expectations, corporate guidance and the corporate Business Plan; it developed its sub-committee, the Housing Assurance Panel (HAP) with a Roles and Relationships Protocol, appointed its Chairman and updated its Terms of Reference. As the HAP is the Board's scrutiny group, the first 2 housing scrutiny projects were considered and recommendations for further improvements made. The Board is now represented by 2 members, on the Council House Building Programme Board. Engagement with a Peer Review is expected to be followed by a Wiltshire Council Overview and Scrutiny project.

Contributing to the services Annual Report to tenants and leaseholders for 2014/15 was fulfilled, and members contributed to the ongoing development of a Housing Strategy, whilst also looking at a potential restructure within housing and the council's refugee commitments. Scheme conversions were also brought to the Board for their input.

The Board's Annual General Meeting included an overview of the year, presented by the Chairman and an update on the budget position, as well as an unused question and answer session. Participants shaped complaints reporting and the development of tenancy inspections, and received an update on the effects of welfare reform on Wiltshire Council tenants.

The Board integrated the outcome of the General Election 2015, the Summer Budget 2015 and the Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Statement from November 2015, into its work and assigned 'Responding to Change', including the changing nature of Government policy, to its Away-Day, held in January 2016. As part of their Away-Day, the Board have agreed:

- In respect of the impact on high income tenants, for locally based advice sessions to be held.
- For reserves to be utilised to address the situation for the coming months, after which different options would be presented to them.
- For information relating to under-occupation and over-occupation, by bedroom size and location, to be presented.
- To use the Open Market Register (OMR) to help people to access other forms of affordable housing (as opposed to social or affordable rented housing).
- The need for a wider social housing register bringing in more people.
- Improvement of the Housing Assurance Panel (HAP – scrutiny) by adding members and involving tenants on a case-by-case basis.

- Improved focus on using the Borough Wide Group (BWG) as a consultation body and to consult residents more.
- For the service to proceed with its desktop exercise looking at the regeneration of The Friary, as soon as possible.
- To receive a completed Stock Condition Survey and a list of non-economically viable housing (in terms of long term repair and maintenance costs).

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 nearing completion of its first 4 year cycle, which is linked to the council's local electoral cycle. This provides a sensible opportunity for the service to strategically assess and review the operations of the Board, both in terms of its work and how it interacts with the Executive structure of Wiltshire Council.

The service is minded to engage external independent support, to strategically assess and review the Housing Board, evaluate our current arrangements against those considered as good practice and provide commentary on how other local authorities manage their own council housing stock.

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.

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19 January 2016

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

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**Cabinet member: Councillor Jonathon Seed
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Key Decision: No

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2014 and November 2015 and comply with its Terms of Reference which requires an update to be provided to Cabinet.

2. Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

- 2.1** As part of their Away-Day in 2014, the Board set future priorities, which were constructed to complement the Council's Business Plan.

3. Background

- 3.1** 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.
- 3.2** 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.
- 3.3** Board meetings are approximately held on a bi-monthly basis:
- a) For the year 2015, meetings were scheduled and held in January, March, May, July, September (held in October) and November.
- 3.4** The Board's Annual General Meeting was held on 30 November 2015.

