

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Housing Management Board

10 December 2020 at 6.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Alex Marsh (Chair), Harriet Clough, Helen Godwin and Jo Sergeant

Officers in Attendance:-

Sarah Spicer (Business Innovation Manager) and Liz Cheetham (Engagement Team Leader)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies were received from Councillors Richard Eddy and Paul Goggin. Kerry Bailes had given apologies for absence at the start of the meeting.

The Chair welcomed two new members, Philip Morris and Peter Edwards to the Board.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the Housing Management Board of 29 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters arising

Action: Minute 4 (3) Adaptions to accommodation – this action still outstanding, Councillor Clough to liaise by e-mail with Pete Daws;

Action: Minute 4 (7) Disabled Facilities Grants - this action still outstanding, item to be brought to the next HMB meeting in March 2021.

3. Public Forum

None received.



4. Moving Forward Together - update

The Business Innovation Manager (Housing and Landlord Services) gave a presentation on the updated Moving Forward Together draft model.

The Board was reminded of the draft model's six key priorities –

1. Design services from the resident's point of view;
2. Provide services that are visible and local;
3. Rebuild trust and relationships;
4. Be a diverse and inclusive service that fully represents the city of Bristol;
5. Engage residents and employees in a creative and meaningful way;
6. Give back accountability and decision making to residents and employees.

Key issues and emphasis in the update were –

- a) That residents must be listened to and processes introduced that made it easier for residents to make contact with Housing Officers and other key council staff;
- b) Building of trust formed a fundamental part of the approach particularly around on site safety and security;
- c) Despite challenging Covid-19 restrictions significant progress had been made and 60 workshops had been held to facilitate the listening and understanding of concerns and feedback from residents;
- d) There had been surveys sent to residents asking a range of questions in relation to the six main priorities; contacted 500 residents on average per week;
- e) Feedback identified a number of priorities including provision of local surgeries and more opportunities for face to face contact, improved litter control and installation of more CCTV around estates;
- f) Modernising how the H&LS team engages with residents;
- g) Look at what needed to change to deliver a resident led service with full accessibility;
- h) The Operating model must give residents priorities full backing so it was essential that the H&LS was able to test its own ambitions and make sure that new ways of operating worked;



- i) The pilot scheme would fully test the robustness of the model and alongside testing would enable looking at ways of working with other services that the Council provides;
- j) Training & Development of employees would be a key feature of improving services;
- k) The pilot to commence in spring of next year, it was envisaged that residents would be able to really see a difference to service provision

Arising from questions the following points were made/clarified -

- i. It was anticipated that the work of the Residents Advisory Group would meaningfully engage with the pilot in order to identify what would work and what would not;
- ii. With regard to the pilot, preliminary work would look at long standing work patterns and Housing Officer availability as it was recognised that without proper resources the proposals would not work as intended;
- iii. The Pilot would use an area that best represented the whole of the City. Issues to explore will include staff get access to facilities, lone working issues and associated safeguarding when on remote sites;
- iv. It was suggested that the Pilot consider two locations to better capture the diversity eg one in centre of the City and one further out as the issues could be very different. This would be explored **Action: Business Innovation Manager**;
- v. The next MFT update would measure the success of both the Pilot;
- vi. Possible presentation for next meeting about Human Resource aspects regarding recruitment and retention of Housing Officers and the opportunities of a professional career, rather than just a job, in the context of the Pilot scheme;
- vii. Noted that the Pilot scheme would be fully resourced to obtain the best feedback and the ability to assess the robustness of the proposed changes. This would include the required number of housing officers and surveyors.

The Board noted the presentation and endorsed its aims and objectives.

5. Social Housing White Paper

The Chair and Business Innovation Manager (Housing and Landlord Services) outlined the core goals of the White Paper which set out the actions the government would be taking to ensure that residents in social housing were safe, would be listened to, be able to live in good quality homes and have access to redress when things go wrong. Noted that the White Paper built upon the proposals set out in the social housing green paper.

The Charter sets out seven commitments that residents should expect from their landlord:

1. To be safe in their home.



2. To know how their landlord was performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money.
3. To have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman service.
4. To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. To have their voice heard by their landlord.
6. To have a good quality home and Neighbourhood to live in, with their landlord keeping their home in good repair.
7. The Government to ensure social housing could support people to take their first step to ownership.

