

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Housing Management Board

20 October 2021 at 6.00 pm



### Members Present:-

**Councillors:** Alex Marsh (Chair), Kerry Bailes, Andrew Brown, Carla Denyer, Tony Dyer, Paul Goggin, Pete Daw and Christine Jory

### Officers in Attendance:-

Sarah Spicer (Business Innovation Manager), Liz Cheetham (Engagement Team Leader), Claudette Campbell (Democratic Services Officer), Zara Naylor, Paul Sylvester (Rehousing Manager) and Lesha Wilson

## 70 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and led introductions.

The following apologies were received and noted:

- Cllr Richard Eddy & Cllr Tom Renhard
- Donald Graham and Peter Edwards

## 71 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Housing Management Board held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

**Action:** Sarah Spicer to circulate a meeting note on the outcome of the Matters Arising from that meeting

### Action Update:

- I. EIB/NIB bids not being actioned: Confirmed that all EIB/NOIB have been actioned, but colleagues have been reminded that Councillors need to be advised of the outcome the EIB/NIBs (Environmental Impact and Neighbourhood Improvement Bids)
- II. Some specific examples of repair work were reported: The Head of Responsive Repair investigated and resolved the issues raised.



## 72 Public Forum

There were none.

## 73 Tenant Participation Review and Board Member recruitment

Sarah Spicer (Business Innovation manager) & Lesha Wilson (Business Intelligence Manager) spoke to the presentation (a copy can be viewed uploaded online in the agenda pack) outlining the plans for the Resident Engagement Review.

- a. The reasons for the resident engagement review are many but key drivers addressing low resident satisfaction that they are listened to and have opportunities to get involved, and the need to build great services that meet residents need.
- b. The aim of the review was to ensure that all residents are encouraged to:
  - Be involved in the development of thriving communities
  - Participate in discussions to drive resident led improvements.
  - Provide feedback that enables us to cater the service to the needs of residents
- c. The review includes testing a service commitment to residents, working title, 'our promise to residents': that is a seven part service delivery pledge.
- d. The review will engage in four ways with residents to improve access to services and engagement with residents across the city and communities.
- e. The pandemic restrictions allowed for new and innovative ways to engage with tenants when in-person events ceased. Many more residents and a wider diverse cohort of tenants engaged via virtual meeting rooms. The aspiration is to build on this to outcome, to support our aim to widen participation to include diverse groups and communities; to ensure a fair representation; strengthen the voice of tenants in the scrutiny process across all boards.
- f. The timeline for the project continues to April 2022 with the service able to identify by March 2022; (1) best practice (2) analyse and feedback results (3) consider options and recommendations made by the TPAS review.

Following was noted from the discussion that arose:

- g. Pete Daw thanked officers for the work done to move things forward; he asked to be involved in the TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service); confirmed that PD would be added to the tenant panel and reference groups.
- h. Cllr Paul Goggin shared past difficulties in raising a response to emails from the generic email address for estate management: Action: SS to investigate
- i. Cllr Tony Dyer enquired as to whether there were other ways in which to make contact with the service outside of the digital channels. Officers advised that the existing channels would remain with alternative means being sought to enhance resident's ability to make contact and liaise with officers.



- j. Zara Naylor confirmed that the list of estate officers presently uploaded online, was reviewed quarterly to keep up with changes within the service.

The Board agreed to note the report.

### **Board Member Recruitment**

- k. The Board currently has two tenant representative vacancies. The Board primary role is to allow the voice of the tenants and leaseholders to be heard and provide an opportunity for them to influence decision making. It allows for sharing of information on all aspects of service provision with those who can influence the decision makers.
- l. A discussion followed on how to promote these vacancies to the widest possible audience with an emphasis on reaching the diverse tenant base. Members were assured that those tenants who had participated in past events would be canvassed. Members suggested that an approach should be made to Ward Members citywide, asking them to share the vacancy information with residents and contacts.  
Action: SS

The Board agreed this way forward.

## **74 HRA Business Plan consultation**

The Bristol Big Housing Conversation was launch on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021, it's aim is to shape the 30 year plan for council housing in Bristol.

The City housing stock numbered 28,000 and participants will be asked to consider all aspects of investment and maintenance by way of a 'Budget Simulator' exercise. The aim in using a budget simulator is to widen participants understanding of current investments requirements and to priorities against competing pressures. The consultation will run to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021.

