

## Statement for Environment Select Committee

Last year saw a few changes after our local election. Councillor Chuck Berry became the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Councillor John F. Smale was appointed as the Portfolio Holder for Housing Stock.

This has now changed. As I was previously the Portfolio Holder for Housing, I was thrilled to have my Cabinet Member duties expanded to incorporate housing – I am now the Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism. Housing is vital to me and so in June, I took direct responsibility for the Housing Board by becoming its Chairman.

This has been an exciting period of change and I am delighted to say that we have all quickly settled into having a tremendous working relationship, especially with officers. Together, we are all really looking forward to continuing to steer the service through the challenges that we face together. I would like to thank Chuck and John for their great work and I am determined to build on their success.

I will shortly be presenting the Board's Annual Report to Cabinet which will cover activities between December 2016 and November 2017. 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.

The primary focus of the Housing Board is as follows:

- 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 Councillor John F. Smale (former Chairman of the Housing Board). I have attached a copy of this presentation for your information.

Board members operate in a fair and balanced manner, maintain their independence and 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.

Service standards are continuing to improve; challenging objectives are continuing to be delivered; residents and their families remain at the heart of everything the service is doing. This has been achieved against a difficult backdrop and continuously evolving environment.

There were a few changes to the leadership team throughout the year. James Cawley departed the Council and Alan Richell took over as Interim Director. Simon Hendeley will shortly take over as the permanent Director.

I shall finish this statement by thanking all of our staff for their commitment along with residents and their families for working in partnership with the service – it is this fantastic spirit of partnership working which enables us to deliver even better services for all residents and their families.

Councillor Richard Clewer  
Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism