

**HOUSING BOARD held at JUBILEE GARDEN ROOM - HILL STREET,
SAFFRON WALDEN, on TUESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2022 at 11.00 am**

Present: Councillor A Coote (Chair)
Councillors A Dean, G Driscoll, P Lees, M Lemon, S Merifield
and N Reeve

Officers in attendance: C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), P Kingston (Interim
Deputy Director of Housing, Health and Communities), P Lock
(Housing Enabling and Development Officer) and J Snares
(Housing Strategy and Operations Manager).

Also Present: D Cornell (Member of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel) and S
Trimnell (Member of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel).

HB16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Foley, Councillor Khan and
C Mandy.

Councillors Merifield and Reeve arrived at 11.06 am.

HB17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

There was some discussion around the possibility of the Housing Board
meeting with representatives of Uttlesford Norse (UNSL). The Chair said that it
would be considered if appropriate.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 were approved as an
accurate record.

**HB18 SELF REFERRAL TO THE REGULATOR FOR SOCIAL HOUSING -
POTENTIAL BREACH OF THE HOME STANDARD**

The Interim Deputy Director of Housing, Health and Communities presented the
report. He apologised and said that the Appendix 2 was not the correct
document (*This has since been corrected and the agenda republished*). He
updated Members and said that the Regulator had asked to be kept informed
about the data validation as it progresses; the validation should be completed by
the end of the third week in October and will enable the council to be assured
about the accuracy of the data held and being reported by Uttlesford Norse

Views were expressed that the tenants would be very pleased that the exercise
was being undertaken and officers confirmed that they would continue to liaise
with the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

The report was noted.

HB19 **DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager provided an update on the current and proposed development by the HRA across the District. She outlined the progress made on all sites and, in addition to details within the report, highlighted:

- Bartholomew Close, Great Chesterford- a site visit invitation would go out to all Housing Board Members.
- Parkside, Saffron Walden- This was in the planning application consultation phase. The development would include air source heat pumps and electric charging points.
- Walden Place- the aim was to start on site in the New Year. Local residents were happy; the main issue was access, but a Construction Management Plan would be in place.
- Garden Reduction Sites- a 5th possible site had been identified at High Easter.
- Section 106 Opportunities- the first nine properties were under construction.

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager confirmed that 141 properties will have been delivered towards the target through listed schemes.

Housing Officers were congratulated for their efforts.

The report was noted.

HB20 **ALLOCATIONS OF RURAL EXCEPTION SITES**

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager summarised the five options relating to the Allocations Policy (Rural Exceptions Sites) for wider public consultation.

The Housing Enabling and Development Officer said that he chaired a group across various Councils and had canvassed opinion on the principle of under occupation and the consensus was that they would not consider this within their schemes. The Tenants' representatives indicated that keeping the current policy in place was their preference .

Members discussed the various possible options, including options for families with two single sex children and the possibility of Parish Councils making use of Community Land Trust arrangements.

Councillor Lemon proposed the continuation of the current policy. This was seconded by Councillor Dean.

RESOLVED to endorse the current Allocations Policy (Rural Exceptions Sites).

HB21 TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER REPORT

The report was favourably received.

HB22 INDEPENDENT HOUSING OMBUDSMAN`S SCHEME COMPLAINTS HANDLING CODE SELF ASSESSMENT

The Interim Deputy Director of Housing, Health and Communities presented the report. He said that the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHOS) wanted to see complaints embedded positively in organisations cultures. He said that the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy will need to be reviewed in the light of the IHOS Complaints Handling Code in order to achieve compliance. There was also a need to evidence learning from complaints and that the Council needed both a lead Member and a lead officer for complaints, both persons with senior levels of responsibility. He said that the self-assessment showed that the Council was currently not quite compliant and that this should go to Cabinet. The aim would be to be fully compliant by the end of the calendar year

In response to various questions, the Housing Strategy and Operations Manager said that partial compliance meant that we could not fully evidence that we complied with requirements. There were two stages to the council's complaints process not three. She said that the shaded items indicated "best practice should do" and the unshaded represented "compulsory must do".

RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet the approval of the Self-Assessment of the Independent Housing Ombudsman's Scheme Complaints Handling Code and to appoint Councillor Coote as the lead Member.

HB23 TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

The Interim Deputy Director of Housing, Health and Communities provided an update a report on the timeline for completion of the HRA Business Plan. He said that Savills had been engaged and that works would be completed ahead of budget preparation.

In response to various questions, he said that the work would inform how much money could be afforded to invest in both existing and new housing and that various assumptions and scenarios would be factored in for the council to consider taking the HRA Business Plan forward to 2053.

Further discussion took place around the merits of Council owned housing and of Housing Associations. There was an appetite to continue to develop new council housing.

The recommendations were agreed. The report was noted, and an additional meeting of the Housing Board will be held mid-November 2022, for the purpose

of receiving a report and presentation on the various business planning scenarios.

The meeting finished at 12.22 pm .