The following comments were noted from the discussion that followed:

- a. The link to the consultation will be shared with the board (Investing in council homes – Bristol's Big Housing Conversation – Bristol.gov.uk); every effort had been made to ensure that its accessible, with proper context written in plain English demonstrating actual challenges faced by the service. The aim is to ensure that those who engage find it a meaningful exercise.
- b. All aspects of future need would be considered that included the challenge of Green Energy; Gas boilers; the sustainability of current assets; the issue of occupancy and heating costs of aging stock.
- c. Action: SS to share Link with Board Members (see above)

The Board noted the report.

## **75 Allocation review**



Paul Sylvester, the Head of Housing Options spoke to his presentation on the reason for reviewing housing allocations. (the presentation is online with the agenda pack) The review process had commenced prior to the pandemic but had to be put on hold whilst the team addressed the urgent need of those person who were homelessness when lockdown was implemented.

- a. The current system for allocations known as Home Choice is the Bristol Common Register for Council or Housing Association properties. Bristol currently worked in partnership with 18 provides in the housing section (housing association).
- b. The review has specific outcomes:
  1. To deliver a future vision for the service that:
  2. Supports more mixed, balanced and sustainable communities
  3. Houses those in the greatest need
  4. Is more efficient and user friendly for applicants, the council, housing associations and other partner organisations
  5. Give realistic expectations about being housed to those who have joined the HCB register
- c. Areas under review:
  1. Common register and allocation policy
  2. Choice based approach vs. a managed list
  3. Open register/ qualification criteria
  4. Banding system
  5. Priority for specific groups
  6. Flexibility: local lettings, landlord agreed transfers, letting policies or priority for positive behaviours (asset-based approach)
- d. It was decided that the work was to be carried out in a way that enlisted community participation and involvement to identify and understand community needs and priorities.
- e. Details of key activities with a timeline recommencing, at this time, with the main project board and steering groups reconvened to allow for the project to be on tract to deliver outcomes during April 2022.
- f. A communication review is an essential part of the project: The way in which the Home Choice service communicates with those applying for housing and the explanation of decisions made need to be revitalised and refreshed to improve the way the service is perceived. This is an immediate action with concepts already formed to be delivered by Christmas 2021, to effect change.
- g. The project did not have a designated funding pot to support delivery. The project is viewed as essential to the 'Bristol Big Housing Conversation' therefore every effort is being made to overcome the lack of targeted resource by whatever means possible.

The following was noted from the discussion;

- h. That the working group had considered the realistic situation faced by those on the housing register; that in reality only limited number of properties become available for re-letting, on average 1550 per year; the many thousands on the waiting list are not aware of this reality; the group had considered how to convey this reality to those in desperate need; that the way in which it is conveyed was important to demonstrate the right level of empathy on the part of the service about the stark reality of the lack of housing.
- i. Housing Associations have introduced additional credit referencing checks that place many applicants at a disadvantage; this will be considered in the scope of the review; how to work in partnership with housing associations to manage this aspect; approaches have made on this issue and assurances were given that



there is an element of flexibility around debt but there was acknowledgement that in reality customer facing staff members providing the service would be more rigid with the application of housing associations policy.

- j. Agreed to consider within the review the existing econometric study that captured the issues experienced by diverse groups.

The Board noted the report.

## **76 Moving Forward Together update**

The Vision for Moving Forward Together; to improve housing services, meet the needs of residents and make Housing and Landlord Services a great place to work, with equality and diversity at its heart.

The Business Innovation Manager, presented an update report (copy attached to the agenda papers online) outlining the next steps:

- Working on how we can learn more from the data we collect
- Resident satisfaction survey started in autumn
- Equalities through inclusion
- Training to be rolled out to managers
- Bespoke training for responsive repairs and planned maintenance colleagues
- New estate and neighbourhood standards to be set

Service Manager Response Repairs was invited to provide an update on the training being rolled out to staff.

- a. In person training have now recommence; confirmed that equalities training was being successfully embedded across the construction workforce.

The Board noted the update.

## **77 Date of Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting will be held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

## **78 Any Other Business**

- a. To ascertain if Bristol has a lead officer tasked with working on the United Nations Habitat Climate Challenge. To see if this is something Bristol is involved with and if a representative from the Board is required. Action SS



- b. Action Update: More information can be found regarding the UN Habitat, Nesta Challenge detailed here [Climate Smart Cities Challenge — Bristol Housing Festival](#)

Meeting ended at 7.51 pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

