



Landlord Assurance Board, Annual Report 24/25

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| Report Author: | Christopher Flannery , Assistant Director for Housing Quality, Development and Landlord Services cflannery@melton.gov.uk Michelle Howard , Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive) mhoward@melton.gov.uk |
| Chief Officer Responsible: | Michelle Howard , Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive) mhoward@melton.gov.uk |
| Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder | Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure & Landlord Services |

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| Corporate Priority: | High Quality Homes and Landlord Services |
| Wards Affected: | All |
| Date of consultation with Ward Member(s): | N/A |
| Exempt Information: | No |

1 Summary

- 1.1 In 2024, the Council established a Landlord Assurance Board. This report represents a review of the first year of the board and provides an update on progress and impact.

2 Recommendations

That Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 **Note the progress made since development and implementation of the Landlord Assurance Board in 2024.**
- 2.2 **Provide feedback and recommendations to Cabinet to support continued progress and impact of the Landlord Assurance Board.**

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 This report forms part of the Scrutiny Committee work programme and creates an important opportunity to consider the work and impact of the Landlord Assurance Board, which has now been in place for almost a year. It also provides an important link between

the Landlord Assurance Board and the Council's Governance Arrangements, and opportunity to increase visibility and profile of the board as a core part of the Council's landlord function.

4 Background

4.1 Effective governance, assurance and oversight are essential to delivering high quality council homes and accountable landlord services and form a key part of the overall responsibilities of the council as landlord. In January 2024, [Cabinet](#) considered the Council's preparations for Regulatory Change in Housing and as part of this, approved a recommendation to establish a Landlord Assurance Board as an important next step in enabling this.

4.2 The Landlord Assurance Board was implemented in April 2024. It provides an opportunity for collective ownership of one of the Council's most significant areas of responsibility. It does not replace any existing structures, scrutiny or decision-making arrangements; however, it provides a single focus for political and professional leaders and tenants to work as a partnership of equals and to consider housing matters in one place; ensuring there is collective focus and grip on housing, regulatory responsibilities, and tenant voice.

4.3 Overview of the Landlord Assurance Board – Scope and Purpose

4.3.1 Whilst the Council has well established mechanisms to monitor performance, risk and compliance, it is important to draw together the various strands of the landlord service that collectively demonstrate how the Council operates and performs as a landlord so that these can be considered together, enabling collective awareness of this key agenda, whilst also supporting continuous improvement.

4.3.2 Working as a partnership of equals and represented by officers, councillors and tenants, Landlord Assurance Board members work together to ensure collective awareness and visibility relating to regulatory assurance, financial resilience, risk management, performance and compliance on all matters relating to being an effective landlord.

4.3.3 The terms of reference and code of conduct for the Landlord Assurance Board are published online and can be accessed here: [Landlord Assurance Board](#).

4.3.4 Within its meetings and supporting papers / agenda pack, the Board receives up to date information and update on:

- a) Performance, risk and compliance and progress updates on any improvements or remedial actions required
- b) Performance and benchmarking information, to support continuous improvement
- c) Complaints management and monitoring, including annual self-assessment, trends and insights
- d) Tenant voice, ensuring this is embedded and being reflected in the decisions and service improvements that are made, including learning from tenant satisfaction measures
- e) Effective planning and delivery of the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act and any other associated legal and regulatory requirements
- f) Delivery of commitments and strategic action plans relating to the Council's Landlord Service, including Asset Management Plan, HRA Business Plan and Affordable Housing Development Plan

- g) HRA budget and capital programme spending, delivery of agreed programmes/projects, ensuring budget and spending is within acceptable parameters and that the HRA remains financially resilient

5 Main Considerations

5.1 The Landlord Assurance Board (LAB) has now been in place for almost a year. It is recognised an important assurance and oversight mechanism and is starting to become well established as a partnership of officers, councillors and tenants.

5.2 The LAB has evolved and changed over the year, and the annual report provides an opportunity to reflect on its inception, evolution and impact, and to consider how it can be most effective in the future.

5.3 Role in Inspection Process and Ongoing Oversight / Assurance

5.3.1 As part of the programmed regulatory inspection in 2024, the Regulator gathered information through reviewing a wide range of documents and data, and by observing meetings, including the very first meeting of the Landlord Assurance Board.

