

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

12 October 2021

Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report

Cabinet Member: Cllr Phil Alford Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets and Asset Transfer

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 2020 and September 2021.

Areas focused on by the Board are detailed in the main body of the report, with the primary focus of the Housing Board being to ensure that a prudent Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan is being implemented.

Key achievements of the Housing Board over the past 12 months are presented in 5 groups (additional details are provided in the main report: Pandemic Response; Planned Investment in Homes; Services Performance; Approach; and Challenges and Opportunities.

The Board is regularly updated about the budget position of the HRA and the implications of COVID-19. Members are also regularly updated about Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), with the targets for said indicators being set between the service and a sub-committee of the Board.

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.

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

Proposal(s)

For Cabinet to:

- 1) Note this Annual Report.
- 2) Agree the proposed changes to the Housing Board's Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendix A.

Reason for Proposal(s)

Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to Cabinet and modernising the Housing Board's terms of reference requires Cabinet agreement.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

12 October 2021

Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report

Cabinet Member: Cllr Phil Alford Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets and Asset Transfer

Key Decision: Non Key

Purpose of Report

1. To update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between December 2020 and September 2021, to comply with its Terms of Reference which requires an update to be provided to Cabinet and to refresh its remit and rules.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. This report supports the draft Business Plan Principles 2022 – 2032 agreed by Cabinet on 27 September 2021, in particular 'We have vibrant, well-connected communities', 'We ensure decisions are evidence-based', 'We live well together', 'We have the right housing', 'We take responsibility for the environment' and 'We are on the path to carbon neutral (net zero)', and more around supporting vulnerable customers and supporting the local economy.

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 requires a decision to be made to change the terms of reference. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets and Asset Transfer, presented this report to the Environment Select Committee (ESC) Chairman and Vice-Chairman in a briefing on 8 October 2021.

Background

4. Housing Board appointments terminated in line with the local Government electoral cycle in May 2021.
5. Following the provision of information events, advertisements were placed to facilitate recruitment of new Housing Board members. Applicants were interviewed by the Cabinet member for Housing and officers.
6. Appointments were made between late May 2021 and early July 2021.

7. Two previous Housing Board members were appointed to the current Board without going through the interview process which was allowed under the existing Terms of Reference. This report proposes a change to ensure all appointments are subject to an interview.

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

8. Pandemic Response

- a) Response to COVID-19
 - i) Welfare calls to residents, where required
 - ii) Officers continued working remotely
 - iii) Emergency repairs continued
 - iv) Non-emergency repairs backlog cleared
- b) Digital Resident Engagement
 - i) Estate Inspections
 - ii) Virtual Scrutiny
 - iii) General online engagement sessions

9. Planned Investment in Homes

- a) Refurbishments and Planned Maintenance
- b) Housing Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP) (moving Housing Revenue Account stock to Energy Performance Certificate B)
 - i) The council was successful in being awarded funding of £500 thousand from the Green Homes Grant for works on 100 properties. We have carried out all of our 100 retrofit assessments and pre works EPC's. All works have been issued out to our partnership contractors. We have commenced works on 20 properties with 5 of those awaiting quality assessments and sign-off. The remaining properties are being programmed with more commencing each week. Like other registered providers in Phase 1B, we have been given an extension from end of September 2021 to end of March 2022 to complete all works, although we are hopeful for a pre-Christmas completion. The council is already getting positive feedback of electrical utility savings from those tenants with smart meters.
- c) Council House Build Programme and off-site manufacture via Modern Method of Construction (MMC)
 - i) Profiled Programme expenditure

Phase	HRA Business Plan No. of Units (agreed position)	HRA Business Plan approved figures
2	28	£5,773,788
3.1	91	£21,950,972
3.2	98	£20,446,014
3.3	100	£20,000,000
3.4	100	£20,000,000

- The Council house build programme was discussed at the Development and Investment ('Place') Sub-Committee and recommended to Housing Board, leading to the recommended programme which was agreed at Cabinet – July 2021.

ii) Breakdown of Programme by delivery type

Phase	Purchasing	S106	New Build
2	17	6	5
3.1	8	18	78
3.2	11	34	53
3.3		22	77
3.4			90
	36	80	303

- New build sites can fall in and out of the programme of deliver less units as due diligence takes place.
- This currently represents a split of 28% acquisitions and 72% new build.
- The original intention was to see a 60/40 split in favour of new build.

iii) MMC 3 Year procurement process

- Working in partnership with Magna Housing Association (Dorset), Sedgemoor District Council (Somerset) and South West Procurement Alliance to aggregate our demand.
- Collectively pool our construction needs to drive down costs and seek competitive tenders.
- By working together, we are saving costs on design and we are sharing good practice and absorbing learning already achieved with neighbouring housing providers.

