

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee - 8 March 2022

Subject: Housing Services Advisory Committee March Update

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) &
Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer

Summary

This report provides an update to the Committee on the proposed new governance arrangements in respect of the Council Housing Stock.

The new advisory committee is intended to provide oversight of the housing management and maintenance services (formerly Northwards ALMO). The advisory committee will make a significant contribution to empowering tenants and ensuring that North Manchester residents help shape and hold to account the Council's Housing Service,

Recommendations

Members are asked to note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: Ancoats & Beswick, Charlestown, Cheetham, Crumpsall, Harpurhey, Higher Blackley, Moston, Ardwick, Clayton & Openshaw, Miles Platting & Newton Heath and Piccadilly

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	As the largest single landlord in the City the Housing service is a major source of contracts and supplies that ideally are sourced locally
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Access to appropriate affordable housing and services will support residents to achieve and contribute to the city's ambitions.

A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The council's housing service is one of the largest single community influencers in. By including tenants directly in the management of their homes they will be empowered and will be able to have a wider neighbourhood impact.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Central to the transfer of the management of the housing service is the required external investment needed to retrofit existing homes in order to achieve a zero carbon housing stock.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The housing service is a major contributor to the North Manchester infrastructure and regeneration.

Contact Officers:

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee ("RAGOS") as to the progress on establishing the new Northwards Housing Services Advisory Committee, as well as the actions relating to recommendations made at the 7 December 2021 RAGOS meeting and further consultation between the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Chair of RAGOS.
- 1.2 The anticipatory recruitment to the advisory committee is ongoing, has garnered significant interest and aims to conclude in March 2022, with a further report to be presented to RAGOS proposing the final arrangements, that will be due to commence, subject to Full Council approval, in the new municipal year.
- 1.3 In addition, the Director of Housing Operations commissioned an internal audit of the proposed governance arrangements, which found a Reasonable Opinion and has been agreed by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and the Council's Senior Management Team. The findings of the report were presented at MCC Audit Committee on 15th February 2022.
- 1.4 The reasonable opinion found by MCC Internal Audit identified a number of areas of strength and four recommendations for the Housing Operations service to take forward.
- 1.5 The areas of strength identified in the internal audit report included;
 - Significant consideration had been given to setting up governance structures which will provide a line of accountability and community engagement from tenant and resident groups through the proposed advisory committee and to the Council's Scrutiny and Executive.
 - The proposals align with wider Council Governance arrangements and with Housing Regulations and Standards, documented in the 2021 Social Housing White Paper.
 - The key themes of the White Paper had formed the foundations of the governance arrangements and that these will be incorporated into the new Resident Charter, which will become a focal point of the committee.
 - The commitment to create a Resident Charter, giving tenants the opportunity to influence the development of key performance indicators (KPIs) that are meaningful to them.
- 1.6 The four recommendations in the report were in relation to committee documentation and membership, the oversight and ownership of the risk register and finalising the approaches to gathering performance data and reporting requirements, which are all being progressed along agreed timescales. Indeed, the Northwards Shadow Board, held on 1st March 2022, featured enhanced performance data and reporting, including resident

satisfaction, repairs, voids as well as the planned 2022/23 capital programme, the revised approach was well received by residents and elected members at the meeting.

- 1.7 In relation to Advisory Committee membership, following RAGOS feedback and the internal audit report, the membership has been changed so that residents serve a minimum, rather than maximum of 2 years, to allow for greater continuity and flexibility.
- 1.8 In addition to the above, Table 1.1 below sets out the responses to the RAGOS recommendations of Dec 2021.

RAGOS Dec 2021 Recommendations	March Update
1. The PFI stock is explicitly removed from the Terms of Reference.	The TOR have been updated to this effect.
2. The maximum term of office for both Elected Members and the co-opted residents from the Council's housing stock should be set at a maximum of six years, that there should be parity between Members and residents, and that consideration be given to staggering the lengths of membership of the Board so that there is progressive rolling change in personnel over time.	<p>Following due consideration, this recommendation will be kept under review until the first 12 months of the advisory committee's operation and reassessed by the relevant Executive Member in 2023, with any changes being subject to Full Council approval.</p> <p>It is fully accepted that there needs to be periodic refresh of committee membership</p> <p>The Advisory Committee Membership has been changed so that residents serve a minimum, rather than maximum of 2 years, to allow for greater continuity and flexibility.</p>
3. The terms of reference cover how conflicts of interest for Elected Members are to be addressed.	In line with the council's constitution elected members will adhere to MCC's protocols, in particular those contained within Council's Code of Conduct for Members, in relation to declaration of interests at each meeting. It is to be noted that as the co-opted members of the committee will have voting rights, they will also be subject to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.
4. The terms of reference explicitly refer to gender balance and ensuring diversity and protected characteristics are proportionately	The TOR have been updated to reflect the Advisory Committee's vital leadership role in representing, promoting, and delivering to the Council's equality objectives.

RAGOS Dec 2021 Recommendations	March Update
reflected across the membership of the Board.	
5. The terms of reference identify which Scrutiny Committee(s) will be responsible for scrutinising the work of the Board.	<p>As part of the Neighbourhoods Directorate, Housing Operations reports into the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>In addition, the HRA Business Plan, of which Housing Operations is a significant element, will report into RAGOS.</p> <p>This is reflected in the TOR where the existing reference to making reports to scrutiny committees has been expanded to specify in particular the above two scrutiny committees.</p>
6. The terms of reference refer to the conurbation of Northwards Housing Stock rather than North Manchester, in order to truly reflect the location of all Northwards residents.	The TOR have been updated to reflect this
7. The terms of reference are explicit insofar as the Board will act as an advisory body and not a governance and decision-making body; and consideration be given to a minimum number of co-opted non-resident members to be appointed, and a strategy is drawn up for timely recruitment of suitably qualified independent members.	<p>It is considered that the TOR already reflect the advisory nature of the committee.</p> <p>The recommendation to a minimum number of co-opted non-resident members will be kept under review as the new committee is established.</p> <p>After due consideration, the advisory committee, with its' main focus on resident representation, will not enforce a minimum non-resident for the committee to be quorate. The advisory committee quorum remains a mix of 5 resident and elected members.</p>