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## **Place Scrutiny Committee - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

### **Report of the Director of Housing and Community Services**

#### **Housing Board Update**

##### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide an overview of the Housing Board's role and activity.

##### **Recommendations**

2. That the information contained in this report be noted.

To recommend the Council to appoint a non-voting Co-opted Member to represent the Housing Board on the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in the 2021/22 municipal year.

##### **Background**

3. The establishment of the Housing Board (which includes Member and Community representation) was approved by Full Council in October 2014. The Board was established in the light of best practice from consultation with tenants, residents, members, and Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (DFTRA). This was in line with Consumer Regulation, and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

The purpose of the Housing Board, as set out in its Constitution (circulated to Committee Members), is to:

- Provide the community-based scrutiny function of the Housing Service, to the proportionate benefit of tenants, leaseholders and other service users for their collective benefit.
- To improve decision making, provide challenge in Housing Services, and to ensure that high quality services and best value for money are delivered to tenants, leaseholders and service users.

The Housing Board is an advisory board and cannot make decisions on behalf of the Housing Service or in respect of any activity of the Council.

4. The Housing Board has responsibility for raising issues with the Council members who are nominated to attend Full Board meetings. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services has responsibility to feedback and highlight major issues raised to the Cabinet. The Housing Board also recognises the need to feedback to the tenants and residents it represents and are developing ideas to achieve this through a communication plan.
5. The Housing Board operates within a defined Constitution and consists of 13 places, comprising 11 Community Representatives and 2 co-opted places for Independent Board Members (someone with no other link to the Council). There are also places for the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services and the Shadow Cabinet Member. In addition, there is also a place for one representative from Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations.

There are currently 8 community representative Board members, covering all 5 townships from across the Dudley borough.

6. The appointment of the Community Representatives and Independent Board Members is made through a selective process as set out in the Constitution. Appointments are made by an Interview Panel, who submit a report with recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services for approval.
7. Full Housing Board meetings are held quarterly, and Community Representative meetings are held monthly, but due to the global pandemic all physical board meetings were suspended in March 2020. The Community Representatives have been set up to hold virtual meetings on MS Teams and are now confident to recommence Full Board meetings once Covid guidance allows.
8. The Participation Development Team provides general support, coordination of agendas and meetings, training and activities. There is a small budget of £5000 covering training, expenses, and equipment. All Housing Board members have the option of a Council iPad, and access to the internet.

Training is offered and provided to all Housing Board members. This is provided both from within the Council and through external organisations such as the Housing Quality Network (HQN) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Training in recent years has included, a Finance Overview, GDPR, Scrutiny, Political Governance and Decision Making, Professionalism in Housing, Resident Communications Masterclass, Social Housing White Paper overview, Induction for new Board members, and MS Teams. Further training needs will be assessed in April 2021 and a programme set out for the next 12 months.

9. The Housing Board is a consultative group for the Housing Service (along with DFTRA and specific groups) and are consulted on local initiatives. Consultations have included:
- The Homelessness Strategy
  - Asset Management Investing Wisely in the homes the Council manages (via ARK), Allocations Policy Review
  - The HRA budget

Service reviews are commissioned and supported by the Housing Board. Review requests are normally received from DFTRA and Heads of Service, but the Board will also be looking at trends in PIs and complaints in the future to identify other areas. Reviews have included:

- Aids and Adaptations
- Community Improvement Bid Process
- Rechargeable Repairs
- Kitchen and Bathroom Installations

All of the reviews look at services from a customer perspective, and how to improve the customer experience. There are a small team of volunteer service inspectors who work alongside Housing Board members to carry out the reviews.

10. The CIB Working Group (chaired by a Housing Board Member) considers small local projects submitted by tenants and housing officers – these tend to be local environmental/landscape schemes.

### **Finance**

11. All operating costs are contained within the HRA budget.

### **Law**

12. The Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards require effective tenant involvement and consultation, which is due to be strengthened by the Housing White Paper

### **Equality Impact**

13. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken at the set up of the Board and has been circulated to Members of the Committee.

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

14. This report has no direct implications for Human Resources or Organisational Development.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

15. This report has no direct procurement or commercial implications.

## **Health, Wellbeing and Safety**

16. The links between communities and the Directorate are currently being reviewed and will be improved through Neighbourhood working.



**Paul Davies**  
**Director of Housing and Community Services**

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### **List of Background Papers**

Current Housing Board Constitution  
Equality Impact Assessment