

Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee 1 November 2024 Public Forum – Questions



Public forum questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Joe Banks, The Housing Management Board
2. Joe Banks, Housing and Consumer Standards Programme Board
3. Suzanne Audrey, Bristol Housing Completion Figures 2023/2024
4. Suzanne Audrey, Quarterly Performance Report – ageing portfolio
5. Dan Ackroyd, 'Section 5' (Local Government and Housing Act 1989) Report
6. Dan Ackroyd, 'overarching resident engagement' and 'per block resident engagement' strategies
7. Dan Ackroyd, Strategic Housing Review – equalities impact
8. Shaban Ali, addressing overcrowding and other issues
9. Joanna Booth, Housing Festival projects with and for Bristol City Council
10. Joanna Booth, Quarterly Performance Report – Energy Performance Certificate



1. Question from: Joe Banks, The Housing Management Board

In a council press release published in September, which highlighted plans to respond to the critical Regulatory Judgement delivered on the state of the city's social housing in July, the Chair of this committee said: "It's really important that our approach is informed by the needs of our tenants, and we will be expanding on the opportunities available for residents to share their views and experiences with us." The Housing Management Board - the forum that is supposed to provide a space for council tenants to directly inform councillors and officers of housing issues, and contribute to the formation of solutions - hasn't met since February. Can you please provide an update on when it will be convened again and what its role will be in tackling the deep problems facing social housing in the city?

Response:

We have taken a decision to pause our current Housing Management Board – In light of the new consumer standards and our Regulatory Judgement. The Structure and approach of the Housing Management Board is under review in line with a wider planned review of resident engagement. Board members met with the chair of the homes and housing delivery committee to discuss ideas and potential options for the way forward. Proposals on how the Housing Management Board members and Housing Scrutiny panel will be involved & influence within the housing and consumer standards programme is being drafted for consultation with committee chairs, senior officers and residents.

2. Question from: Joe Banks, Housing and Consumer Standards Programme Board

A Housing and Consumer Standards Programme Board, chaired by the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration, has been formed to oversee the council's Housing and Consumer Standards Programme - its response to the critical Regulatory Judgment delivered on the city's social housing. Which individuals sit on this board?

Response:

Name	Programme role	Job role
John Smith	Chair Executive director sponsor	Interim-Executive Director – Growth & Regeneration
Fiona Lester	Programme sponsor	Interim-Director - Housing and Landlord Services
Tony Kirkham	Directorate Representative	Interim-Director – Finance / S151 officer
Tim Borrett	Directorate Representative	Director – Policy, Strategy and Digital
Steph Griffin	Directorate Representative	Director – Workforce and Change
Richard James	Programme lead Service lead – 5. Strategy, Culture and Governance	Housing & Consumer Standards programme lead
Desmond Vincent	Advisor – Projects 1 and 5	Strategic Asset Management advisor
Kelsey Walker Maxine Loftus	Advisor	Director - Savills Affordable Housing Consultancy
Miles Tilling	Workstream lead – 1. Safety and Quality: Data and Delivery	Head of Business Development
Craig Cook	Workstream lead – 1. Safety and Quality: Data and Delivery	Head of Housing Repairs and Maintenance

Jorden Crawford	Workstream lead – 2. Complaints and Resident Feedback	Service development manager
Martin Owen	Workstream lead – 3. Neighbourhood 4. Tenancy	Service development manager
Michael Scorer	Advisor	Strategic housing consultant
Sarah Chodkiewicz	Advisor	Head of Financial Management / deputy S151 officer
James Brereton	Advisor	Head of HR
Polly Thompson	Advisor	Head of Digital Strategy and Transformation
Rebecca Baldwin-Cantello	Advisor	Head of Equalities and Inclusion
Rizwan Tariq	Advisor	Head of Citizen Services
Jean Candler	Advisor	Head of Policy, Strategy and Communication
Nicola Knowles	Advisor	Policy and Public Affairs manager
Celia Williams	Advisor	HR business partner
Tom Lynes	Advisor	Procurement business partner
Sam Marsh	Assurance	Delivery business partner

3. Question from: Suzanne Audrey, Bristol Housing Completion Figures 2023/2024

Please provide the Bristol housing completion figures for 2023/24 including the total number of homes completed, of which the number classed as student accommodation, the number classed as 'affordable', and the number available for social rent. If these figures cannot be provided, please will you explain why as the response to a Freedom of Information request some time ago indicated that the numbers would be available in September or October 2024.