4. Overview (December 2014 – November 2015)

- 4.1** The Board did not have a meeting scheduled for December 2014.
- 4.2** Between January 2015 and March 2015, the Board received a presentation giving an overview of Asset Management throughout 2014 and a Resident Engagement Update which included agreeing to fold Older Persons' Panels into Local Housing Panels as per resident feedback; it considered Affordable Housing Delivery Options and Budget Setting for Housing Services. Participants were updated on 'Right to Buy' receipts and the associated split, and revisited the Boards' objectives, particularly regarding the Responsive Repairs Delivery Model and received Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) data.
- 4.3** Furthermore, between January 2015 and March 2015, the Board were presented with the services' Risk Map, appointed a Chairman to its scrutiny sub-committee, the Housing Assurance Panel (HAP), and established a Roles and Relationships Protocol with the HAP. The Board put forward an independent member to sit alongside the Board's Chairman, on a separate Board, namely the Council House Building Programme Board. Housing Allocations provided a policy update, Investment Works programme details were presented and a Housing Services Policy Review update was received, and Board members engaged in theme based policy and procedure cohort groups. Income Management presented its strategy; rent setting definitions were confirmed; and Board members affirmed their commitment to co-operate with a proposed Peer Review and a Wiltshire Council Overview and Scrutiny project, if commenced.
- 4.4** Members also engaged in training and development, much of which was conducted alongside members of their sub-committee, the HAP, and were also asked to complete the agreed Board Appraisal process.
- 4.5** Throughout April 2015 and June 2015, Board members were presented with a Resident Engagement Update focused on the Borough Wide Group (BWG), the lettings and KPIs relating to garages, alongside the KPIs for the year 2014/15 and agreed KPIs for the year 2015/16, in accordance with their already agreed Board priorities. A Budget Update was presented and the implications of the General Election 2015 were considered. Deleting some minor property charges were agreed in principle; an update on the HAP was provided; and the Board established a working group to reconfigure the Risk Register and bring it suitably into line with corporate expectations, corporate guidance and the corporate

Business Plan. The service implemented a suite of new policies and procedures, which had been approved by Board members.

- 4.6** Between July 2015 and September 2015, the implications of the Summer Budget 2015 were considered, Housing Income presented its Performance Report for the year 2014/15 and a Budget Update was presented. Also, participants considered the KPIs for 2015/16 Q1 and received the HAP's first scrutiny project, entitled 'Introduction to a Tenancy'. Housing Allocations statistics, the reconfigured Risk Register and the services Annual Report to tenants and leaseholders for 2014/15, were all presented to members. An update on the Peer Review and potential restructure were considered and clarification was provided regarding the ending of tenancies following the death of a tenant.
- 4.7** The Boards September 2015 meeting was held in October 2015, which included amending the HAP's Terms of Reference and considering the management response to the HAP's first scrutiny project. Also, a presentation from Palmer Housing Consultants Ltd (via an attached consultant) around the Housing Strategy was received, alongside details of the Scheme Priority Ranking and an update from Housing Income. Participants were also presented with Cabinet and Cabinet Capital Assets Committee reports in relation to converting schemes, council house building and the establishment of a Wholly Owned Subsidiary (WOS). Wiltshire Council's refugee commitments were also discussed.
- 4.8** In November 2015, the Board held its second Annual General Meeting, which included a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update and the Chairman's overview of the year. Programmed into the agenda, was a question and answer session. There were no public attendees; the question and answer session was unused.
- 4.9** Additional areas covered include:
- a) Effects of welfare reform on Wiltshire Council Tenants.
 - b) Council House Building Programme.
 - c) Hard-to-lets.
 - d) Sheltered Housing Remodelling – Nadder Close, Tisbury.
 - e) Complaints Report (2015/16, H1).
 - f) Proposed Development of Tenancy Inspections.
 - g) Resident Engagement: Review of Arrangements.
 - h) Report Back on Peer Review.
 - i) 2015/16 Q2 Performance Report (KPIs).
 - j) HAP's second scrutiny project, entitled 'Voids'.
 - k) Management Response to the HAP's 'Voids' Report.

- l) HAP Update including its forward work plan and a social media recruitment campaign for January 2016.
- m) Restructure Proposals.

