

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: COUNCIL	REPORT NUMBER: MC/18/26
FROM: Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 25 October 2018
OFFICER: Gavin Fisk Assistant Director – Housing	

DISBANDMENT OF JOINT HOUSING BOARD

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to gain agreement from the Council that the Joint Housing Board be disbanded and to describe the alternative form of tenant engagement that is being pursued.

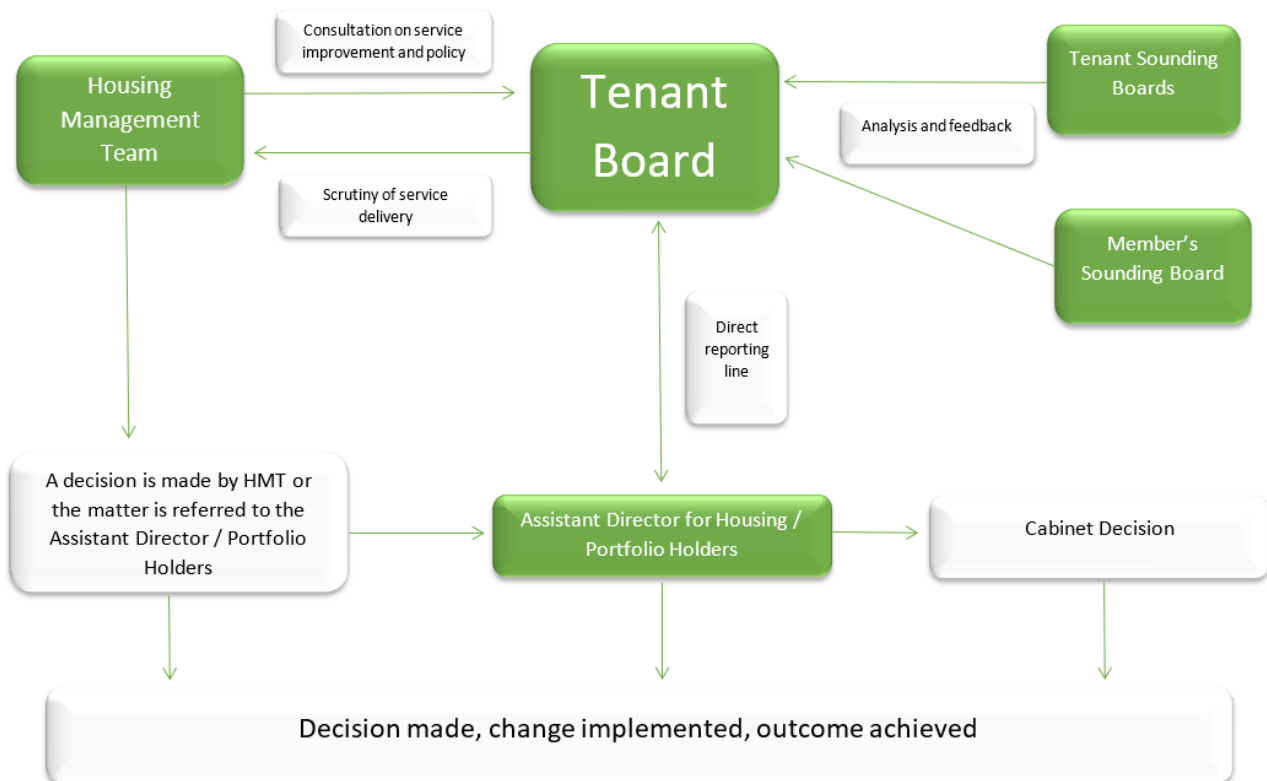
2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Joint Housing Board be disbanded.

