

HOUSING STANDARDS BOARD (HSB)

Minutes

3 March 2025

2.00pm – 3.23pm

PRESENT:

Committee Members

Cllr David Carter (DC) – Chair
Cllr Jodie Dunne – Labour
Group Representative (JD)

Leaseholder Standards Panel:

Annette Hogan (AH)
Frank Feldman (FF)

Tenant & Leaseholder

Representatives:

Property Standards Panel:

Hugh Hoad (HH)
Selena Ellis (SE)

Tenancy Standards Panel:

None

Officers:

Zulfi Kiani-Mackintosh (ZKM)
Wayne Mitchell (WM)
Nicole Parker (NP)
Cara Stevens (CS)

		Action
1.	<u>Welcome & Apologies</u> None.	All
2.	<u>Declaration of Interest</u> None.	All
3.	Minutes of last meeting (3 February 2025) and Matters arising <i>The minutes were agreed.</i> CS said there was currently no update to provide the board in relation to the Decent Homes	Noted

	<p>Standard, this is still outstanding due to not receiving the standard.</p> <p>Hugh Hoad (HH) asked if Harlow Council had received any of the funding from Essex County Council of the 500k allocated to Homelessness. CS advised we had been allocated a winter top up grant and explained how this may be used.</p> <p>HH also asked about the homeless pods and how these would be allocated that were being gifted to Harlow by Hill Group. CS went through this and explained that Streets2Homes will gifted these units and will manage these in line with homeless requirements.</p>	
4.	<p>Cabinet Forward Workplan 2024/25</p> <p>Noted.</p>	All Noted
5.	<p>HSB Workplan 2024/25</p> <p><i>The workplan was noted.</i></p> <p>ZKM went through the HSB Workplan with updates.</p> <p>Annual Report – This is ongoing, the content of the report work would start early summer 2025.</p> <p>Land satisfaction survey – This is in phase 2, Harlow Council received 749 completed surveys, report from BNG to follow.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

	<p>Update on the Tenant and Leaseholder Review Action Plan – On agenda today, a draft Communications plan has also been drafted.</p> <p>Tenant Satisfaction Measures – These are ongoing, on track for responses back/for them to be published on time.</p> <p>Building Safety Engagement Strategy – This is currently going through discussions.</p> <p>Homelessness Rough sleeper Strategy –On agenda today.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
6.	<p>Update on the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement and Involvement review Action Plan.</p> <p>ZKM gave an update on the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement and Involvement review action plan.</p> <p>A Communication plan draft was provided for members to review.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
7.	<p>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</p> <p>CS provided an update on the above, this is going to Cabinet on 19 March 2025. This is a requirement of every Local Authority to provide every 5 years.</p> <p>Officers, Councillors, Groups and the Public have helped collate the information for this strategy through meetings, working groups and public surveys.</p>	<p>All Noted</p>

	<p>The draft strategy and the draft public consultation went to Scrutiny Committee prior to going out for public consultation, this was approved, and it went out online. 95% responded, 93% lived in Harlow, 90% agreed on the Councils views on the priorities.</p> <p>CS went through the priorities, the new frameworks and the aim for the next Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy with the group.</p> <p>The new strategy will detail the issues being faced and the priorities going forward which are expected over the next 5 years, in terms of prevention and relief.</p> <p>The update from the public consultation and the final strategy went to Scrutiny on the 4 February, and will now go to Cabinet on the 19 March 2025 to hopefully be approved.</p>	
8.	<p>Disposal of Purford Green Garages (Verbal)</p> <p>CS advised this report would be going to Cabinet on the 19 March.</p> <p>Councillor Jodi Dunne (JD) felt that on the cabinet workplan the ward effect should read Bush Fair and not Latton Bush and Stewards. CS checked this and has made the amendment to the report and the workplan to state effected ward Bush Fair.</p> <p>Purford Green currently has 32 garages, only 12 of them Harlow Council let. CS detailed how the</p>	All Noted

	<p>garages are in poor condition, little profit is being made and the cost to repair and renew are high. The report in which will go to Cabinet with options on what Harlow Council could do with the garages. The preferred option which is going to Cabinet for approval is to sell them to an outside private management company.</p> <p>Annette Hogan (AH) asked CS what the private company plans to do with the site where the garages are located. In line with the request the report has been updated with the following statement</p> <p>“Harlow Council are to proceed with the sale of the Purford Green garages to the identified private management company. The management company would then undertake refurbishment works to bring the garages up to a lettable standard. The existing tenants will be offered the opportunity to sign up with the new company, relocate to another garage with the Council or surrender their garage prior to completion of the sale”</p>	
9.	<p>Update on the Housing Regulator (Verbal)</p> <p>CS gave an update on the position of Housing Regulator.</p> <p>Requirements to collect TSM's (Tenant Satisfaction Measures) come in last year in 2023/24.</p> <p>Harlow Council were Issued with C3 grading as the percentage of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)</p>	All Noted

	<p>completed was not acceptable and needed to be improved.</p> <p>CS has been overseeing the work with the regulator, relationships have progressed, monthly updates on FRA's and compliance areas have been produced and shared with the regulator to highlight the improvements being made.</p> <p>Currently working towards 100% completion of all FRA's by the end of March 2025. We have currently completed 81% of FRA's of council stock however this number is changing daily. This covers flat blocks or people who 'share a front door.'</p> <p>As a result of the completion of FRA's, there are now a number of actions that need to be completed, and the team are actioning and monitoring the progress of these.</p> <p>In line with the newly approved 25/26 budget housing have been allocated 2 additional Housing Officers to concentrate on housing management fire risk actions. HOPS have also been instructed to help assist with the data.</p> <p>FRA surveys should be completed by end of March 25, however work will continue on until all actions have been completed.</p> <p>A external technical review is due to be commissioned to review the Councils compliance areas and plans going forward and to ensure that they are the right steps. CS and Alan Townshend (AT) are working together on this.</p>	
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Cllr David Carter (DC) asked if you can have gas in the flat blocks/tower blocks. Following the meeting CS checked this and advises the following:

There is no law or regulation preventing the use of gas within High Rise Buildings (HRB's) however there is a trend away from gas naturally for energy efficiency purposes particularly in new builds. For example the new properties at Burnt Mill owned as a non-housing asset by the Council have heat pumps in them.

11 of the Council's HRB's have gas throughout them for heating purposes with the exceptions being Brenthall Towers and Netteswell Tower (although one property on the ground floor has a gas fired boiler, the rest is electric heated)

A number of our buildings have recently seen upgrades from warm air units to individual gas fired combination boilers as part of our capital improvement programmes. We manage the safety of these installations through a number of measures however the primary one is for a yearly gas safety check to be undertaken in all Council properties. The national network provider, currently Cadent, will also have responsibilities for safety in the buildings to maintain the network up until the meter within each property. They undertake periodic inspections of the pipework in communal areas to ensure its safety and have a programme of routine replacement, as recently seen at The Lawn.

10.	Current Consultations – None	Noted
11.	Any Other Business Zulfi confirmed with the meeting that due to no Elections meant no Purdah period, so all meetings go ahead as usual for the rest of the year.	Noted

The Date of the Next meeting: TBC as new financial year timetable will be produced