

## For publication

### Establishment of a Housing Advisory Board

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
<b>Cabinet portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Report by:</b>	Service Director – Housing
<b>For publication</b>	

#### 1.0 Purpose of report

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to establish a new Housing Advisory Board.

#### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 To approve the establishment of a new Housing Advisory Board comprising Members, tenants and senior officers, in order to fulfil the requirements of the Social Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman, and to ensure detailed and effective oversight and scrutiny of all social landlord activities.

2.2 To note that the Board will have no decision-making responsibilities, and that any reports requiring a formal decision will continue to be presented to Cabinet.

2.3 To delegate to the Service Director – Housing, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to establish Terms of Reference for the Housing Advisory Board, and to subsequently amend such Terms of Reference if requirements change over time.

2.4 To agree to receive a progress report, outlining the activity of and outcomes achieved by the Housing Advisory Board, one year after its establishment.

#### 3.0 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Regulator of Social Housing takes a co-regulatory approach to monitoring against its consumer standards and has encouraged local authorities to prepare for the shift to a more proactive regulatory approach, following new powers being introduced from April 2024.

3.2 Housing associations and arms-length management organisations (ALMOs) typically have a Board of Directors (including tenants), with reporting mechanisms and strategic oversight of their organisation's performance. A clear reporting / strategic governance model is now needed for the Council's Housing Services, to

ensure that the service receives effective scrutiny and oversight by tenants and Members.

3.3 In addition to the Housing Regulator, the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code becomes mandatory from April 2024 and demands involvement and oversight at director and elected member level, with a councillor taking the lead on complaints. The Code includes expectations that the Council will have arrangements in place for regular detailed discussions about complaints performance, and for a formal response from the responsible Member / governing body to be published, following comprehensive scrutiny and challenge.

#### 4.0 **Report details**

4.1 It is proposed that the Housing Advisory Board will comprise the following:

- Four Elected Members, including the Cabinet Member for Housing who will be the Board's Chair, and a member of the opposition
- Four council tenants
- The Council's Executive Director
- The Council's Service Director - Housing
- Housing Service managers will attend as required to present specific reports

4.2 The Board will meet quarterly, and all papers will be published on the Council's website.

4.3 The Housing Advisory Board's responsibilities will include:

- Monitoring compliance with / performance against the Social Housing Regulator's consumer standards
- Reviewing tenant satisfaction survey results and related action plans, and recommending further actions to address any areas of low satisfaction
- Reviewing and signing off information to be published to tenants as requested by the Regulator, including:
  - Landlord service delivery performance
  - Actions to improve performance
  - How tenants' views are taken into account
  - How income is spent
  - Directors' remuneration and management costs
- Receiving and considering complaints data and compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Practice to inform service delivery, including:
  - Annual complaints information
  - Service improvement reports (learning from complaints)
  - Self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code
  - Providing a formal response to the annual complaints report
- Receiving tenant engagement and tenant scrutiny reports, and approving recommendations for implementation and action
- Receiving an annual report on the monitoring and oversight of compliance with building safety requirements

## **5.0 Alternative options**

- 5.1 Research was undertaken into how other local authorities have implemented similar arrangements, and various alternative models were explored. The proposed model will achieve the required outcomes and is considered to be the best approach, but can be reviewed in the future as necessary.
- 5.2 Another option would be to present all reports relating to the housing service to Cabinet. Due to the large volume of reports and materials within scope (see 4.3 above) and the level of detailed scrutiny required, this would not be practical. Nor would it achieve the essential criteria of including tenants in the process.

## **6.0 Implication for consideration - Financial and value for money**

- 6.1 Tenants will be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, and this will be contained within the tenant engagement budget.

## **7.0 Implications for consideration – Legal**

- 7.1 The new body is to help the Council comply with the new regulatory framework. The new Board will have no decision-making responsibilities. Standards and Audit Committee has already approved a delegation to the Cabinet Member for Housing to consider reports and recommendations of the proposed Housing Advisory Body, with delegation to the Head of Regulatory Law to amend the delegation if appropriate.

## **8.0 Implications for consideration – Human Resources**

- 8.1 There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

## **9.0 Implications for consideration – Council Plan**

- 9.1 This contributes to our key priority to improve quality of life for local people.

## **10.0 Implications for consideration – climate change**

- 10.1 There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

## **11.0 Implication for consideration – equality and diversity**

- 11.1 A preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as **Appendix 1**. There are no identified implications for groups with protected characteristics.

## **12.0 Implications for consideration - risk management**

<b>Description of the risk</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>
Lack of effective oversight of housing service to achieve	H	M	Establishment of the Housing Advisory Board will reduce risk	M	L

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regulatory requirements leading to poor regulatory judgments					
Lack of scrutiny of Housing Ombudsman's requirements for complaint handling potentially leading to complaint handling failure orders	H	H	Establishment of Housing Advisory Board will ensure that complaint handling quality and performance is routinely reviewed and learning from complaints is identified and implemented with outcomes reported to Housing Ombudsman	M	L
Lack of reporting route for tenant engagement activity – demonstrating the landlord is hearing the tenant voice in decision making as required by the Regulator	M	M	Establishment of the Board will allow for receiving and actioning of all tenant engagement reports and recommendations for consideration in service planning and delivery.	L	L

### **Decision information**

<b>Key decision number</b>	<b>1125</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All</b>

### **Document information**

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<b>Background documents</b>	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
N/A	
<b>Appendices to the report</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Preliminary equalities impact assessment