

Bristol Homes and Communities Board

Minutes of the meeting 25 June 2020, 3.00 pm Venue – City Hall, Bristol

Board members:

Councillor Paul Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, Cabinet Member for Housing (Co-Chair)

Alistair Allender, Bristol Housing Partnership

Peter Daw, Tenant Representative, Housing Management Board (Co-Chair)

David Ingerslev, St Mungo's

Sado Jirde, Black South West Network

Ian Knight, Homes England

Lindy Morgan, Community Led Homes

Kathryn Pennington, Vistry

Tom Renhard, ACORN

Other attendees:

Ian Barrett, Avon Wildlife Trust

Corrina Haskins, Democratic Services, BCC

Julian Higson, Director: Housing and Landlord Services, BCC

Deanne Klein, Policy and Projects Manager, BCC

Andrew Linfoot, Environment Board

Alex Minshull, Climate Change Manager, BCC

Aisha Stewart, Energy, BCC

Hannah Spungin, Energy, BCC

David Tudgey, Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change

Lizzi Testani, Bristol Green Capital

Jessie Wilde, Bristol Housing Festival

Zoe Willcox, Director: Development of Place, BCC

Matt Wood, Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that this would be the last meeting of Alistair Allender as he would soon be retiring and would be replaced by Sarah Maylor. He thanked Alistair for his work on the Board.



Apologies for absence were received from Rob Kerse, Penny Walster, Cathy Provenzano, Laura Welti, Cllr Nicola Beech and James Durie.

2. Election of Co-Chair

As discussed at a previous meeting, the Chair asked for nominations for the position of a co-chair to support in the work of the Board.

There was one nomination from Pete Daw, which was supported by the Board.

RESOLVED – that Pete Daw be elected as co-chair of the Bristol Homes and Communities Board.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the 14 May 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising

The Chair confirmed that following the public forum questions raised by Acorn at the previous meeting, he had met with representatives of Acorn to discuss the issues in greater detail.

In response to a question about the current position in relation to rough sleepers and those being temporarily accommodated in hotels the following comments were raised:

- The Government had announced a new fund for when hotels were due to open on 4 July to help ensure people did not have to return to the streets and it was hoped that Bristol would receive a substantial amount, although the process for applying for the funding had not yet been made clear;
- In Bristol, there was currently just under 300 people residing in hotels and a further 311 had moved on;
- Once funding was secured, it would be useful for the Council to meet with Housing Associations and private landlords to see how they could support initiatives;
- In addition to the risk of people returning to the street at the point when hotels reopened, there was also a risk of more people becoming homeless once the furlough scheme and the ban on evictions ended.

4. Public Forum

There was no public forum received.

5. Fuel Poverty



Alex Minshull, Climate Change Manager BCC, set the context for the following two items and reported that both fuel poverty and climate change were long standing problems and although good progress had been made in some areas, there was no simple fix and action was required by a lot of agencies across the city as well as changes in policies at national government level. He confirmed that there were also risks associated by competing pressures and it was important to ensure that action to improve one area would not make things worse in another area. He also drew attention to BCC initiatives, such as expanding heat networks in the city and the City Leap project, a joint venture with the private sector to support the delivery of the target for Bristol to be carbon neutral by 2030.

1. Presentation by Aisha Stewart and Hannah Spungin

HS/AS gave a presentation summarised as follows:

- unhealthy homes caused problems for people of all ages;
- a lot of cost was taken by NHS as people often ended up in hospital, but it was a multi-agency problem and not just the responsibility of the health sector;
- the improvement of people's homes was essential to keep people out of hospital;
- improving energy efficiency of homes would reduce poverty as well as reducing CO₂;
- a One City Plan approach had been taken to the Fuel Poverty Action Plan with governance by the Health and Wellbeing Board and endorsement being support from the Environment Sustainability Board and Homes and Communities Board;
- the action plan had been delayed by COVID 19 and would now be completed in the autumn so it would be in place for winter;
- actions were both short term and longer term "Just energy transition" – needs to link to decarbonisation of heat plan;
- technology was constantly changing and so the plan needed to be updated accordingly;
- one of the joint projects – Warmer Homes Advice and Money (WHAM):
 - WHAM was a partnership between Bristol City Council and the Centre for Sustainable Energy; We Care; Talking Money; Citizens Advice and Bristol Energy Networks.
 - WHAM gave people one point of contact for advice on reducing financial, food and fuel poverty;
 - There is an online referral form and Freephone number.
- discussion topics
 - work being undertaken by organisations;
 - new build work? Housing Associations?
 - does FP factor into any of the programs you are currently doing?
 - does FP factor into any of the decision making within your organisation?
 - were you aware of the government target of EPC C by 2030 for Fuel Poor Homes?
 - planned improvement works and Energy Efficiency
 - do you consider homeowners bills when planning energy efficiency or sustainable energy work?
 - support for employees and tenants
 - are you aware of support services for people in Fuel Poverty in Bristol?
 - what would be a useful resource?