5. Priorities (December 2014 – November 2015)

- 5.1** November 2014 saw the first Board Away-Day entitled 'Fit For The Future' which resulted in the Board agreeing its strategic objectives for the forthcoming year (2015/16).
- 5.2** The Board's second Away-Day was held in January 2016. Entitled 'Fit For The Future – Responding to Change', the session focused on new policies from Government, including Welfare Reform. Information from the General Election 2015, the Summer Budget 2015 and the Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Statement from November 2015, were incorporated.
- 5.3** Board members were provided with presentations on and asked to consider the implications of:
- a) Housing and Planning Bill:
 - i) What is the bill and what does it contain?
 - ii) What are the welfare reforms?
 - iii) Housing Peer Challenge.
 - b) Finance and Budgets:
 - i) Rent reduction of 1% per annum for 4 years.
 - ii) What does this mean?
 - iii) Impact on income, expenditure and reserves.
 - iv) Implications for the 30 Year Business Plan.
- 5.4** As part of their Away-Day, the Board have agreed:
- a) In respect of the impact on high income tenants, for locally based advice sessions to be held.
 - b) For reserves to be utilised to address the situation for the coming months, after which different options would be presented to them.
 - c) For information relating to under-occupation and over-occupation, by bedroom size and location, to be presented.
 - d) To use the Open Market Register (OMR) to help people to access other forms of affordable housing (as opposed to social or affordable rented housing).
 - e) The need for a wider social housing register bringing in more people.

- f) Improvement of the Housing Assurance Panel (HAP – scrutiny) by adding members and involving tenants on a case-by-case basis.
- g) Improved focus on using the Borough Wide Group (BWG) as a consultation body and to consult residents more.
- h) For the service to proceed with its desktop exercise looking at the regeneration of The Friary, as soon as possible.
- i) To receive a completed Stock Condition Survey and a list of non-economically viable housing (in terms of long term repair and maintenance costs).

5.5 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.

6. Review

6.1 The Housing Board is nearing completion of its first 4 year cycle, which is linked to the council's local electoral cycle. This provides a sensible opportunity for the service to strategically assess and review the operations of the Board, both in terms of its work and how it interacts with the Executive structure of Wiltshire Council.

6.2 The service is minded to engage external independent support, to strategically assess and review the Housing Board, evaluate our current arrangements against those considered as good practice and provide commentary on how other local authorities manage their own council housing stock.

7. Safeguarding Implications

7.1 There are no significant safeguarding implications associated with this proposal.

8. Public Health Implications

8.1 There are no significant public health implications associated with this proposal.

9. Corporate Procurement Implications

9.1 There are no significant corporate procurement implications associated with this proposal; although should the Board make recommendations regarding

procurement of services to be delivered to residents, then this will become a consideration.

10. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

10.1 All Board members operate in and treat all residents in a fair and balanced manner, maintain their independence and make recommendations to Housing Services. 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.

11. Environmental and Climate Change Consideration

11.1 There are no significant environmental or climate change implications associated with this proposal.

12. Risk Assessment

12.1 Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken: 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.

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

12.3 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 Services and can make recommendations to Cabinet.

13. Financial Implications

13.1 There are no significant financial implications associated with this proposal.

14. Legal Implications

14.1 There are no significant legal implications associated with this proposal.

15. Options Considered

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

16. Conclusions

16.1 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.

17. Proposal

17.1 For Cabinet to note this Annual Report.

18. Reason for Proposal

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

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19 January 2016

Background Papers





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

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Wiltshire Council's Housing Board 2015/16 Annual Plan.


Wiltshire Council Housing Board 2015/16 Annual Plan

Action Status	
	Unassigned; Check Progress
	Not Started
	In Progress; Assigned
	Completed


ASSET MANAGEMENT


Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 -17	Due Date
▼	Develop a Maintenance Service a maintenance service and programme which is achievable and delivered; alongside a responsive, effective, customer friendly repairs service (develop an appropriate response and repairs model).	<input type="text"/>	Dave Hellier	We will encourage the building of 2,000 new affordable homes by 2017, work closely with social housing providers and invest £46 million to refurbish council housing in south Wiltshire.	31-Mar-2016
Desired Outcome	<p>Customer Outcomes: Knowledge that Wiltshire Council's Housing Management service is providing value for money and investing in either existing sustainable stock or reinvesting in building new homes</p> <p>Housing Management Outcomes: Best use of financial and property assets assured; Robust stock data maintained to enable us to forecast accurate programme to maintain high performing stock.</p>				
Notes	Dave Hellier				

BUDGETING


Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 -17	Due Date
	To be financially robust and secure.	<input data-bbox="1296 339 1440 387" type="text"/>	Heads of Service	We will work with partners to support people affected by welfare reform, and through employment reduce the number of people on the benefits system in Wiltshire – we will work with the Department of Work and Pensions to support claimants to make the transition from existing structures to Universal Credit.	31-Mar-2016
Desired Outcome	Customer Outcomes: Service efficiencies; Value for Money (VfM) for their rent and service charges Housing Management Outcomes: Efficient service; Compliance with VfM regulatory standard; improved financial performance				
Notes	Head of service - No adverse variances in management accounts.				