Arising from questions the following points were made/clarified –

- i. The White Paper was welcomed by social landlords including Bristol City Council;
- ii. Building Safety was at the core of the White Paper ;
- iii. The Council had started considering issues raised by the Green Paper so had already made good progress;
- iv. The Government would be carrying out a consultation exercise next year regarding the regulatory processes and performance measurement
- v. The issues raised in the White Paper and how the Council would be dealing with them would be brought back to future meetings of the Housing Management Board.

The Board noted the aims and objectives of the White Paper and endorsed the work that Bristol City Council had achieved to date.

6. Housing Ombudsman - self assessment

The Business Innovation Manager (Housing and Landlord Services) gave a summary of changes that were happening regarding the complaints process for social housing via the Housing Ombudsman service.

Key points emphasised were –

- i. There was a spotlight on the social housing sector in particular on Health & Safety issues;
- ii. There would be an improved and clear Definition of a Complaint;
- iii. There would be changes to the complaints handing code with a two stage structure and with greater focus on clear time frames;
- iv. There would be improved correspondence to ensure better promotion of the complaint process and lessons learned from analysis of complaints;



- v. The Self-Assessment paperwork would be published by the end of the year and the Council's corporate policies would be updated to reflect the changes;
- vi. One key aim of the changes was to ensure social landlords were identifying and address systemic issues;
- vii. The HMB would get regular updates regarding the progress of the changes in relation to the Council's housing service and any additional relevant information.

The Board welcomed the aims of the changes noting that this would build a learning loop to feedback into the monitoring of complaints handling performance for the future.

7. Covid-19 update

The Service Manager for Responsive Repairs gave a presentation updating the Board with regard to the Council's housing service and its response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Key points summarised were –

- i. Housing and Landlord Services had continued to deliver services throughout the second Lockdown period including the provision of the full Responsive Repairs Service;
- ii. Full support had been given to tenants who were facing difficulties paying their rent during the covid-19 crisis;
- iii. Liaison with community representatives was maintained in response to Covid-19 safety concerns and anxieties;
- iv. There was an emphasis on letting properties quickly and effectively, in order to address the rise in urgent rehousing & homelessness cases;
- v. Continued to provide focussed support to identified vulnerable residents;
- vi. Provided an adjusted service to residents in Support Housing for Older People.

Arising from comments/questions the following points were made/clarified –

- a) Access to the Housing register and information about council services could be obtained at the Council's Temple Street offices;
- b) Parking on dropped kerbs at social housing sites by Council staff/contractors was a growing problem. It was noted that this was illegal. Agreed to communicate to all staff/contractors, explicitly, that this was not acceptable (**Action: Service Manager-Responsive Repairs**);
- c) Government guidance during Covid-19 restrictions regarding the Legal requirement to do electric safety checks in properties within a certain timescale, to be better communicated to residents so that contractors would be able to gain reasonable access to do the work and tenants would be fully aware of the need for the work to be carried out;



- d) Further efforts to be made with regard to communicating the use of communal lifts with the requirement for social distancing. Noted that there were sometimes language and cultural issues which formed barriers to communication and this needed to be considered further;
- e) Non-compliance of use of hand sanitisers and social distancing was sometimes an issue due to language and cultural reasons. H&LS to consider using communication methods such as simpler messaging eg using infographics, working with schools so that children could help communicate the message and perhaps asking Covid-19 Marshalls for their help;
- f) Cleaning of communal areas within housing blocks remained a priority and increased hours amongst existing staff had been increased and where required extra staff had been brought in to assist caretakers.

The Board noted and appreciated the work that had been done to maintain services during the Covid-19 period so far.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Early to mid-March 2021, date to be confirmed.

9. Any Other Business

- 1) Draft Minutes of the HMB to be circulated prior to Area Forum meetings as soon as possible, however it was acknowledged that recent changes to the Forums, due to low attendance levels, might mean that this was not always possible/practical;
- 2) A question was raised regarding tenants who were on the sex offenders register. This would be looked at further and an update given at the next HMB meeting.

Meeting ended at 8pm

CHAIR _____