Response:

The social rent and wider affordable housing delivery numbers were already provided in our original response to this FOI which confirmed that 607 new affordable homes were delivered in Bristol in 2023/24, which included 217 Social Rent homes, 130 Affordable Rent homes and 156 Shared Ownership homes.

In 2023/24, Bristol saw the net completion of 1,433 dwellings comprised of 424 houses, 886 flats and 136 equivalent dwellings of student accommodation (where student dwellings are calculated in accordance with ratios set out in National Planning Practice Guidance based on the number of student bed spaces delivered).

4. Question from: Suzanne Audrey, Performance Report ageing portfolio

The Quarter 1 (1 April - 30 June 2024) Performance Progress Report indicates for HC1.2 (Implement investment priorities for the council's housing stock to ensure effective compliance with new regulation, standards and the Building Safety Act): "Whilst progress is being made with creating a detailed investment plan, the complexity of balancing multiple competing new legislative requirements with an ageing portfolio for which we have poor intelligence is taking

considerable time." Please will you explain the reasons why there is 'poor intelligence' in relation to the council's ageing portfolio.

Response:

The accepted 'poor intelligence' in relation to the council's asset portfolio is in part due to our stock condition surveys being significantly reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to COVID, three to four thousand properties were surveyed every year, and this information was used in the development of our investment plans. The disruption caused by COVID-19 led to the internal stock condition survey capability being lost. An externally delivered stock condition survey programme started in July 2024.

As of the end of September, the contractor has completed 2,278 property surveys. It is our intention to complete 8,000 stock condition surveys this financial year and this information will enable BCC to improve its investment planning and asset intelligence. Furthermore, given the age of some high and medium rise blocks, other specialist surveys are being planned for these assets from 2025/26 to further support the investment planning requirements.

5. Question from: Dan Ackroyd, 'Section 5' (Local Government and Housing Act 1989) Report

The council has been acting unlawfully with respect to both Fire Safety and maintaining housing to an adequate standard.

When the council is breaking the law, the Monitoring Officer has a personal duty to produce a 'Section 5' (Local Government and Housing Act 1989) report.

This is meant to allow everyone, including members of the public, councillors, and officers to clearly see the scale of the lawbreaking by the council, and to show how the situation came to be, so that similar situations can be avoided in the future.

Why has a Section 5 report not been written?

Response:

A report was brought to this committee in July following the judgement of the Regulator of Social Housing. <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s99243/10.1%20Report%20-%20Hsg%20Cons%20Stds%20Prog%20compliance%20update.pdf>

It is a decision for the Monitoring Officer, not the Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee, on whether a Section 5 Report is required.

6. Question from: Dan Ackroyd, 'overarching resident engagement' and 'per block resident engagement' strategies

In response to a question submitted to this committee at the meeting on 19th of July 2024, I was given to understand that by now the council should have produced an strategies for both "overarching resident engagement" and a "per block resident engagement"

Where have these strategies been published please?

Response:

The overarching resident engagement strategy for building safety has been, however this has been delayed due to resources issues. The strategy is currently going through the governance pathway for approval and will go out for a wider six-week consultation with residents in January 2025. The draft strategy will be published in January as part of the consultation, and the final version be published following consultation. The current target date is April 2025.