5.3.2 In September 2024, Cabinet received a formal update following the programmed inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing. At this meeting, Cabinet agreed that the Landlord Assurance Board should have an ongoing role in overseeing regulatory progress and resolved that: “The Landlord Assurance Board will receive and be able to comment on progress updates, detailing continued progress in line with the action plan, at each of its future meetings.”

5.3.3 Whilst the board does not have a decision-making function, and does not replace the council’s existing governance and decision-making arrangements, representatives are well placed to ask questions, seek assurance and provide feedback relating to progress against the required actions

5.3.4 In line with this decision, an update on Regulatory Compliance is now included as a standing agenda item and key focus area for the Landlord Assurance Board and has proven to be useful in monitoring progress, and also to enable a ‘check and challenge’ process and consideration of how to progress each of the improvement areas in a way that focuses on outcomes for tenants.

5.3.5 In line with the commitment to meet on a quarterly basis, since its inception, the Landlord Assurance Board has met four times in 2024 on 11th April, 22nd July and 7th November, with the last meeting on 13th February 2025.

5.4 Board Representation and Membership

5.4.1 The Landlord Assurance Board is represented by Officers, Councillors and Tenants. It is also supported by an external officer peer acting as a critical friend to the Council. This has been valuable not only to offer another perspective and opportunity for suggestions and challenge but has also strengthened professional networking opportunities for officers. Working on a reciprocal support basis, the Director for Housing and Communities is also a peer / critical friend to the external peers own Council (outside of Leicestershire).

5.4.2 Officer membership of the board includes the Council’s Statutory Officers (Chief Executive, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer), lead / accountable service delivery officers and an external officer peer from another Council. The Council’s Chief Executive is Vice Chair of the Board.

- 5.4.3 A key officer role within the board and link with tenant board members is the Tenant Engagement and Regulatory Compliance Lead, who has very quickly established rapport and a positive and constructive working relationship with officer, councillors and tenants and has embraced opportunities for co-design and collaboration with tenants to respond to feedback received through the board and to support tenant board members to develop in their roles and opportunities to be involved and to hold the Council to account as a landlord.
- 5.4.4 Councillor membership of the board is balanced across political groups and includes the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and Leader of the Opposition. The members represent a mix of rural and town centre wards as Councillors. The Council Leader in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Landlord Services is Chair of the Board. Thanks go to Cllrs Allnatt, Glancy, Adcock, Brown and Browne for their support.
- 5.4.5 Tenant membership of the board has, without a doubt, transformed the approach, focus and insights for the whole board and has energised opportunities for learning, collaboration and co-design. Tenant board members are actively engaged not only in the meetings, but also in between, providing suggestions and feedback and contributing to work that flows from the board. Examples are provided later in the report.
- 5.4.6 Tenant board member recruitment formed an initial task in 2024, and guided by a role profile, expressions of interest to join the board were sought. The role profile can be found here: [Tenant Board Member, Role Profile](#).
- 5.4.7 The terms of reference created three tenant board member spaces; however, it was agreed to take a pragmatic view to this based on the number of expressions of interest received. The recruitment process was advertised from July 2024 through to 13th September 2024. Awareness of the opportunity was raised through our newsletter, Your Choice engagement meetings, on our website and through social media. The result was four applications from a wide demographic of tenants, all of which had something different to offer as board member.
- 5.4.8 The applications were considered by officers and tenants at the tenant engagement meeting (Your Choice) on 24th September 2024. After discussion a decision was made by the group to appoint all four candidates as LAB Board Members.
- 5.4.9 Our Tenant Engagement and Regulatory Compliance Lead, Kerry, provides support to the tenant LAB members. This support extends beyond basic invites to the meeting and sharing of information. We want to make sure our LAB members have access to a range of opportunities to help them to be effective in their role, this includes individual tailored one to one meetings with Kerry, following the same format that we do with our own team members. Kerry has also assisted the group with training opportunities and engages with them regularly outside of the meetings.
- 5.4.10 Kerry summarises her support for tenant LAB members as:
- a) I have an invested interest in ensuring the board members are comfortable and have everything they need, and this involves me checking in with them. This is to ensure they are successful in their roles.
 - b) I am their single point of contact and have met with each of them to consider any development opportunities and this will be reviewed throughout the year, each quarter.
 - c) I provide advocacy assistance and support them with liaising between departments.