- **Ask of BHCB:**
 - Provide information on any current actions your organisation is doing around fuel poverty/energy efficiency improvements;
 - Consider any actions your organisation could take to prevent or alleviate fuel poverty or ensure a just transition;
 - Feedback & input on the draft of the action plan;
 - “No Cold Homes Group” – speak to your organisation about being included in this group.

6. One City Climate Strategy

1. Presentation by Andrew Linfoot, Environment Board

AS gave a presentation summarised as follows:

- One City Climate strategy was launched in February 2020:
 - Vision statement - by 2030 Bristol to be carbon neutral and climate resilient;
 - 10 themes: transport; buildings – new buildings need to be of a good standard; heat decarbonisation; electricity; consumption and waste; business and the economy; public voluntary and social enterprise sectors; natural environment; food; infrastructure interdependencies
 - Principles: Fair; collaborative; transformative; learning; evidence based;
- The Ask – opening up the conversation:
 - an idea..? COVID 19 Green economy recovery plan?
 - low Carbon Retrofit Economic recovery package;
 - green jobs from major retrofit programme of the existing social housing stock suiting a range of qualifications;
 - draw on technology and innovation;
 - relatively strong local ‘green building skills’, building services expertise and public energy advice services;
 - addressing fuel poverty goals in tandem with carbon neutral goals;
 - delivering health benefits through providing better environments;
 - leadership from public sector to demonstrate potential with exemplar retrofits and new build projects on own buildings (including housing) and to drive skills and quality improvements.
 - scalability and confidence for the private sector.

2. Matt Wood and David Tudgey – Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change (BACCC)

MW and DT introduced themselves as members of BACCC, a voluntary group of 15-20 experts that provided technical advice on climate change to all of the Bristol One City Boards. DT advised that in the context of a climate emergency, it was important to look at projects that could make a



difference rather than waiting for changes in policy at the national or local level and drew attention to a project he had been involved in: <https://cheeseproject.co.uk/news/2020-03-Costing-the-Earth>

3. Presentation by Ian Barrett – Avon Wildlife Trust

IB gave a presentation on the building a response to the ecological emergency summarised as follows:

- unprecedented ecological crisis – globally we are losing vast majority of wildlife;
- this was replicated at the national level, decline in species e.g. hedgehogs and brown hare;
- loss of insects which had an impact on the food chain;
- change due to different things:
 - In UK – changes in land use and pollution due to use of fertilisers and pesticides;
 - In Bristol - people paving over front gardens;
- why relevant?
 - Wildlife supports the whole eco system;
 - Pollination – ¾ of crops rely on insect pollination;
 - At major risk of losing species;
 - Climate change and ecological emergency were equally important and are linked;
 - Global economy depends on wildlife;
- what need be done:
 - stop destruction of habitats;
 - protect existing habitats and link and enhance wildlife hotspots;
 - manage other land sympathetically for wildlife;
 - stop routine and unnecessary use of pesticides;
- Mayor declared ecological emergency in February 2020;
- targets of One City Plan:
 - everyone has access to good quality green space by 2036;
 - reverse decline in bees and pollinators by 2037;
 - double wildlife abundance by 2044
- targets relevant for BHCB:
 - by 2036 all new developments to have the highest standards of design for wildlife, water and wellbeing;
 - the majority of new buildings and infrastructure will have green living roofs and make a positive contribution to the local environment;
- Challenges:
 - nature recovery network;
 - wildlife friendly development;
 - retrofitting habitats.