10. Services Performance

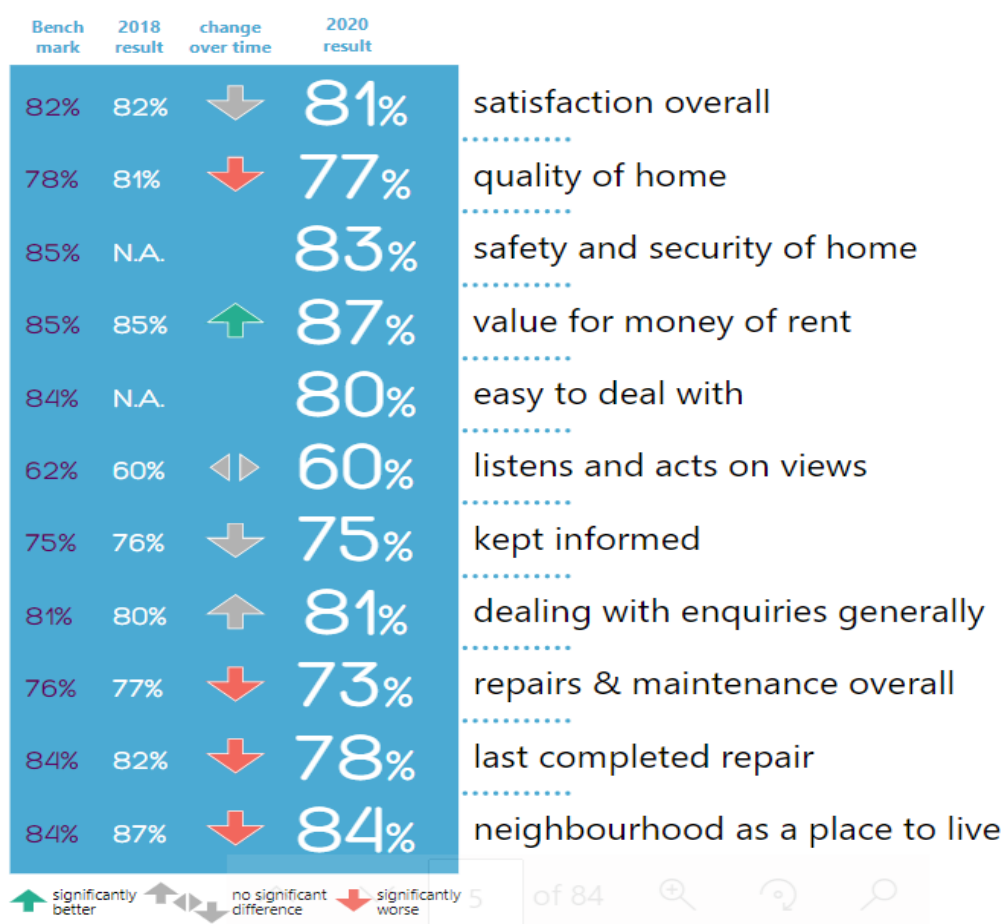
a) Key Performance Indicator(s)

- i) Proposed targets for 2020/21
- ii) End of Year Report
- iii) Complaints and Compliments Report

KPIs for 2021/22 Q2 are attached at Appendix B.

b) STAR Survey

- i) The Executive Summary is replicated below (STAR Tenancy Satisfaction Survey 2020, page 3):



- ii) Report outcomes were presented to the Housing Board.
- iii) It was agreed that focus groups would be held (online) to further understand what the best solutions would be.
- iv) The Performance and Risk ('People') Sub-Committee will be developing an action plan.

c) iHousing portal

- i) More residents are signed up to use our digital option.

Former iHousing system (up to November 2020)	Current iHousing system (from November 2020)
900	1,900

approximate registered users which included inactive and never used accounts	approximate registered users which is growing daily, especially when we send mass email shots, we also email new tenants after 1 week, 6 weeks and 4 months, if they have not registered
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- ii) More efficient and positive outcomes for customers.
- d) Resident Engagement Plan
 - i) The Housing Board reviewed the Resident Engagement Plan.
 - ii) The Housing Board extended the Resident Engagement Plan for a further year, as some elements had to be put on hold during the pandemic.