The service has recently completed a pilot to engage with residents and gather information to inform the 'per block' engagement strategies. The pilot included four high rise blocks, Little Cross House, Barton House, Rawnsley House, and Northfield House. The written strategy documents are being drafted, will be shared with residents, and published on the BCC website once the approach has cleared the governance pathway. Learning from the pilot will be shared with operational teams and a template and guidance document will be handed over to operational services for further roll across the remaining high-rise blocks from 2025.

7. Question from: Dan Ackroyd, Strategic Housing Review – equalities impact

In Appendix B for agenda item 11, the "Strategic Housing Review", in section 1.3, it is written: "Will the proposal have an equality impact?"

The answer checked is "no".

It is difficult for elderly people to complain and make their voices heard. They have poor health and find it difficult to attend council meetings.

My understanding is that a majority of the people who live in Barton House are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The evacuation of Barton House was a traumatic event that could have either been avoided entirely or at least handled with much better communication, that would have hurt so many people so severely.

Please explain how it was concluded that a "Strategic Housing Review" does not have an equality impact?

Response:

The report refers to an important review commissioned by senior council officers and looks at potential changes in relation to management structure of the Housing Service and considers issues in relation to governance, culture, training, staff and resident engagement. The report is presented for the committee to discuss and comment on the issues raised. There is not a key decision in the report but the Chief Executive will note the comments when implementing the recommendations of the review and an update on the implementation will come back to the committee. On this basis it is not anticipated that the discussion (as opposed to the implementation of the report) will of itself have equalities implications.

8. Question from: Shaban Ali, addressing overcrowding and other issues

How is the Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee addressing and assessing initiatives to deal with pressing issues such as overcrowding?

Please include the metrics you will use to measure the success of these initiatives, such as reductions in overcrowded households, and progress tracking.

Response:

We have made changes to our allocation Policy giving addition priority to under occupation cases – the resulting impact freeing up increased levels of larger family accommodation. In addition, we have increased our ability to backdate the length of time allocated within a band by a further 6 months to 12 months where multiple needs are evident. We also award band one to BCC households who wish to live together who both occupy BCC accommodation thereby freeing up further available housing stock.

The issue is we are dealing with a finite ‘resource’ as such our focus must be on increasing movement within our stock thereby freeing up units of accommodation for families who are overcrowded and in need.

9. Question from: Joanna Booth, Housing Festival projects with and for Bristol City Council

In the previous public forum you updated me on the fact that the Housing Festival MOU no longer is in operation. Please state any work Jez Sweetland is doing with and for Bristol City Council including how much he and/or the Housing Festival are being paid.

Response:

The Housing Festival are being commissioned through the Council’s Strategic Partner, Arcadis, to lead the Council’s Tackling Homelessness Transformation programme. As part of this function the Housing Festival team work with the Council’s Programme Management Office to drive changes to service delivery, look externally beyond Bristol to identify structural change to address homelessness and Temporary Accommodation provision, monitor and review savings, and work with the Council’s Corporate Leadership team to feed into the wider Transformation programme

The Council does not divulge commercially sensitive, financial data as part of its Public Forum offer.

10. Question from: Joanna Booth, Quarterly Performance Report – Energy Performance Certificate

In Agenda item 8, the 'Quarterly Performance Report', key point number 3 includes the following:

"Investment priorities for the council's housing stock (HC1.2) and reducing the number of council homes with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D or lower (BPPM377c) are both behind schedule."

For the work to improve the energy performance of council homes, how many homes are predicted to not have an EPC of 'C' or above by 2030 under both the current target goals and the actual measured performance?

Response:

In the One City Climate Strategy, BCC set a target for all our socially rented homes to reach EPC C standard (or better) by 2030. Although not a legal requirement this is in line with the ambition set by the previous Government in their Clean Growth Strategy.

Based on the progress made so far, and the level of investment currently allocated in the Housing investment plan, we expect to fall short of the target, with around 4000 homes still at EPC D or below in 2030 (down from over 8000 at the start of this decade).

