

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

17 March 2015

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

**Cabinet member: Councillor Jonathon Seed
Cabinet Member for Housing (exc. Strategic 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 2013 and November 2014 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 'open' sessions, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), including the 30 year Business Plan and the Decent Homes Standard, rent and service charges, council house building and resident engagement arrangements, including a full review conducted by independent consultants, which lead to an overhaul of all arrangements. Members have also set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the service and monitored these on a quarterly basis, received updates on the new Allocations Policy and Contract Management arrangements, ensured changes to Right to Buy and Anti-social Behaviour rules have been appropriately disseminated and placed all policies and procedures under review. The Board also took the view that training and development was appropriate, partook in the production of a Pre-Tenancy Guide and integrated the findings of a survey of residents into its plans; it also considered the merits of demolishing some garages and has been updated on the investment works programme and initiated a greater interest in the response and repairs element of the service.

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 a question and answer session.

As part of their Away-Day, the Board have set future priorities:

- Asset Management – developing the maintenance service, including recommending an appropriate model, encouraging building, and ensuring best use of financial and property assets is assured, and robust stock data is held;
- Budgeting – to be financially robust and secure;
- Development – building more council homes and understanding the effects of building components and technology;
- Repairs – ensure meaningful input into service improvement;
- Resident Engagement – develop the role of the Housing Assurance Panel (scrutiny) and better engage with residents to deliver a personalised service via yearly or bi-annual contact;
- Risk Management – development of a risk management matrix for the service.

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.

Proposal(s)

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.

Maggie Rae
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

17 March 2015

**Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board –
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**Cabinet member: Councillor Jonathon Seed
Cabinet Member for Housing (exc. Strategic Housing),
Leisure, Libraries and Flooding**

Key Decision: No

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2013 and November 2014 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, the Board have set future priorities, which have been 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 where the main item of discussion was the Terms of Reference.
- 3.3** Board meetings are approximately held on a bi-monthly basis:
- a) For the year 2014, meetings were scheduled and held in January, March, May (held in June), July, September and November.
- 3.4** The Board's Annual General Meeting was held on 24 November 2014.

4. Overview (December 2013 – November 2014)

- 4.1** At its inaugural meeting in December 2013 the Board focused solely on and agreed its terms of reference. In January 2014 the Board introduced 'Open Sessions' at the beginning of each meeting where tenants could attend and put questions to Board members.
- 4.2** Between March 2014 and May 2014 a working group of the Board met to consider and agree the Key Performance Indicators for the service for the 2014/15 financial year. Additionally they received a presentation from Selwood Housing, a presentation from the previous Housing Scrutiny Panel on their completed scrutiny of Customer Services within the housing management service and a presentation on the new Allocations Policy.
- 4.3** The Board also received, considered and agreed the draft HRA Business Plan and the outcome of the comprehensive review of tenant participation.
- 4.4** At their meeting in May 2014 (held in June 2014) the Board received the following and discussed:
- a) Contract Management (presentation).
 - b) The completed Housing Revenue Account – Business Plan.
 - c) Feedback from tenants on the Tenant Participation Review.
 - d) Council House Building Programme.
 - e) Resident Engagement Strategy agreed.
- 4.5** Between July 2014 and September 2014 the Board agreed a Board Appraisal process to commence in April 2015, together with a Training and Development Plan.
- 4.6** A Pre-Tenancy Guide was agreed and details on the Right to Buy changes were considered as well as the first quarter Key Performance Indicators.
- 4.7** In August 2014 a working group of the Board met with the Head of Asset Management and managers to better understand the Response and Repairs processes and technology and discuss current and potential arrangements for delivering an improved repairs service.

5. Priorities (December 2014 – November 2015)

- 5.1** November 2014 saw the first Board Away-Day entitled 'Fit For The Future' where members considered the likely impact of the 2015 General Election on housing following which group activity resulted in agreement on their strategic objectives for the forthcoming year (2015/16) as set out in Appendix 1.

5.2 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. Safeguarding Implications

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

7. Public Health Implications

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

8. Corporate Procurement Implications

8.1 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.

9. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

9.1 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.

10. Environmental and Climate Change Consideration

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

11. Risk Assessment

11.1 **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.

11.2 Risk 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 lead to a deterioration of service quality.

11.3 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.

12. Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications associated with this proposal.

13. Legal Implications

There are no significant legal implications associated with this proposal.

14. Options Considered

It was considered that a presentation could be given to Cabinet, summarising the work of the Board over the applicable year, as opposed to a formal written report.

15. Conclusions

15.1 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.

16. Proposal

16.1 For Cabinet to note this Annual Report.

17. Reason for Proposal

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

James Cawley
Associate Director – Adult Care Commission, Safeguarding and Housing

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Date of report: 25 February 2015

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 data-bbox="1202 352 1355 392" 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	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				
Notes	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. Dave Hellier				

BUDGETING


Status	Action	Progress	Managed By	Business Plan 2013 -17	Due Date
	To be financially robust and secure.	<input data-bbox="1301 336 1440 384" 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	Customer Outcomes: New and improved homes, issues addressed 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.				
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	Customer Outcomes: Low maintenance components – attractive homes, desirable – choose to stay in their homes Housing Management Outcomes: Better specification leading to lower maintenance costs – longevity of schemes				
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 343 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.				