

## **HOUSING BOARD held at ZOOM, on FRIDAY 20 MAY 2022 at 11.00 am**

Present: Councillors A Coote (Chair), A Armstrong, G Driscoll, A Khan and N Reeve

Officers in attendance: A Lindsell (Democratic Services Officer), R Millership (Assistant Director - Housing and Environmental Services), J Snares (Housing Strategy and Operations Manager)

Also present: J Burwell (Operations Director NORSE Group), G Despacio-Reyes (Member of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel) and S Ovel (Member of Tenant and Leaseholder Panel)

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dean, Lees and Lemon.

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 were approved.

### **3 NORSE PARTNERSHIP**

The meeting was being held as an additional meeting to discuss the Norse Partnership and the Assistant Director of Housing and Environmental Services invited the Operations Director for NORSE Group to provide an update on the NORSE partnership.

Councillor Foley joined the meeting.

Due to technical difficulties experienced by the Operations Director for NORSE Group who temporarily left the meeting, the Democratic Services Officer shared her screen to enable Members to view the performance indicators and targets for 2022/23 and the NORSE performance indicator outturn figures for 2021/22 which had been shared with Members shortly before the meeting commenced.

Members expressed dissatisfaction that only 85% of tenants were happy with their new home.

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager explained that it would be unrealistic to expect 100% tenant satisfaction as some tenants are required to accept a flat when they would prefer a house.

The Operations Director for NORSE Group rejoined the meeting by telephone and confirmed that HSG 50 details the percentage of void properties made ready to let within target and combines the minor and major targets.

There are currently high levels of major voids which required extensive works, which was further impacted by material and staffing shortages as a result of Covid.

He noted that they were not meeting their void targets.

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager confirmed that these figures were not the performance indicators (PIs) that Officers put together and presented to Members.

The Operations Director for NORSE Group left the meeting.

Members expressed dissatisfaction due to:

- Receiving the reports shortly before the meeting started
- The quality of the sound at the meeting
- The absence of a report or covering letter relating to the NORSE paperwork appended to the agenda
- The apparent failure to deliver employment of one hundred local apprentices as per the contract
- The apparent failure of the NORSE Group to deliver value for tenants, residents and the Council
- The need for an additional meeting, in person to fully review the documents

The Chair agreed to urgently schedule an in-person meeting of the Housing Board to resolve the issues highlighted.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair sought to raise issues in regards to a planning application relating to Auton Croft.

In response, the Housing Strategy and Operations Manager confirmed that withdrawal of the application would conclude the process.

Councillor Foley confirmed that he has requested that the County Council provide him with a list of all the sites they own within Uttlesford. He hoped that this might identify potential sites for social housing. He suggested that the social housing numbers should be increased dramatically in response to the current cost of living crisis.

The Chair expressed his thanks to the Leader of the Council for her continued support with social housing which has seen excellent work undertaken by the Housing Department. He welcomed any conversations from Members which could assist with moving social housing forward.

Councillor Khan supported the Chair's comments and noted the need to identify land and to plan for delivering quality homes.

The Assistant Director of Housing and Environmental Services noted that the meeting had been scheduled in response to Councillor Dean's request for an additional meeting so that the Housing Board could question the Operations Director of Norse and be satisfied that Norse were carrying out their

responsibilities. She welcomed any specific questions relating to the partnership from Members for the next meeting so that if a report was required this could be prepared in advance.

*The meeting finished at 11:46am.*