Although this would fall short of our stated target, it would still see around 85% of our homes reach the desired standard by 2030. This is compared to a current average of 68% across the social rented sector and 50% across all tenures.

Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee 1 November 2024 Public Forum – Statements



Public forum statements have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Shaban Ali, Strategic Housing Review
2. Dan Akroyd, Strategic Housing Review

Please note: The views and information contained within these public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not of the Council.



1. Statement from: Shaban Ali, Strategic Housing Review

In the report pack, you write: "Good housing is essential for a good start in life and stable family conditions, it has a profound impact on lifetime health and the right housing can help older and disabled people to live longer and more independent lives." I agree and I have been looking at this very notion of 'right housing' through the idea of 'right sizing'.

I agree and I have been looking at this very notion of 'right housing' through the idea of 'right sizing'. One suggestion by housing associations such as SNG (previously Sovereign) is to incorporate a "Right-Sizing Housing Program" that educates tenants on housing options and creates incentives for those in under-occupied units to relocate, freeing up larger homes for overcrowded families. See the following link: <https://www.sovereign.org.uk/advice-and-guides/moving-home/our-rightsizing-offer>

This could be explored and implemented by the council through hosting workshops and distributing leaflets to explain the benefits of right-sizing and offering financial incentives-such as moving assistance or rent discounts to tenants who voluntarily move to more suitable accommodations.

This approach could be a valuable part of the housing strategy, helping to maximise existing stock and alleviate overcrowding in a sustainable way. In line with this 'right housing' commitment by Bristol and the Rightsizing approach mentioned elsewhere, please provide the following answers.

2. Statement from: Dan Ackroyd, Strategic Housing Review

I am mildly discombobulated to see that a Strategic Housing Review is moving forward without there being a public report of what went wrong in the housing department. At the July committee meeting, I asked a written question trying to find out how it came to pass that Bristol Council was woefully unprepared for either the Fire Safety Regulations that came into effect in 2023, or the Consumer Standards that came into effect in April 2024.

The answer I received was unsatisfactory, and so I asked a supplementary question, asking for the answer to be clarified.

Cllr Parsons as Chair replied: "I think one thing I would say is that we are, we're right now in the process of trying to respond to the regulator's judgement and I think there will be a time later on for us to look back and try and understand, try and understand more about what went wrong. Initially though, I think we are very much focused on what we're doing now."

At the September meeting Fadumo Farah asked: "Will there be an independent investigation into how Barton House residents were treated?"

The response was: "The Green party made a pre-election commitment to an investigation into Barton House. This has not progressed, in part due to the urgent challenges the housing sector faces and our response to the regulatory changes that came into place in April. Particularly building safety and fire safety, which take priority for us as well as our response to the regulatory judgement. The commissioning of an independent investigation remains an aspiration; however, our resources are being redirected at this moment in time."

Chair, the party that holds the most seats in this Council campaigned with: "As strong advocates for the new committee system, Bristol Green Party is committed to a new type of politics for Bristol, one of openness and transparency. With this open and complete policy agenda, this starts now."

Starting the Strategic Review before the problems with the Housing Department are thoroughly investigated and made public is not only a breach of a campaign promise; it is also bad governance.

There needs to be a proper understanding of the full scope of the problems that led to this Council being

woefully unprepared for the changes in law related to either consumer standards or fire safety.

After attending the "Escalation Panel" I believe most Labour Councillors still view the decision to cancel the HRA investing in building new homes through Goram Homes as a politically motivated decision.

They seem to genuinely not understand the scale of the problems in the Housing Department.

I note that the report says: "The report is seeking the committee's views on the housing challenges facing the council and its potential responses."

I hope to see a well informed debate in this chamber for this item.

Otherwise this report could give the appearance that there may have been an effort to proceed quickly without thorough consultation with the public and without establishing all the relevant facts.

Finally, there is an error in the draft minutes. I believe my name has been attributed to supplementary questions asked by Mr Varley.