

# Housing Management Board Agenda



**Date:** Wednesday, 10 March 2021

**Time:** 6.00 pm

**Venue:** Zoom meeting

## **Distribution:**

**Councillors:** Alex Marsh (Chair), Helen Godwin, Charlie Bolton, Nicola Bowden-Jones, Harriet Clough, Richard Eddy, Paul Goggin, Jo Sergeant, Pete Daw, Andrew Hatley, Christine Jory, Kerry Bailes and Ross Dallimore

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**Date:** Tuesday, 2 March 2021

Agenda

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## 1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

## 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

To confirm as a correct record.

(Pages 4 - 9)

## 3. Public Forum

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item.

Any member of the public or Councillor may participate in Public Forum. The detailed arrangements for so doing are set out in the Public Information Sheet at the back of this agenda. Public Forum items should be emailed to [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk) and please note that the following deadlines will apply in relation to this meeting:-

Questions - Written questions must be received 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that your question(s) must be received in this office at the latest by 5 pm on 4 March 2021.

Petitions and Statements - Petitions and statements must be received on the working day prior to the meeting. For this meeting this means that your submission must be received in this office at the latest by 12.00 noon on 9 March 2021.

**Please note, your time allocated to speak may have to be strictly limited if there are a lot of submissions. This may be as short as one minute**

## 4. Accessible Homes and TEC

(Pages 10 - 13)

## 5. Moving Forward Together - update

Presentation by Sarah Spicer

(Pages 14 - 17)

## 6. Covid-19 - verbal update

## 7. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed



## 8. Any Other Business



## 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** \_\_\_\_\_



## Report for Housing Management Board

### Accessible Homes and TEC Hub

#### Service Update

#### Overview of team

Accessible Homes and TEC Hub is a team in Homes and Landlord Services focussed on assisting people to remain independent in their own homes. The team carry out a range of interventions to support residents to remain living independently in their own home from equipment to bedroom and bathroom extensions. The team arrange and oversee the repair of bathing adaptations and servicing and maintenance of lifts in council properties. In January 2020 the new TEC Hub joined the team and is responsible for assessing for and provide Technology Enable Care to support adult care in providing innovative solutions to care in people's homes.

The team is made up of Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Occupational Therapy Aids (OTAs) who carry out assessments of people's needs around access the home environment. On completion of the assessment if it is not obvious how the identified need can be met then a surveyor will be allocated to work with the OT/OTA and the family to see how needs can be met. This can involve many technical designs to reach a workable solution. The Caseworkers will be the point of contact for the customer throughout the process and oversee the administrative process. The Technicians complete minor adaptations quickly where these are identified such as grab rails, half steps, raise and lower chairs. We have recently appointed a clerk of works who will visit whilst contractors are on sight to ensure everything is going to plan and they also check repairs when these are ordered.

#### What has been delivered since March 2020

##### Cross tenure completions April to Dec 2020

	Number
Assessments	308
Minor adaptations completed Work	741
Major Adaptations Completed	421*

\*Budgets are 100% committed with full spend expected at year end

Since last March the team has had to adapt to new ways of working to continue to provide a level of service to our customers.

The first lockdown did not allow for us to visit people in their homes to carry out an assessment, it also prevented the opening of the assessment centre. We quickly adopted a new way of carrying out virtual assessments using WhatsApp. This enabled us to continue to carry out some assessments. We continue to use this as an option especially for staff and customers who are still shielding.

The technicians team continued to carry out minor adaptations in peoples in homes to prevent hospital admission. The TEC Hub was only just fully staffed and ready to start when lockdown came in. The new team had to come together remotely, including all training. The team have worked closely with hospital discharge teams to aid discharge safely and quickly.

The Caseworker and the OTs/OTAs team carried out 100's of welfare checks for all of those customers involved in our service. Telephone calls were made to advise of delays and to check if people needed access to other services – many were referred to other agencies for further support.

Through out the year we have continued to release works that can be completed in a Covid secure way including stairlifts and external works. As consequence we have no stairlifts and very little external work on our waiting list.

### **Work backlog**

The current backlog of work is unacceptable, and we have been working to reduce this backlog. However, there are multiple factors influencing waiting times these include;

- **Covid**
- **Staff**
- **Contractors**

### **Covid**

Has had a significant impact on the ability of the team to carry out their work at every stage from not being able to visit people in their homes or to hold assessment centre consultations and with two out of our three contractors furloughing their entire work force from March to August during 2020. Many of our customers have been shielding as have some of the team. The need to social distance and wear PPE has also significantly reduced the way in which the team and our contractors can work. These will be ongoing issues until such time all restrictions can be lifted.

### **Staff shortages**

The OT team has not been at full capacity for at least 18 months. Long term sickness, maternity leave, unfilled vacancies and an increase in referrals have all impacted waiting times.