- d) I support and encourage them to get involved in meetings, task and finish groups ensuring that they are aware of both face-to-face participation but also digital participation.

5.5 **Overview of board agenda**

- 5.5.1 The LAB agenda is presented in two different formats, a traditional agenda which is accompanied by a pack of information, and a PowerPoint presentation.
- 5.5.2 The agenda pack contains details of everything that will be discussed at the meeting including timings and details of which officers will present each item. The pack is circulated to all LAB members a week prior to the meeting, with the option of a hard copy being provided in advance if required. All members are provided with a paper copy on the day.
- 5.5.3 The agenda is split into two sections, the first section covers “Governance, Assurance and Oversight”. This focusses on progress with regulatory compliance, performance information, complaints performance, and a financial overview. The purpose of this is to ensure that all members of the board have awareness and visibility of these areas, and meaningful discussion can take place to support positive progress.
- 5.5.4 The second section covers “Sector Insights and Key Updates: Know Your Stock, Know Your Tenants”. This section raises awareness of current issues and changes in the sector, making use of publications from bodies such as the Housing Ombudsman. Assessments of our performance against, or compliance with, these documents or new legislation is provided to the board.
- 5.5.5 Key updates on our work to “Know our Tenants and Know our Stock” are provided, including corporate projects and other improvement work.
- 5.5.6 This is to ensure that the board is sighted on upcoming issues and is aware of the work being done to maintain compliance and achieve positive outcomes for tenants.

5.6 **Key outcomes and achievements of the board**

- 5.6.1 One of our proudest achievements and outcomes from the board has been the open and honest approach that members, particularly those that our tenants, have taken. The board is a safe space for discussion and some of the outcomes below really demonstrate that. Tenants have provided an explanation of how they feel about the services we deliver, providing an honest reality check.
- 5.6.2 Tenants, Officers and Members now share a collective awareness and increased understanding of housing performance, compliance and service delivery, including upcoming challenges. This has helped to inform debate elsewhere, including tenant engagement meetings and Member meetings.
- 5.6.3 There have been examples of shared good practice. Following a presentation at the board on the outcomes of the second phase of the Grenfell Tower report, the external peer that attends the board shared an example of how their organisation has approached an assessment of their compliance with the requirements. This was shared with our Senior Compliance Officer and is now forming the basis of our own piece of work which will be reported back to the board.
- 5.6.4 The board meetings have led to an authentic and reciprocal relationship between Officers, Members and Tenants. From the initial meet and greet meeting through to the ongoing engagement with Kerry and then the formal board meeting, we have been able to break

down barriers and misunderstandings through open and frank conversations on subjects that matter to tenants.

- 5.6.5 The initial meet and greet session set the tone for the future. The session was informal and included conversations about who we all are, our history and experiences. This helped board members to develop a good understanding of each other and broke down any pre-conceived views that may have been held.
- 5.6.6 The honest feedback and reflections from tenants have led to real examples of collaboration on improvements for the future. Frank feedback from one tenant on her experiences with contractors in her home has led to the development of a Code of Conduct for staff and contractors. The document is being co-designed with the Your Voice, Your Choice group following a task and finish group. This document will become a key part of all future contracts relating to housing services, demonstrating our commitment to listen to tenants and ensure that our services are shaped around their views.
- 5.6.7 The board has developed over time, partly in response to feedback from board members and partly in response to our wider work to improve the housing service. This shows a demonstrable willingness to continue to evolve and improve.
- 5.6.8 The focus of the housing team over the next two board meetings will be to continue to develop links between the board and wider tenant group.

5.7 **Changes in response to feedback**

- 5.7.1 The board has evolved significantly over the last four meetings. Initial meetings were held before tenant members were appointed, since their involvement we have been able to develop the meetings in response to their feedback and to respond to their needs.
- 5.7.2 The two-part agenda that is described above was designed to split the meeting to provide clear focus on each area. The first meeting with the two-part agenda was held in February, the focus was clear however the meeting needed to be fast paced to keep to time. The tenant board members provided feedback and reflections at the end of the meeting, highlighting that the fast pace had made it more difficult to follow and there was less opportunity to engage on each item. As a result, future meetings will be extended to allow more time, and a substantial break will be provided between the two sections.
- 5.7.3 During our meet and greet session tenants highlighted that Officers and Members tend to use “jargon” or technical language. In response to this we actively encourage tenants to call out jargon and things that are unclear. The Chair of the board has actively encouraged this and meetings regularly get paused to explain an acronym or technical term. Officers take time to explain technical terms when they need to be used, and this is approached with good humour in a relaxed way.
- 5.7.4 There is a clear focus on performance on the agenda, and performance information is shared proactively with board members. The timing of the February meeting fell in a way that meant that the published quarterly performance data had been published for some time, but the next quarter had not been published. This meant that the recent data could be shared but not in a way that was finalised. Future meeting dates are now being planned around performance information publication dates to ensure that the most recent information is being discussed.
- 5.7.5 Feedback from our sector peer led to the inclusion of sector highlight and spotlight reports being included on the agenda. The purpose of the reports is to reflect on sector changes and learning and to evaluate our compliance with the recommendations.

