

Report to: Housing Review Board



Date of Meeting 15th June 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Housing Review Board (HRB) – Induction briefing

Report summary:

This report provides an introduction to the work of the Housing Review Board and is intended for new members of the Board, and a reminder for existing members. The report is a reminder of Housing Service priorities and the remit of the Housing Review Board. It is intended to help the Board focus on key activities and the areas of service that matter to tenants and service users.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

To use the contents of the report as part of the induction process for new Board members.

Reason for recommendation:

To assist new Board members play an active and effective part in the business of the Housing Review Board.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☒ Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- ☐ Economy and Assets
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; [Click here](#) to enter text on risk considerations relating to your report.

Links to background information .

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ Better homes and communities for all
 - ☒ A greener East Devon
 - ☐ A resilient economy
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1. Background and purpose of the Housing Review Board

1.1 The **purpose** of the Housing Review Board is to **oversee and steer the Council's housing landlord activities**.

- We are a local housing authority and a Registered Provider so have a series of legal responsibilities for housing, including those relating to homelessness; housing advice; housing register; housing strategy; and landlord services. We also run a number of discretionary services such as community development and Home Safeguard.
- Tenant and other HRB members play a key role in ensuring that we meet our responsibilities and perform our duties.
- Constitutionally it operates like an Overview and Scrutiny committee.
- Many Councils have transferred their housing stock and their landlord responsibilities to a housing association. For example, in Devon it is just us Exeter and Mid Devon that have retained their housing.
- We have housing as a corporate priority (Better Home and Communities for all) and have an aspiration of promoting excellent customer service.
- Establishing the HRB was innovative at the time and required an amendment to the Councils Constitution and establishing a co-option scheme to get tenants on the Board.
- The Board is involved in setting strategy, policy and procedure – direction of travel for landlord services.
- The HRB provides a mechanism to involve tenants in decisions affecting the management of their homes.
- HRB has a key role in driving continuous improvement.
- HRB oversees and monitors performance.
- HRB is involved in assessing and agreeing new housing and community development initiatives.
- Tenant members need to represent tenants and not personal interests.

1.2 The Housing Review Board was established in 2006 following our involvement in a national housing stock appraisal exercise. It was intended to replicate a housing association board translated into a local authority context. We were amongst the first in the country to establish this arrangement.

1.3 The **purpose** of the Housing Review Board is in summary to:

- Consider matters relating to the council's landlord and housing management functions;

- Advise the Cabinet on housing policy and operational practice, where this affects the council's tenants and leaseholders;
- Keep under review the housing stock options appraisal and monitor the conditions which will influence the future arrangements for the ownership and management of the council's housing stock;
- Promote good practice and monitor service delivery;
- Examine subjects and issues as directed by the Cabinet.

Full details of the Housing Review Board are set out in the constitution.

2. Terms of reference

2.1 Housing Review Board (Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Membership: The Housing Review Board will consist of **5 Council Member representatives; 5 tenant and leaseholder representatives; and 2 independent community representatives**. The non-councillor members will be co-opted members and shall have the right to vote.

Meetings: 5 times per year (or more frequently as required).

Quorum: 4 committee members.

2.2 Appointments:

Council shall appoint the Chairman. The Board will elect its own vice chairman.

Council Members and co-opted members on the Board will be appointed at the annual Council meeting.

Tenant and leaseholder representatives on the Board will initially be selected by interview (unless there is no need because the number of candidates equals the number of places) and serve a four year term. Should a vacancy occur during the four year term, the unsuccessful candidate who received the highest score in the last interview, within the previous six months, will normally be offered the appointment. All tenant and leaseholder appointments are subject to Council approval.

Normally non-councillor Board members will serve for a maximum of eight years, subject to annual reappointment by the Council, with the objective that every four years one quarter of the non-councillor members will stand down.

2.3 Role and purpose:

As previously stated the Housing Review Board is one of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and will consider matters relating to the Council's landlord and housing management functions. The Board will advise the Council's Cabinet on housing policy and operational practice, where this affects the Council's tenants and leaseholders.

The Board will keep under review the housing stock options appraisal and monitor the conditions which will influence the future arrangements for the ownership and management of the Council's housing stock.

Council officers and others, where appropriate, will support the work of the Board.

3. Aim and purpose for Housing Services:

3.1 In Housing we aim to secure - ***A decent home for all.***

We have also adopted the following purposes where we have undertaken Systems Thinking reviews:

- *To match the right people with the right home (voids & allocations).*
- *Do the right repair at the right time, get it right first time, and stay fixed (responsive repairs).*
- *Do the right service/repair at the right time, and leave safe (gas servicing).*

- *To collect the right amount of rent at the right time (rent management).*
- *Deal with customer emergencies promptly (Home Safeguard).*

3.2 We have defined our Service Culture by reference to a series of service values, purpose(s), and operating principles.

Our values are:

- Customer focus – recognising we are here to provide a service for our customers.
- We aim to be:
 - Accountable;
 - Open ;
 - Listening ;
 - Caring;
 - Looking forwards
- Diversity – we welcome diversity and work to a series of diversity commitments.
- Strive for excellence in service delivery.
- Have pride and passion for our housing work.

4. **Future challenges and opportunities for housing:**

- Delivering new affordable housing through the Housing Task Force
- Tackling homelessness and securing suitable permanent and temporary accommodation
- Maintaining tenants homes and ensuring tenant safety
- Managing the Integrated Asset Management contract
- Rejuvenating programmed works based on stock condition information
- Decarbonising the housing stock
- Achieving high levels of tenant satisfaction and managing complaints
- Meeting tenant aspirations and effective tenant engagement
- Managing self-financing and our share of the national housing debt and running a ‘fit for purpose’ housing business
- Maintaining rent collection rates and supporting tenants through the cost of living crisis
- Implementing the HRA Business Plan – maintaining decent homes and high levels of stock investment
- Achieving our Service Plan targets
- Meeting the demand for affordable/social housing
- Using Systems Thinking to drive further improvements
- Exceeding the Regulator for Social Housing’s requirements and ensuring full compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill and the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice.
- Achieving continuous improvement in service delivery
- See **Housing Service Plan** and the **Housing Strategy** for a more comprehensive analysis.

5. **How we are organised as a Service:**

- Staff numbers are circa 120 with the majority dedicated to the Housing services team.

- We as a Service are organised into 4 teams covering **Housing Options and Allocations; Housing Services; Property and Asset management**. We have established a separate **Housing Task Force** (with separate Assistant Director) We also have a separate Housing Systems team who manage all the systems housing use to transact electronically.
- The annual income and expenditure is strictly controlled in a ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account. The annual **turnover is £18 million**. We spend about £8 million a year on maintenance and improvements and £2.6 million on staffing and central costs. £1 million is spent on MSOs, community centres, fences, ground maintenance etc. £3 million of our income is used to pay off loans taken out following the reform of the HRA. We are required to maintain a surplus of just over £3.1 million.
- Our Annual Report to tenants sets out a considerable amount of information on the Service – achievements, standards, facts and figures.

6. Housing Strategy summary

6.1 Our over-riding vision is to provide a decent home for all residents of East Devon (**annex 1**).

6.2 Our responsibilities are to:

- provide a housing options service for all who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- to provide, maintain and manage our own council housing stock
- to work with housing developers and housing associations to deliver more affordable housing
- to regulate and improve other social rented, private rented and owner occupier housing

6.3 Our priorities fall into three broad categories:

Providing homes:

- prevent homelessness and make sure that suitable accommodation is found for those who do become homeless
- provide a range of affordable housing to meet housing needs
- widen the choice of housing, especially for those in priority need

Improving homes:

- bring sub-standard housing (of all tenure) up to current standards
- improve the use and safety of housing
- improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing and eliminate fuel poverty
- enable elderly people, disabled people and people with special needs to live as independently as possible, and where possible and practicable remain in their own homes if they so wish
- maintain and manage the council owned housing stock to a high standard, actively involving tenants in all aspects of the service.

Improving communities

- support the improvement and regeneration of local communities by encouraging social inclusion, involving children and young people with housing issues, and enabling residents to actively participate in their communities

Across all our priorities we aim to have consistently satisfied customers.

Our Housing Service Plan can be found on the Council's website

[housing-service-plan-2023-24.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/housing-service-plan-2023-24.pdf)

Financial implications:

There are no financial implications

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications on which to comment.