

**HOUSING BOARD held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 8
FEBRUARY 2024 at 12.30 pm**

Present: Councillor A Coote (Chair)
Councillors C Fiddy, R Freeman, P Lees (Vice-Chair) and
M Tayler

Officers in attendance: K Clifford (Director of Housing, Health and Communities),
C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), J Snares (Housing
Strategy and Operations Manager) and M Watts
(Environmental Health Manager (Protection))

Also present: J Cotier (Chair of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel).

HB12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dean and Barker and S Ovel (Vice-Chair of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel).

John Cotier (Chair of Tenant and Leasehold Panel) introduced himself and was welcomed to the meeting by Committee Members.

There were no declarations of interest.

HB13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 were approved as an accurate record; HB8 first bullet point to read "CPI" rather than "CBI".

HB14 ENDING INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager presented her report.

She said that the aim was to end introductory tenancies. This would free up Housing Officers to undertake more tenancy audits and reduce time spent on administration.

There was some discussion around the possibility of setting up a small sub-committee to discuss the council's succession policy and where discretion can be used in extenuating circumstances.

RESOLVED that:

- Housing Board recommends that Cabinet approves the ending of introductory tenancies and the granting of secure tenancies to all new tenants.
- Housing Board recommends the approval and adoption of the revised Tenancy Policy.
- Housing Board recommends that Cabinet approves the issue of new secure tenancies to all tenants currently on introductory tenancies unless there is current enforcement action being taken to end the tenancy.
- Officers work with Members to review council's succession policy.

HB15 **DAMP AND MOULD LEAFLET**

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities outlined the contents of the Damp and Mould leaflet.

The Chair said that he had received an email from Councillor Barker asking for details about damages to health being included in the leaflet. Members discussed whether to expand on the information already contained. Members considered that the leaflet should stay focussed from a landlord perspective. Councillor Tayler gave his view from a medical viewpoint that the leaflet was well balanced and that information about damage to health was not considered necessary. Members all supported the leaflet as circulated.

The leaflet will be circulated with rent statements and newsletters.

HB16 **KPI'S AND PERFORMANCE MATRIX**

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities introduced the report, which was shown on the screen. She said that all KPI's currently recorded had been shown and asked for views from Members as to how this data be brought back to Committee in future.

Members expressed views that:

- There was a need to highlight those cases which could be referred to the Ombudsman and the importance of an index with key dates and explanations.
- As much information as possible should be provided initially and this could subsequently be narrowed down.
- There was a need to understand how each PI had been set, alongside a risk assessment for each. Reference was made to the use of Housemark public data dashboards.
- Private sector information re deadlines could possibly be included.

Clarification was sought re KPI 08a in respect of the average lettings days for sheltered properties being 23 days compared with an average of 7 lettings days for non-sheltered properties. Officers explained the difficulties faced with harder to let dwellings.

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities said that a cover report would be brought back to the next Committee that would provide more narrative. She said that in future the KPI's for the following year should be agreed at Housing Board.

HB17 UPDATE ON UNSL

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities provided a verbal update. She said that the Extraordinary Cabinet in January 2024 had taken the decision not to continue with the arrangement beyond the five years and that an exit notice had been issued to UNSL. A Project Board had been set up to work on an exit management strategy over the next 15 months. There was a need to define the options moving forward and to seek a best option. Various workshops would be organised.

She said that negotiations continued on an on-going basis with UNSL to ensure that business as usual didn't decline.

HB18 UPDATE ON RESOURCES IN HOUSING

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities said that she would be leaving the Council on 8 March 2024. A Director of Property was due to start work shortly; the focus would be exiting the UNSL contract; the preferred candidate had experience in this specialist field.

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities said that Simone Russell would be returning on an interim basis as Strategic Director of Housing. There would also be a review undertaken of the functions currently undertaken by Housing Officers.

John Cotier (Chair of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel) asked to be involved in discussions and the Director of Housing, Health and Communities, welcomed this suggestion and tenants would be invited to participate in the options for future service provision.

HB19 RENTERS REFORM BILL

The Environmental Health Manager (Protection) presented a PowerPoint presentation (copied in the Agenda papers).

Views were expressed that much of the work moving forward would be reliant on the goodwill of Councils and that Government guidelines were awaited as no explanations had been given yet as to how actions would be carried out.

HB20 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Director of Housing, Health and Communities presented the Forward Plan; an addition was required in respect of the KPI's and risk assessments.

As this was her last Housing Board meeting, the Chair thanked the Director of Housing, Health and Communities for all her efforts.

The Director thanked Members of the Committee and her team of officers.

The meeting finished at 1.45 pm.