5.8 Tenant feedback and testimonials

5.8.1 Our tenant LAB members all joined the board for various reasons. These varied from their positive experiences with us as a landlord, through to more negative experiences. They all saw it as an opportunity to influence the way in which we deliver services for tenants.

5.8.2 We encourage our tenants to be open and honest with us about their views, and as a result we have challenging and constructive conversations about services.

5.8.3 One of our tenants, Brian, has provided the following reflections on his board involvement. This demonstrates a shift in his perception of us based on his involvement on the board:

“I have been a council tenant for several years after living in a number of rented and owned properties. I have on occasions questioned why certain events took place or decisions made for residents and their properties. I felt that it was a them and us syndrome and that the council did not care or listen about residents and their circumstances.

I decided to apply for a role on the Landlords Assurance Board, hoping I could make an impact without actually becoming a councillor. Since joining the board, I have received feedback on why and how decisions were made and remedies implemented. I have also supplied feedback on how residents have been treated and how we/they feel.

I have been involved in decision making, advised of recommendations and have also been asked to advise in reviewing a new code of conduct for both council employees and their contractors.

Since joining the Landlord Assurance Board, I have noticed a significant improvement to the way the council deals with residents and resolving their issues.

I now find that when speaking to my neighbours, I am often defending the council and advising them to contact the council and raise their concerns because the council does listen and does act on issues. Previously they felt that nothing would be done. This is a testament to how the council has transformed itself in a positive way.”

5.8.4 Another tenant, Carol, has given her thoughts. These show that positive steps have been taken, but there is potential room for further improvements. We remain committed to working to understand this and shape improvements based on this:

“Over the past year I’ve seen many changes not only in staff turnover but also how the council is run.

The biggest change as far as tenants are concerned is the set up of Your Choice Your voice committee.

Tenants previously felt they weren’t listened to but now they have a chance to voice their concerns and be heard at their own meeting although a recruitment drive is needed for more tenants to participate. I believe this is now actively in progress to gain interest.

Although there has been lots of improvements MBC still have a long way to go as sometimes, they tend to go in headfirst without considering the consequences and the impact it has on tenants but having said this they do then listen to feedback and have acted accordingly.

Communication has been a big issue in the past whereas a member of (staff) leaves and information hasn’t been passed on therefore having to start from the beginning although this is now showing some improvement.

Housing Officers appear to have far too many properties to look after therefore very frustrating when tenants cannot reach them. With the new team at MBC in place we are now beginning to see a much more stable relationship. I look forward to continuing to being a member of Your Choice also Landlord Assurance Board of which I am getting more involved in and having a better understanding of how the council operates.”

5.9 Feedback to Your Choice, Your Voice and to RSH

- 5.9.1 The LAB and the work we do with the tenant engagement group, Your Choice, Your Voice, are closely linked. The intention is that key programmes of work or engagement work that are identified in the LAB are then raised with the wider tenant group in Your Choice, Your Voice.
- 5.9.2 Examples of this work include the Code of Conduct which is mentioned earlier in this report. The issue was first raised in the LAB which led to a task and finish group being set up with a number of engaged tenants. Following this the draft Code was discussed at Your Choice, Your Voice and the final version will be shared with both the group and the board.
- 5.9.3 This will continue to be one mechanism for ensuring that the work done by the LAB is shared more widely with tenants.
- 5.9.4 Following inspection in 2024, the housing team continues to engage with the Regulator for Social Housing. The purpose of this is to give assurance on our continued compliance with the regulation and of our improvement work.
- 5.9.5 The regulator agreed that the LAB was a key part of our work to “turn up the volume” on tenants’ voice. The evolution of the LAB is a key part of our regulatory updates, and the regulator will be invited back to participate in a future LAB meeting so that they can see the progress made.