11. Upcoming areas of work

- a) Upcoming areas of work for the Sub-Committees includes:
 - i) Development and Investment ('Place')
 - a. Housing Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP)
 - b. Council House Build Programme
 - c. Sheltered Housing Refurbishments
 - d. Sheltered Housing Review
 - ii) Finance and Policy ('Pounds')
 - a. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan – including budget setting and rent setting
 - iii) Performance and Risk ('People')
 - a. STAR Survey – Action Plan
 - b. Risk Register
 - c. Key Performance Indicators – setting and benchmarking
- b) Challenge and Change Group
 - i) Continued remote working
 - ii) Decant Policy
 - iii) Contributing toward council wide review of anti-social behaviour, via a sub-group of the Task and Finish Group (including joint working with GreenSquareAccord)
- c) Small Improvement Bid(s)
 - i) 12 bids received for 2021/22
 - ii) Ongoing monies for future years
 - iii) Moved to rolling bids every 6 months rather than annual cycle to further increase satisfaction with the scheme

12. Priorities and Service Objectives

- a) Housing Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP) – Climate Change
- b) Council Housing Build Programme
- c) Review of Neighbourhood Services

13. Membership and Attendance Record (December 2020 – October 2021)

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

15. Of the 4 meetings held thus far in 2021, attendance was:

WCHB Member	27/01	31/03	N/A	21/07	29/09	Total
Councillor Phil Alford	Not a member		N/A	✓	✓	2 (100%)
Rachael Arnott (Tenant Member)	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✗	3 (75%)
Angela Britten (Tenant Member)	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (100%)
Councillor Richard Britton	Not a member		N/A	✓	✓	2 (100%)
Councillor Richard Clewer	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (100%)
Robert Chapman (Independent Member)	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (100%)
Cindy Creasy (Independent Member)	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (100%)
Councillor Brian Dalton	✓	✗	N/A	✓	✓	3 (75%)
Cris David (Tenant Member)	Not a member		N/A	✓	✓	2 (100%)
Melissa Davies (Tenant Member)	Not a member		N/A	✓	✓	2 (100%)
Kevin Ellis-Brush (Independent Member)	Not a member		N/A	✗	✓	1 (50%)
Jacqui Evans (Independent Member)	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (80%)
Lorraine Le-Gate (Tenant Member)	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (80%)
Glenn Loftus (Independent Member)	Not a member		N/A	✓	✓	2 (100%)
Simon Maggs (Independent Member)	Not a member		N/A	✓	✓	2 (100%)
Councillor Fred Westmoreland	✓	✓	Term of office expired			2 (100%)

16. Sub-Committee Membership

17. 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')
Councillor Phil Alford	x	✓	✓
Rachael Arnott	✓	x	✓
Councillor Richard Britton	x	✓	x
Councillor Brian Dalton	✓	x	x
Cris David	✓	✓	✓
Melissa Davies	x	✓	x
Kevin Ellis-Brush	x	✓	x
Glenn Loftus	✓	x	✓
Simon Maggs	✓	x	x

18. Changing the Terms of Reference

19. Appendix A includes the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference.

20. The term limit and associated reappointment conditions are supported so that the council can ensure that the Housing Board operates by:

- a) Maximising the opportunity to work with talented members.
- b) Provides greater flexibility over appointments which can assist around equality and diversity.
- c) Ensures fresh perspectives are brought forward to challenge officers in the most effective way possible, which mitigates against the risk of losing expertise.
- d) Create an option to allow for rotating committee work.
- e) Creating a more dynamic and responsive Board which is even better placed to respond to the continually changing environment, particularly with the future challenges around implementing reforms flowing from the Social Housing White Paper.

Safeguarding Implications

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

Public Health Implications

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

Procurement Implications

23. 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

24. 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. Over the coming 4 years, the service will be working toward Housing Board membership better reflecting council house residents, in respect of the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act. Specific work will be undertaken to encourage membership of the Housing Board to better reflect our resident population.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

25. 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

26. Wiltshire Council's Housing Board would fail to meet the requirements of its Terms of Reference, namely to provide an Annual Report to Cabinet.

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

27. Whilst there is a risk that there may not be any applicants for vacant posts, recent experience demonstrates that there was a wealth of applicants for member types (councillor, independent or tenant). We will continue with the same recruitment approach.

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Options Considered

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

Conclusions

31. 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

32. For Cabinet to:

- 1) Note this Annual Report.
- 2) Agree the proposed changes to the Housing Board's Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendix A.

Reason for Proposal

33. Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to Cabinet and modernising the Housing Board's operations requires Cabinet agreement.

Simon Hendey (Director - Housing and Commercial Development)

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4 October 2021

Appendices

Appendix A – DRAFT Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference.

Appendix B – Key Performance Indicators (2021/22 Q2).

Background Papers

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

None.