DEVELOPMENT


Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 -17	Due Date
	Build more Wiltshire Council homes for Wiltshire residents (based on local requirements).	<input type="text"/>	James Cawley/Janet O'Brien	Invest to refurbish council housing and encourage the development of new affordable homes, including supported living	31-Mar-2016
Desired Outcome	<p>Customer Outcomes: New and improved homes, issues addressed</p> <p>Housing Management Outcomes: Improved products (lower cost / higher quality) - inform future - products of choice. Survey for tenants of new build properties which incorporates questions relating to the property in terms of quality, usability, design and longevity. The responses will be used to inform our decisions regarding future schemes. It also highlights any management issues that may have emerged over the period since occupation.</p>				
Notes	Janet O'Brien -				


Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 - 17	Due Date
	Develop understanding the effects of building components & technology in new homes	<input type="text"/>	Janet O'Brien	Invest to refurbish council housing and encourage the development of new affordable homes, including supported living	31-Mar-2015
Desired Outcome	<p>Customer Outcomes: Low maintenance components – attractive homes, desirable – choose to stay in their homes</p> <p>Housing Management Outcomes: Better specification leading to lower maintenance costs – longevity of schemes</p>				
Notes	Janet O'Brien -				

REPAIRS


Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 - 17	Due Date
	Ensure Repairs Panel have meaningful input into service improvement	<input data-bbox="1279 459 1426 507" type="text"/>	Dave Hellier	People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them	31-Mar-2016
Desired Outcome	Customer Outcomes: More involvement and ownership by panel; a service that meets residents needs more fully Housing Management Outcomes: Improved service delivery. Better satisfaction levels				
Notes	Dave Hellier -				

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 - 17	Due Date
	Develop the role of the Housing Assurance Panel	<input type="text"/>	WCHB	Creating stronger and more resilient communities People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decision that affect them	31-Mar-2016
Desired Outcome	Customer Outcomes: Residents receive training to do the job and will have more direct input into service improvements Housing Management Outcomes: Services are scrutinised from an objective resident perspective and constructive ideas for improvement identified;				
Notes	Ian Seekts – The 11 member Panel is yet to be recruited to. Due to insufficient applications following advert. The posts have been re-advertised				

Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 -17	Due Date
	Better engage with residents to deliver a personalised approachable service (yearly or bi-annual contact).	<input type="text"/>	Dot Kronda	Creating stronger and more resilient communities	31-Mar- 2016
Desired Outcome	Customer Outcomes: Residents are able to access a greater range of services with less barriers Housing Management Outcomes: Providing services that are inclusive and have taken equality impacts into account				
Notes	Dot Kronda -				

RISK MANAGEMENT

Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 - 17	Due Date
	Develop risk management matrix for the service	<input data-bbox="1279 347 1424 387" type="text"/>	Heads of Service	We will develop an innovation strategy which promotes a culture that welcomes and implements innovative ideas – we will make sure we maintain our position at the cutting edge of local government thinking and encourages staff to be innovative and consider radical solutions that will help with the challenges we face. We will introduce a clear process for identifying and implementing new ways of doing things	31-Mar-2016
Desired Outcome	Customer Outcomes: Should lead to better services and less variance; future proofing of services Housing Management Outcomes: Wider service awareness, buy-in and mitigation of risks. Understanding risks, including staff and customers				
Notes	Heads of Service – Risk Map to be presented to January Board Meeting, following agreement staff will be updated as appropriate and training arranged.				