6 Options Considered

- 6.1 None. This report forms part of the Scrutiny Committee work programme and creates an important opportunity to consider the work and impact of the Landlord Assurance Board, which has now been in place for almost a year. It also provides an important link between the Landlord Assurance Board and the Council’s Governance Arrangements, and opportunity to increase visibility and profile of the board as a core part of the Council’s landlord function.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 Regular engagement has taken place with the Landlord Assurance Board. Tenants are represented on the board and are actively holding the Council to account.
- 7.2 Awareness of the LAB has been raised through the Your Choice, Your Voice meetings.
- 7.3 Regular engagement also takes place with representatives from the Regulator for Social Housing as set out in the report.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are limited financial implications associated with the Landlord Assurance Board. Members of the board, including tenants, are provided with greater oversight of financial performance and budget management within Council.
- 8.2 The reasonable expenses of tenant board members are covered by the council, including travel and childcare costs. This helps the board members to fulfil their roles and makes the

meeting more accessible to a wider range of tenants. This has a minimal impact on the Housing Revenue Account.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Dawn Garton 13/03/25

9 Legal and Governance Implications

- 9.1 The Landlord Assurance Board has a key role in supporting the Council as a landlord. The establishment of the Landlord Assurance Board and terms of reference for the board were approved by Cabinet in January 2024, and in September 2024, Cabinet received a formal update following the programmed inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing and agreed that the Landlord Assurance Board should have an ongoing role in overseeing regulatory progress. Whilst the board does not have a decision-making function and does not replace the council's existing governance and decision-making arrangements, representatives are well placed to ask questions, seek assurance and provide feedback relating to progress against the required actions.
- 9.2 The annual report provides an important link between the Landlord Assurance Board and the Council's Governance Arrangements, and opportunity to increase visibility and profile of the board as a core part of the Council's landlord function and requirements to demonstrate transparency, accountability and influence – a core strand of the regulatory requirements.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Clive Tobin 13/03/25

10 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 10.1 Under the equality duty (set out in the Equality Act 2010), public authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and consider the potential impact decisions and actions on each of the protected characteristics
- 10.2 The Regulatory Judgement confirmed that the Council provided assurance that it treats tenant with fairness and respect. The Landlord Assurance Board was a key part of this validation, and the developments and evolution of the board identified in this report demonstrate an ongoing commitment to equality.

11 Data Protection Implications

- 11.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed. It was not considered necessary as there are no risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

12 Community Safety Implications

- 12.1 The Landlord Assurance Board is provided with performance information across a range of services. Their oversight extends to the management of Anti-Social Behaviour within the housing stock. This raises awareness of our performance in this area.

13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 13.1 None arising directly from this report.

14 Risk & Mitigation

| Risk No | Risk Description | Likelihood | Impact | Risk |
|---------|--|-------------------|--------------|------|
| 1 | The Council does not take its duty to involve tenants seriously, leading to poor outcomes for tenants. | Almost Impossible | Catastrophic | Low |
| 2 | The Landlord Assurance Board becomes ineffective and does not provide tenants and members with the oversight required by regulation. | Very Low | Critical | Low |

| | | Impact / Consequences | | | |
|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|--------------|
| | | Negligible | Marginal | Critical | Catastrophic |
| Likelihood | Score/ definition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 6 Very High | | | | |
| | 5 High | | | | |
| | 4 Significant | | | | |
| | 3 Low | | | | |
| | 2 Very Low | | | 2 | |
| | 1 Almost impossible | | | | 1 |

| Risk No | Mitigation |
|---------|---|
| 1 | Maintain corporate focus, oversight, transparency and accountability. Ensure tenants are able to hold the council to account for compliance. Scrutiny focus on committee workplan (March 2025). |
| 2 | Continue to take account of feedback from board members. Regularly refresh board membership to ensure new perspectives. Scrutiny committee workplan (March 2025) |

15 Background Papers

15.1 January 2024: [Cabinet Report, Housing Regulation Update](#)

16 Appendices

16.1 Appendix A – Example agenda for LAB (February 2025 meeting)

16.2 Appendix B – Presentation to accompany LAB (February 2025 meeting)