

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

16 March 2021

Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism, Housing and Communities

Key Decision: Non Key

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2019 and November 2020 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, and Asset Management Plan (AMP).

Key achievements of the Housing Board over the past 12 months are presented in 5 groups (additional details are provided in the main report; non-exhaustive list): Pandemic Response; Products; Services; Approach; and, Challenges and Opportunities.

The Board is regularly updated about the budget position of the HRA and the implications of COVID-19 on rental income, along with welfare reform and policy amendments. Members are also regularly updated about Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), with the targets for said indicators being decided between the service and a sub-committee 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 Challenge and Change Group.

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 in its second cycle of 4 years, which is linked to the council's local electoral cycle.

Proposal(s)

For Cabinet to note this Annual Report.

Reason for Proposal(s)

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

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

16 March 2021

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Purpose of Report

1. To update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2019 and November 2020 and comply with its Terms of Reference which requires an update to be provided to Cabinet.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. As part of their Away-Day's, regular meetings and sub-committee 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 Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Housing, presented this report to the Environment Select Committee (ESC) Chairman and Vice-Chairman in a briefing on 28 January 2021.

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. In October 2019, the Board introduced 3 sub-committees:

- a) Development and Investment ('Place') sub-committee
- b) Finance and Policy ('Pounds') sub-committee
- c) Performance and Risk ('People') sub-committee

6. Board meetings are approximately held on a bi-monthly basis:

- a) For the year 2020, meetings were scheduled and held in January, May, July (held in August), September and November. A meeting was scheduled for March, which was later cancelled.

7. Sub-committee meetings are held on an ad-hoc basis:

- a) For the year 2020, the Development and Investment ('Place') sub-committee met in June and November.
- b) For the year 2020, the Finance and Policy ('Pounds') sub-committee met in January, July and October.
- c) For the year 2020, the Performance and Risk ('People') sub-committee met in October.

8. The Board's Annual General Meeting was held on 25 November 2020.

Key Achievements of the Housing Board over the past 12 months (please note: this is an overview rather than an exhaustive list)

9. Pandemic Response

- a) Response to COVID-19
 - i) Welfare calls to residents
 - ii) Officers moved to remote working
 - iii) Emergency repairs continued
 - iv) Non-emergency repairs backlog cleared
- b) Digital Resident Engagement
 - i) Pre-recorded Estate Inspections
 - ii) Virtual Scrutiny
- c) Business and Jobs Focus
 - i) Safeguarding rental income
- d) Provision for Bad Debts
 - i) Extra £270 thousand

10. Products

- a) Refurbishments and Planned Maintenance

as at 1 Nov 2020	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 YTD	2020/21 Predicted
Kitchens	254	200	63	153

Bathrooms	76	122	15	100
Windows (number of properties)	184	237	41	185
Communal Doors	2	18	0	23
External Doors	147	184	25	59

- b) In-house Grounds Maintenance contract
- c) Moving HRA stock to EPC B
- d) New homes development standard

11. Services

- a) Key Performance Indicator(s)
 - i) Proposed targets for 2020/21
 - ii) End of Year Report
 - iii) Complaints and Compliments Report
 - iv) 2019/20 Targets Met: 5
 - v) 2019/20 Targets Missed: 5

KPIs for 2020/21 Q2 are attached at Appendix A.

- b) STAR Survey
- c) New iHousing portal
- d) New Adaptations Policy
 - i) No resident contribution toward first £6 thousand of adaptations

12. Approach

- a) Sub-Committees
 - i) Development and Investment ('Place')
 - a. Garages
 - b. Accommodation for Older People – Specification and Consultation
 - c. Moving all HRA stock to EPC B
 - ii) Finance and Policy ('Pounds')
 - a. Provision for Bad Debts – extra £270 thousand
 - b. Roads and paths surveys – £100 thousand
 - iii) Performance and Risk ('People')
 - a. Voids Standard – leaving carpets
 - b. Named person for incoming residents and work to be done

- c. Survey Review to be started
- b) Challenge and Change Group
 - i) Sheltered Housing Service Charges
 - ii) Moved to remote working
 - iii) Complaints
 - iv) Potential joint working with GreenSquare and Abri
- c) Small Improvement Bid(s)
 - i) Delivering 2019/20
 - ii) Bids received for 2020/21
 - iii) Ongoing monies for future

13. Challenges and Opportunities

- a) Remaining competitive
 - i) Being more commercial
 - ii) Universal Credit / Welfare Reform
 - iii) Stone Circle Housing Company / Development Company
- b) Improving efficiency
 - i) Investment in and agreed enlargement of the DLO
 - ii) Making better use of our stock
- c) Evolving environment
 - i) Public sector spending
 - ii) Housing White Paper
- d) Increasing engagement with customers
 - i) Ageing population
 - ii) Empowering customers
- e) Promoting shift to digital channels
 - i) Informing decisions
- f) Development opportunities
 - i) Lifting of the borrowing cap

Priorities

14. 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 [Plan].
 - 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 [Plan] is presented, it will include proposals for resident consultation, and the full Asset Management [Plan] is to be delivered over the coming 12 to 18 months.”

15. 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 and Attendance Record (December 2019 – November 2020)

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

17. Of the 5 meetings held in 2020, attendance was:

WCHB Member	29/01	N/A	28/05	03/08	23/09	25/11	Total
Councillor Richard Clewer	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	5 (100%)
Rachael Arnott (Tenant Member)	✓	N/A	✗	✓	✓	✓	4 (80%)
Angela Britten (Tenant Member)	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✗	✓	4 (80%)
Robert Chapman (Independent Member)	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	5 (100%)
Cindy Creasy (Independent Member)	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	5 (100%)
Councillor Brian Dalton	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	5 (100%)
Jacqui Evans (Independent Member)	✗	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 (80%)
Lorraine Le-Gate (Tenant Member)	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✗	✓	4 (80%)
Councillor Fred Westmoreland	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	5 (100%)

Sub-Committee Membership

18. Whilst all members are able to attend any or all of the sub-committees, membership of the sub-committees is as follows:

Housing Board member	Development and Investment ('Place')	Finance and Policy ('Pounds')	Performance and Risk ('People')
Rachael Arnott	✗	✗	✓
Angela Britten	✓	✗	✗
Robert Chapman	✓	✓	✗
Councillor Richard Clewer	✓	✓	✓
Cindy Creasy	✗	✓	✗
Councillor Brian Dalton	✓	✓	✗
Jacqui Evans	✓	✗	✓
Lorraine Le-Gate	✓	✓	✓
Councillor Fred Westmoreland	✓	✗	✓

Safeguarding Implications

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

Public Health Implications

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

Procurement Implications

21. 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

22. 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

23. 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

24. 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

25. 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.

26. 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

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

Legal Implications

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

Options Considered

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

Conclusions

30. 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

31. For Cabinet to note this Annual Report.

Reason for Proposal

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

Simon Hendey (Director - Housing and Commercial)

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14 December 2020

Appendices

Appendix A – Key Performance Indicators (2020/21 Q2).

Background Papers

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

None.