

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Housing Management Board

26 January 2022 at 6 pm



### **Present:**

**Chair:** Professor Alex Marsh, University of Bristol (Independent Member).

**Councillors:** Sarah Classick, Tony Dyer.

**Tenant Representatives:** Peter Daw, Peter Edwards, Christine Jory, Philip Morris.

**Leaseholder Representatives:** None

**Associate Tenant Members:** Nigel Varley, Sibusiso Tshabalala

**Officers:** Donald Graham Interim Director (Homes and Landlord Services); Sarah Spicer Business Innovation Manager (Housing and Landlord Services); Sarah Baker Senior Business Information Analyst (Housing and Landlord Services); Liz Cheetham Engagement Team Leader (Housing and Landlord Services); Steve Gregory-Clerk (Democratic Services).

### **1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence**

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting and introductions were made.

Members noted that Councillor Andrew Brown had resigned from the Board, Councillor Sarah Classick had been appointed as his replacement. The Chair welcomed Sarah to the meeting.

The Chair welcomed two new Associate Tenant members Nigel Varley, Sibusiso Tshabalala.

Apologies were received from Councillors Kerry Bailes, Carla Denyer, Richard Eddy, Paul Goggin, and Councillor Tom Renhard (Executive Member Housing Delivery and Homes).

Noted that Ross Dallimore and Susan Houghton (Leaseholder Representatives) were not present.

### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**



## Resolved –

**That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 October 2021 be agreed as a correct record.**

### Matters arising

Several issues were raised these included –

1. Peter Daw raised an issue regarding a lack of contact regarding the Homes & Communities Board. Noted that no meetings had yet taken place, so opportunity had not been missed but SS to follow up on his behalf.

#### **Action Sarah Spicer (SS)**

2. Concerns raised by tenant board members that all tenant participation events were continuing to be held online, meaning a significant number of people were excluded from the process. Recognised that there was a need to review in person and online meeting preferences and create a timetable for action. Noted the request for greater levels of engagement and a return to local ‘face to face’ meetings between tenants and housing officers.

#### **Action Donald Graham/Sarah Spicer liaising with Tenant representatives.**

3. Discussion held regarding the recent Business Plan consultation, and level of responses. Request for information to be broken down in different ways, breakdown by property type would be provided.

#### **Action Sarah Spicer**

4. Work was underway to review the Tenant Participation function. Members were informed that the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) was working with the Council to review the current approach and identify changes and improvements. Members to attend a workshop being facilitated by TPAS, an e-mail inviting volunteers to participate would be circulated after the meeting.

#### **Action Liz Cheetham Engagement Team Leader**

5. Noted that actions from the last meeting regarding recruitment of new associate members to the Board and sharing a link for consultation about the Business Plan and UN Climate Change work had been completed.

## 3. Public Forum

No statements/petitions had been received from the public.

## 4. Housing News - verbal update

The Committee received a verbal update from the Business Innovation Manager (Housing and Landlord Services) regarding the latest housing news.

Key points made were –



1. There was a government led consultation regarding professional training and development for housing staff to ensure high standards of customer care, tenants were welcome to contribute to this process, details of the process including the deadline for comments would be circulated to tenants after the meeting. **Action Sarah Spicer**
2. A second government led consultation was seeking views on proposals for new tenant satisfaction measures, linked to the Government's social housing white paper, looking to hear from both landlords and tenants. A link and deadline for contributions would be shared with the Board after the meeting. **Action Sarah Spicer**
3. Two senior housing staff, Gillian Durden and Zara Naylor were leaving the Council in March 2022. Board members thanked Gillian and Zara for all their work and gave their best wishes.
4. In response to a question about training opportunities at Level 3 or 4 for members of the Board the Business Innovation Manager agreed to find out and share the information. Board members felt that it was important to pursue this to give incentive to tenants. **Action Sarah Spicer**

## 5. Housing Ombudsman self-assessment

The Committee received a paper from the Business Innovation Manager (Housing and Landlord Services) regarding the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code of practice.

Members were informed that the Housing Ombudsman published a Complaint Handling Code which helped social landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. As part of the Code, social landlords must complete a self-assessment at least once every 12 months. The most recent self-assessment had now been published on the Council's website.