A national shortage of OTs and higher pay in health sector both impact on our ability to recruit. The issue around this is recognised by Bristol City Council and new OTs now start higher up the salary scale. However, we have had a post advertised for the third time for three weeks and we have had no applications.

Locum OTs have been recruited to fill vacancies however, the first left due to lockdown and being unable to visit homes. We have had two locums since July 2020 however, both have left after being approached by other local authorities and being offered permanent roles. We had aimed to have two locum OTs working to help clear the waiting list, but this has not been successful. We continue to look for locum OTs but have also started to explore the option of using a private agency.

Since the first lockdown referrals for assessment have continued to come through from Care Direct with five hundred and ninety-five received between March and January. Our ability to carry out assessments however has been impacted. Not least because our client group were predominantly shielding, and many were reluctant to allow home visits for a significant proportion on 2020.

It is important to highlight that referrals come to the team as either high or standard priority cases. High priorities are released as quickly as possible and it would seem we have had a high proportion of high priority referrals this inevitably impacts on the waiting time for standard cases.

Four of our surveyors have retired in the past eighteen months which not only impacts on the experience in the team (all had been in the team for many years) but their cases need to be reallocated to the remaining team.

It is also worth noting that when new OTs and surveyors are appointed it takes considerable time to train them due to the specialist nature of the work.

### **Contractors**

Our current framework contract which is due to expire 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 has not delivered as we had planned. The contractors have been unable to meet the demands of the service throughout the contract. This has had an impact on the amount of work they have been able to complete on time to the quality we expect. Staff time is then taken up having to chase and supervise contractors more than we should have to.

In addition, Covid had a big impact with two out of three of our contractors unwilling to work in people homes for four to five months of 2020. The contractors that did continue had to focus on urgent work that could be completed quickly. They continue to be restricted in how they can work with work generally taking much longer.

We have also had difficulties with the element of the framework for larger schemes of work. With 4 of the 5 contractors not submitting quotes. We have only one contractor left on the framework who is tendering for the work. These quotes are often not competitive and therefore we have had to look and bring forward an alternative route to market. Whilst work is delayed we also still need to evidence value for money in all the work we do.

### **Resolution/ Actions**

- Continue to look to appoint two agency OTs/ Recruit an OT agency.
- Recruit to permanent OT vacancy – ongoing
- Appointed two new contractors to compete thirty level access showers - to BCC properties, this is nearly completed and has been really successful.
- Agents from an external framework being used to design and tender larger complex schemes of work this helps with surveyor capacity. This has also provided access to more contractors, experienced in building extensions, providing more competitive quotes.
- Appointing additional contractors from an alternative framework (South West Procurement Alliance) to continue to reduce waiting list over the next six months. We are aiming to give the design and build element to contractors and bring the new contract on-line very quickly in the next four to six weeks. This could quickly have a significant impact on the surveyor and contractor waiting list.
- Have appointed a Clerk of Works to check contractors on site and oversee repairs – this will hopefully free up surveyor time to focus on the more complex work and not have to get involved in these less complex jobs and chasing snagging works.
- Continual review of waiting list identifying quickest way forward on individual cases to prevent waiting unnecessarily.
- For DFG work encouraging people to organise the work or to employ an agent to do this for them. This will not only free up surveyor time but also mean customers can choose their own contractors reducing reliance on the contractors on our framework.

### **In conclusion**

Undoubtedly, Accessible Homes has not delivered on our normally high standards and quick processing of home adaptation referrals over the last twelve to eighteen months. As outlined we have plans, which we will continually review, in place to reduce these waiting times over the coming six to eight months to considerably reduce waiting times and improve our services.

# Housing Management Board

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# Update since last board....

At the last board we shared our plans to pilot a new operating model for the service in the spring of 2021

In January 2021 there were two significant events. We entered into a third national lock down and we received news that Julian Higson had decided to leave BCC.

As a result we decided that the timing and the environment is not right to trial a new operating model or to pilot a new local team structure in March this year.

We have not let this deter us from our vision and remain committed to the aims and objectives of the programme and the 6 resident priorities.

Housing & Landlord Services have spent the last few weeks deciding what we can take forward now

And will revisit the operating model and team structure at a later date



# Initiatives we will be progressing with

*Engaging our culture improving the way we work*

In the short term, MFT will continue to focus on improvements and changes that we can make now to make a real difference to residents. The focus will be on strengthening and improving our leadership, values and behaviours and making a positive difference for residents as we go about our daily work.

This work will include:

Working with the Customer Service Centre to find ways to make it easier for our residents to contact us

Developing an estates standard to improve the security and appearance of our homes

Prioritising and implementing our colleagues' ideas from a list of improvements

Training to help us achieve better ways of working, including focusing on our values and behaviours

Improving career progression and introducing career grade roles

Developing and rolling out an Equalities and Inclusion action plan for Housing and Landlord Services, to ensure we are creating a diverse and inclusive workplace that meets the needs of staff and residents

Working with corporate colleagues to ensure the roll out of new devices addresses our IT challenges

