

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Housing Management Board



19 February 2019 at 6.00 pm

### Present:

**Councillors:** Charlie Bolton, Nicola Bowden-Jones, Harriet Clough and Richard Eddy

**Tenants:** Peter Daw, Juliette Henderson, Christine Jory and Richard White

### Also in attendance:

Councillor Paul Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing

Professor Alex Marsh, University of Bristol - Observer

Penny Walster, Shelter – for item 5

**Officers:** Liz Cheetham - Tenant Participation Team (LC), Julian Higson - Director of Homes and Landlord Services (JH) Corrina Haskins (Democratic Services)

Apologies: Judith Davis – Leaseholder and Councillor Paul Goggin

### 1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence (6pm)

JH agreed to Chair the meeting and welcomed everyone. He introduced Professor Alex Marsh who had been asked to consider Chairing future meetings further to the decision at the previous meeting that an independent person should Chair the Board.

Professor Marsh informed the Board that he was a professor of public policy at Bristol University and had many years' experience in Housing research. He reported that he was leading the governance theme for UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence.

On behalf of Judith Davis who had sent apologies, LC asked that members be reminded about the code of conduct at the start of every meeting and this was noted.

### 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 27 November 2018

Councillor Paul Smith asked that he be recorded as being in attendance as Cabinet Member for Housing rather than present, as he was not a member of the Board.



**RESOLVED - that subject to the above change, the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.**

#### Matter Arising – Bristol Homes Board

Cllr Smith reminded Board Members to consider agreeing a representative to attend Bristol Homes Board meetings and the Board agreed to consider this as an item of “Any Other Business” at the end of the meeting.

### **3. Public Forum**

There was no public forum.

On behalf of Judith Davis, LC raised an issue about public forum being used for residents, rather than Board Members, to raise any concerns. It was agreed that if questions were raised, a written response could be given in the event of the question not being answered at the meeting. In response to a question as to whether tenants were aware of the Housing Management Board and the opportunity to raise issues under public forum, LC confirmed that all tenants received information about the Board and Local Housing Forum meetings through a number of means including the Housing News and social media.

### **4. Shelter - A Vision for Social Housing (Penny Walster 6:15)**

Penny Walster (Shelter) gave a presentation on the final report of Shelter’s commission on a Vision for Social Housing and drew attention to the following points:

- The commission was a response to the Grenfell Tower fire and aftermath;
- There were 16 diverse Commissioners including politicians from across the political parties;
- There were 31,000 responses including 7,600 from social housing tenants and a key theme was that these tenants did not feel they had a voice;
- 2 main recommendations emerged from the process:
  - The need for 3.1 million more social homes over the next 20 years;
  - The need for a reform in the renting system to introduce a new regulator, improve standards and give social renters a stronger voice;
- The next step was a campaign to take the recommendations forward.

The following comments were raised:

- Members of the Council’s Development Control Committees were often frustrated at applicants looking to avoid meeting the requirement for affordable housing and agreed that further regulation was required in terms of planning applications;
- There should be a covenant in place to stop new affordable housing being bought by private landlords for letting rather than giving individuals the opportunity to buy affordable housing.

In response to questioning, PW responded as follows:



- The term “affordable housing” had been stretched to include a range of different housing options and the commission was looking at the term “social housing”;
- 3.1 million additional social homes was a big ask, and would cost £10.7m per year to build, with two thirds of the costs being recouped by savings in the welfare system and increased tax receipts;
- Capital Economics had undertaken an assessment and found that if funded in the early years through borrowing, the programme would pay back in full over 39 years;
- The additional 3.1m homes would not all be new build;
- The 3.1m was the figure estimated for social housing only, and was therefore lower than other studies estimating the total housing need;
- The planning system was not helpful with too many loopholes for Developers and the commission was campaigning to reform the Land Compensation Act so that landowners were paid the market price for land rather than the price it might achieve with planning permission;
- This could be done by ensuring certificates of appropriate alternative development cease to apply in those areas designated by local authorities;
- Although the previous regulator, the Housing Inspectorate, was not helpful for local authorities, having no regulator was dangerous and the commission was looking at having a separation of two regulators – an economic and consumer regulator.

In response to a question about how many of the 3.1m social houses Bristol would need to provide, Cllr Smith estimated that this would be 1500 per year.

## 5. 2019/20 Housing Revenue Account Budget (6:45)

Julian Higson, Director of Homes Landlord Services gave a presentation on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and drew attention to the following points:

- Cabinet agreed the 1 year budget plan as well as a 5 year rolling programme and a 30 year Business Plan;
- The income included £113.3m from rents; £8.5m service costs; £9.8m right to buy receipts; £4.8m new borrowing and £2.5m other;
- Capital expenditure included £29.9m investment in homes and £21m building new homes;
- Revenue expenditure included £30m on responsive repairs; £29.6m on management and service costs; £11.6m debt costs and £2.9m bad debts;
- New budget issues for 2019/20 included HRA borrowing cap lifted and house development programme expanded; Estate regeneration; Active asset management and “Moving forward together” – customer engagement plans.

The following points, questions and clarifications were raised:

- Capital assumptions had been too cautious in the past and the Council had now benchmarked with the industry to get a more realistic figure;



- There were risks associated with Brexit, especially in terms of the supply of materials and an increased demand on British producers may result in an increase in prices;
- The risks faced by the Local Authority were different from the private sector in that there was greater stability and lower costs associated with borrowing from the Public Works Loans Board;
- Prior to the introduction of HRA self-financing, the level of debt was determined by the Government and Bristol City Council received a share of the national debt;
- The re let time for properties had been reduced, but the Council was looking to reduce the time further, although not at the expense of quality.

## **6. Moving Forward Together (7:15)**

JH informed the Board that over the next few months the Council's Housing Department was looking at its service with a view determining what people thought the service should be doing, what it should be like and how services should be delivered. He confirmed that there would be two strands to the consultation, internal with staff and external with residents and tenants and that a range of mechanisms would be used including surveys, meetings and roadshows.

The following comments were raised;

- A lot of tenants felt the loss of the local service when the Council closed the local housing offices and it was anticipated that this could be one of the main issues raised by tenants;
- Although there was not the resources to reopen local housing offices, the Council could look at using other community facilities, a mobile unit and/or sharing space with other organisations;
- The consultation needed to be extended to aspiring tenants as well as existing tenants;
- There was an inequality in age as older people were more likely to secure Council accommodation than a young single person and this was something the Council should look at as an issue.

JH asked for the support of the Board in publicising the consultation and engaging with tenants.

## **7. Any Other Business**

### **A. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was not yet known and members of the Board would be circulated with the date at the earliest opportunity.

### **B. Uses of Community Rooms**

LC reported that Judith Davis had requested that "Use of Community Rooms" be included on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting.



**RESOLVED** - that Use of Community Rooms be included as an agenda item at a future Housing Management Board meeting.

**C. Bristol Homes Board Representative**

In considering whether a member of the Board would be interested in representing tenants at the Bristol Homes Board, Peter Daw offered to take on this role.

**AGREED**

- (1) That Peter Daw represent the Housing Management Board on the Bristol Homes Board;**
- (2) That a standing item be included on future agendas of the Housing Management Board to allow PD to feedback any issues from the Bristol Homes Board.**

**D. Future Chair of Housing Management Board**

In response to a question from Board members to Alex Marsh about whether he would be willing to take on the role of Chair, he confirmed that he would like to meet with JH to discuss the role of the Housing Management Board before making a decision.

Meeting ended at 8.00pm

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