This looked at the Council's performance between November 2020 and October 2021.

Key facts emphasised in the report were –

Of the 891 landlord service complaints received:

1. 90.6 percent were resolved at stage one, with 78.2 percent of these responded to within the 15-working day target, up 12 percent from last year.
2. 8.4 percent were resolved at stage two, with 84.6 percent of these responded to within the 20-working day target, up 17.6 percent from last year.
3. Timescales were extended on 33 complaints. There were good reasons for the extensions on 74.2 percent of cases and residents were kept informed about the extension before the target date on 54.5 percent of cases.
4. 35.7 percent of residents rated the overall resolution of their complaint as good or very good.



The paper also set out improvements that had been made in 2021 and improvements plans that were proposed for 2022.

Following discussion and in response to Members questions the following points were raised/clarified:

1. A member asked if improved breakdown of complaints by equalities and community could be done to illustrate patterns of complaints more clearly eg Google pinpoint for visual presentation. The Business Innovation Manager there some limitations regarding what information could be provided, but officers would identify what could be done to meet members requests. **Action Sarah Spicer**
2. Regarding the categorisation of complaints, eg repairs, anti-social behaviour, it was noted that current systems inhibited the extraction of multiple and specific points of information however the Business Innovation Manager agreed to look at this to find out what could be done and what could not be done. **Action Sarah Spicer**
3. Members requested that, if possible, it would be useful to have more detailed information about complaints from targeted families. The Business Innovation Manager emphasised that complaints often reflected a wide variation of need however it was recognised that aligning complaints with the social profile of tenants would be beneficial and agreed to investigate if this could be done. **Action Sarah Spicer**

**Resolved –**

**That the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code paper and relevant comments made be noted.**

## **6. Business Plan and Budget 2022/23**

The Committee received a presentation regarding the 30-year Business Plan for investing in council homes.

Initial steps were –

- Budget and business plan was considered by Cabinet at its meeting a on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022.
- Decision at full council on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
- Communication plan to advise stakeholders of the consultation outcomes and emerging plans.

Following discussion and in response to Members questions the following points were made:

1. Business Plan to emphasise need for bathroom upgrade especially walk in showers for disabled tenants. If possible, some form of anticipatory system to be ‘built in’ for tenants who would ultimately need an upgrade so that there was not a time lag between point of need and fitting of facilities.
2. Suggestion to improve categorisation of tenants to match the type of housing required.
3. Note the requirement to improve energy efficiency in all homes to reduce fuel poverty.



4. Suggestion to introduce lower rents for garages to avoid buildings being left empty.
5. Suggestion that where possible joint commissioning be increased between the Council, NHS, WECA to improve work on providing aides and adaptations to council buildings, this would help to reduce NHS bed blocking and associated social issues. Members acknowledged that public health Bristol and the Council continuously put significant resources toward this.
6. Noted that the 30-year Business Plan could only contribute toward climate change mitigation and net zero carbon objectives, further measures would require central government funding sources.
7. Access to solar photo voltaic and air source heat pumps for greater energy efficiency was a core objective of the 30-year plan and a bid for more funding had been applied for to try and achieve this.
8. All new homes built by the Council would seek to achieve the highest possible standards toward net zero carbon and energy efficiency.
9. Some members felt that the response rate to tenant engagement at 3.5 % was too low to give meaningful guidance for future investment strategies and considered opportunities to increase this which included eg minimum 30% response rate, or offering small financial reward for participants. The Board was informed that the response rate, although low, was comparable to other engagement initiatives and that considerable resource was put in to encouraging greater participation eg, direct door to door communications, online public statements. It was acknowledged that engagement was an ongoing challenge particularly if the subject matter was not of immediate concern to those affected by it, however there would be continuous efforts made to incentivise and improve on response rates.

#### **Resolved –**

**That the presentation regarding the 30-year Business Plan for investing in council homes and relevant comments made be noted.**

#### **7. Date of Next Meeting**

Date to be confirmed, expected to be in April 2022.

#### **8. Any other business**

None.

Meeting ended at 7.50 pm

#### **CHAIR**