The Chair invited questions/comments on all presentations:



Bristol Energy is listed as a lead provider in the Fuel Poverty Action Plan, what is the impact of the recent announcement that the company will be sold? HS clarified that the reference to BE needed to be updated.

One City approach is important to tackling these issues. Fuel poverty, debts has impact on mental health so partnership working is important with NHS. How does about South Gloucestershire fit into the WHAM project? AS confirmed that there was a link with South Gloucestershire and cases would get referred on.

The Chair asked the developer representatives to comment on work being done in the sector to address the issues related to fuel poverty; climate and ecological change.

In relation to private developers, KP reported that:

- there were a number of different approaches being taken to what could be done with buildings and the most consistent was the fabric first approach as this was easy to deliver;
- the next challenge was around the energy source as developers would soon not be able to install gas boilers and would need to consider alternatives such as ground source heat pumps;
- a lot of organisations were looking at modern methods of construction (MMC) type products and the industry was watching developments in this area;
- in terms of biodiversity, developers would try to meet what was required through the planning process, but it was not usual for developers to go above and beyond requirements;
- for developers, the land value needed to take the strain of the additional costs and so it would be useful to have clarity about requirements from the outset. Vistry Partnerships would be canvassing the views of its clients on future requirements.

In relation to Homes England, IK reported that:

- design and sustainability had become higher on the government agenda over the last two years;
- as a government agency, Homes England has been encouraged to take higher account of design, sustainability and new technology such as MMC;
- Homes England recognised the potential of MMC as a way to reduce waste and energy use and had launched a national research project with selected partners to look at different types of MMC technology over a five year period looking at the benefits of off-site housing;
- as the MMC sector developed, there would be a reduction in production costs and significant improvements of CO2 emissions;
- retrofitting was significant and there was a need to make existing homes more energy efficient, however, there was no funding to deliver this or encourage take up by private homeowners and landlords;
- in terms of ecological issues, Homes England ensured that best practice was followed on the sites being brought forward in terms of current government policies on biodiversity.

In relation to Housing Associations, AA reported:

- all HAs had an approach to an environmental strategy, but some may be underdeveloped, as HAs were struggling to know how to do this and where they fit in the process;



- there were development teams in the HAs who would focus on meeting planning requirements whereas a different team would look at housing delivery and would be more involved in issues such as fuel poverty; there needed to be a way for the work of these teams to overlap;
- policies relating to climate change and fuel poverty may conflict e.g. when BCS14 policy was introduced, there was a lot of discussion about how improving sustainability did not necessarily result in cheaper fuel for residents;
- as things were constantly changing, it was important to ensure that actions were not too definitive or too complex to deliver;

Action: AA undertook to contact the relevant speakers to share his views about HAs so this could be picked up in the future by the Bristol Housing Partnership. He also welcomed Ian Barrett's offer to speak to HAs and offer help and advice.

In relation to Bristol City Council's role as a developer and landlord, JH reported:

- BCC had a decent sized development programme and was leading the way in terms of low carbon development and fuel poverty/efficiency;
- BCC had been working closely with Bristol Housing Festival on modular construction and had received international recognition for some small scale developments;
- BCC had been installing ground source heat pumps where possible;
- Retrofitting was the biggest challenge for the Council as the owner of 28,000 homes. An initial estimate of the cost of retrofitting these properties was £600m and such a large programme could only be funded at a national level.

In response to views expressed about the importance of the planning system to set the standards to drive change, ZW confirmed that sustainable standards were fundamental to the planning system, but there was a risk of these standards not being met if planning was deregulated. She expressed concern that as it was often a challenge to get developers to meet the existing standards, any relaxation would have an impact on issues such as design and sustainability.

Action: TR expressed an interest in joining the "End Cold Homes" group.

Action: The Chair reminded the Board that the purpose of the discussions was to build up links and relationships between the different sectors and different boards and asked Board Members to take the issues raised back to their organisation.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

Thursday 8 October 2020

Thursday 14 January 2021



Thursday 18 March 2021

Meeting finished at 5.04 pm

CHAIR _____

