

# THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

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An update  
on our work  
in 2017

# Introduction to the Board

The Board is about making a difference to services, individuals and communities and ensuring the Council are accountable. We work together in the spirit of co-regulation to help shape housing services that deliver real benefit to tenants and leaseholders. We also focus on long term plans for housing and helping to achieve good value for money. Working as one-team of tenants, leaseholders, councillors and staff we promote a joint approach to providing good housing services for council tenants and leaseholders.

During the year we kept a strong focus on the council's repairs and maintenance service to ensure internal changes made to this key service were well organised and effectively carried out. We confirmed that improving housing services and tenant satisfaction remain a priority. We pressed for improvements to how empty council homes are managed and it is satisfying to report that an internal modernisation programme is having a positive impact.

Over the coming year we will be monitoring the Council's major refurbishment contract (MRC) programme and pressing for full consultation with affected residents before and during the necessary works.

It was great to get out in Stevenage to visit new council housing in Archer Road and spend an afternoon at the new Hampson Park Community Centre over the summer. Its very encouraging that our Council is committed to building and managing modern, affordable homes for families who have spent too long on the waiting list. It is my belief that having a safe and secure roof over your head is central to human dignity. In addition, high quality local amenities such as the community centre will help to create and maintain a vibrant community that will thrive and grow for many years to come.

**Jon Thurlow**  
**Chair of Housing Management Advisory Board**

## Our role on the Board

We work in partnership with the council and act in an advisory role on strategic housing matters. The HMAB makes recommendations to the Council's Executive, full Council and to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People. The Board acts as a link to other involved housing customer groups including the Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP).



# Who are the Housing Management Advisory Board?

The Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) are a group of recruited council tenants, leaseholders, councillors and employed council assistant directors. They meet monthly.

## Members of the Board are:

<b>Jon Thurlow</b>	– Leaseholder and Chair
<b>Phil Bibby</b>	– Councillor and Vice Chair
<b>Christine Anderson</b>	– Tenant
<b>Jaine Cresser</b>	– Staff –Assistant Director – Housing and Investment
<b>Kerry Gibson</b>	– Tenant
<b>Carol Latif</b>	– Councillor
<b>Lin Martin-Haugh</b>	– Councillor
<b>John Mead</b>	– Councillor
<b>Sarah Mead</b>	– Councillor
<b>Craig Miller</b>	– Staff – Assistant Director – Direct Services
<b>Fiona Plumridge</b>	– Tenant
<b>Len Saunders</b>	– Tenant
<b>Lesley Storey</b>	– Tenant and nominated Customer Scrutiny Panel representative

## Why we joined the board

'I joined HMAB because I wanted to gain experience about how council housing services are planned, delivered and managed and have a say about it. I feel that my input makes a positive contribution to discussions, and my ideas lead to better decisions and better services for people – that's what keeps me coming along! My 'proudest' moment as an HMAB member, was visiting the new Council homes in Archer Road and the revamped community centre in Hampson Park.' *Jon Thurlow (Chair)*



"This is a valuable extension to my role as a local Councillor, looking after residents' interests."

*Philip Bibby – Vice-Chair*



"I joined HMAB to try to give something back and help make a difference. The meetings are interesting and I have learnt a great deal about housing. I think my

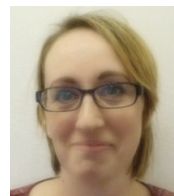


proudest time was being elected as the first Chair of HMAB." *Len Saunders – member*

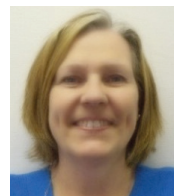
"We really value the input from residents to feedback on work that we are undertaking. The dynamics of HMAB give us the opportunities to reflect on the opinions of leaseholders, tenants and members". *Jaine Cresser – member*



"I joined the HMAB as I wanted to become more involved in housing for various reasons. As a tenant I believe being part of the HMAB helps influence and advise on key areas of housing to help provide an even better service, which I am proud to be a part of". *Christine Anderson – member*



"I enjoy being on the HMAB as it helps me feel part of the wider community and can give a voice to others that aren't in a position to be there. I also find it interesting and have been made welcome by the other members." – *Kerry Gibson – member*



## What does the Board do?

- Review the Business Plan and associated Capital and Revenue Budgets. This includes agreement of the key projects within the plan and how they are delivered.
- Review and comment on reports that relate to key decisions to be taken by the Executive about housing services.
- Review and monitor housing service performance.
- Help develop housing service strategies.
- Discuss key proposals to change housing policy, how services are run, development of new services and new housing development proposals.

The Board is not involved with day-to-day housing service operational matters or matters of detailed service delivery or performance.



### The Board's impact

During the year, the Board have been involved in and influenced decisions around the:

**Housing Business Plan** and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### Review of the repairs service

Board involvement in this project over many months helped the repairs service prepare for changes to improve the customer experience. The Board views were included in the report to Executive.

### The Major Refurbishment Contract

The Board has helped prepare for this large contract to improve communal areas in flat blocks. This has included considering how tenants and leaseholders will be involved and informed. The Board discussed and commented on the 'leaseholder payment options for major works' and made recommendations to Executive.

### The Review of:

- The Rent and Service Charge Policy
- Repairs Policy and Adaptations Policy
- Decant Policy
- Allocations Policy

All these Policies were reviewed and approved by the Board, after much discussion and subject to training being provided to staff.

The Customer Scrutiny Panel review of Liberty Gas services where an improvement plan was agreed

**Restructure of the housing and investment teams** the Board receives regular reports.

### To help meet these achievements during 2017, the Board:

- Held thirteen general meetings and one work planning day
- Recruited three new tenant Board members
- Increased membership of the Board to 13 members – increasing customer membership by two residents
- Recruited a leaseholder Chair and councillor Vice Chair
- Reviewed the Board's work plan
- Attended eight training and briefing sessions; including updates on housing law and the Housing and Planning Act
- Learnt about and debated the possible impact the new Homelessness Reduction Bill for the council
- Strengthened the link to council Executive
- Improved joint working with the Customer Scrutiny Panel
- Turned a spotlight on poor performance and set up monitoring arrangements for the management of empty homes
- Agreed two Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) reviews and the recommendations made
- Monitored progress against CSP recommendations to improve service at the Customer Service Centre and the management of former tenant arrears.
- Discussed damp and condensation and agreed to monitor progress in works to eradicate this.
- Discussed safety and compliance for Stevenage council flat blocks and agreed to seek interest in a tenant led safety group.

## Next steps for 2018

### The Board will:

- Discuss the Asset Management Strategy and how the Board can involve more tenants and leaseholders in setting priorities for asset management and monitoring how works are progressing.
- Monitor the major refurbishment contract - including placing a strong focus on managing costs, staying on budget and consulting with residents.
- Get involved with service charge and caretaking reviews
- Promote the Board, look for new members and develop the plan for 2018/19.

### Interested?

To find out more about the Board and how you could apply to join, please contact the Board on [housingmanagementboard@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:housingmanagementboard@stevenage.gov.uk) or contact the resident involvement team on 01438 242183.