3. KEY INFORMATION

- 3.1 In October 2016, the HQN began a review of the tenant engagement structure at Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, reporting its findings in July 2017. It concluded that Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils were not fully compliant with the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard in that there was no tenant scrutiny of the housing service and no rigorous customer-led challenge, both of which are integral to the current regulatory framework. The method of engaging tenants at that time was through the Joint Housing Board and Tenant Forum.
- 3.2 A project was commissioned in October 2017 to explore ways to effectively involve tenants in the development and scrutiny of housing services and ensure that the Councils were fully compliant with the regulatory standard.
- 3.3 Following a series of consultations and workshops with tenants an alternative tenant engagement structure was developed that replaced the Joint Housing Board and Tenant's Forum with a single Tenant Board. This Board would be supported in its work by the Housing Management Team, a Member's Sounding Board, and *ad hoc* Tenant Sounding Boards, as per the diagram below:

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils Tenant Engagement Structure



- 3.4 **The Tenant Board** will be a permanent group that will both scrutinize existing housing services and be consulted on proposed improvements to service delivery. Its members will be tenants of Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils, and they will be recruited, rather than elected (in the past there has been difficulty attracting tenants to stand for election as tenant representatives. This has resulted in uncontested elections and by-elections).
- 3.5 **Tenant Sounding Boards** will be temporary groups brought together to explore a single issue relating to service delivery. For example, a small number of new tenants could be asked to discuss their experience of moving into one of our properties, and how that experience could be improved. The results of this would be reported to the Tenant Board.
- 3.6 **The Member Sounding Board** will be an informal group of Councillors who will support the Tenant Board with advice and guidance.
- 3.7 At its meeting on 19 March 2018, the Joint Housing Board considered the above structure and resolved:

3.2.1 That the disbandment of the Joint Housing Board and Tenant Forum be presented to the Tenant Forum and upon their agreement, a report be presented to Babergh and Mid Suffolk Full Councils on this matter.

3.2.2 That upon agreement from Babergh and Mid Suffolk Full Councils the Joint Housing Board and Tenant Forum be disbanded.

- 3.8 The Tenant Forum confirmed its agreement with the proposals on 30 April 2018, and voted in favour of disbanding in order to allow the creation of the new tenant engagement structure centred around the Tenant Board.
- 3.9 The Tenant Board held its first meeting on the 24 July, and has met four times since, including a session with Jenny Osbourne, the Chief Executive of Tpas (formerly the Tenant Participation Advisory Service). The Board has a confirmed membership of five, with another two potential members at the time of writing. The Board is currently in a period of capacity-building and team development but will shortly start to plan their schedule for the coming year. This planning will involve making decisions on which aspects of the housing service they would like to scrutinize further, and the areas of service improvement they wish to be consulted on.
- 3.10 No Tenant Sounding Boards have yet been set up, but it is proposed to run two in the very near future. One will consider BMBS service standards, and the second will look at how we communicate fire safety information to our residents.
- 3.11 It is intended that a Member's Sounding Board is formed towards the end of 2018 to consider the work of the Tenant Board up until that point, and discuss key elements of the Housing Green Paper

4. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 4.1 This report supports the following outcomes within the joint strategic plan:
- Community led solutions to deliver services and manage assets
 - Community volunteers are skilled and able
 - Manage our housing assets effectively
 - Alternative service delivery models
 - Strengthened and clear governance to enable delivery
 - Digital by design

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The current costs are associated with supporting the Joint Housing Board:

Staff support costs	£8,000
Costs of holding Joint Housing Board meetings	£350
Events / Marketing materials	£0

- 5.2 It is not anticipated that the disbandment of the Joint Housing Board will result in significant savings as the current expenditure will be redirected to alternative forms of tenant engagement.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard requires housing providers to give their tenants a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- Formulating policy and strategic priorities
- Decision-making about service delivery and service standards, including local offers
- Scrutiny of performance and making recommendations for improvement.

6.2 It is vital that the new structure meets this standard in order that Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils are compliant

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If we do not have a formal mechanism for engaging tenants the Council may be unable to meet its duties as a landlord.	Highly unlikely – 1	Bad – 3	Creation of a tenant board, implementing outcomes of customer engagement review.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Joint Housing Board, tenants' forum and Cabinet Members for Housing.

9. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not specifically required for this report; however an EIA will be undertaken for the proposed tenant engagement activities. It is most likely that the proposed arrangements would have positive equality impacts.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 None