# Minutes of City Housing Liaison Board

# Thursday 29th September 2022, 16:30 p.m. -18.30 p.m.

# Microsoft Teams

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Present: Name** | **Surname** | **Representing** |
| **Members** |
| Eric | Shipton | Sutton Coldfield |
| Diane | Horton-Griffiths | Bartley Green |
| Jeff  | Horton | Hall Green |
| Samantha | Vaughan | Perry Barr |
| Malcolm | Nicholls | Druids Heath |
| Collette | Bailey | Aston |
| Jennifer  | Walters  | Lozells |
| Bruce | Pitt | Frankley |
| Carl | McCooty | South Yardley |
| Brenda | Grigg | Sheldon |
| Michael | Thawe  | Harborne |
| Stephanie  | Dubt | Weoley |
| Tony | Coles | Washwood Heath |
| **Officers/Councillors** |
| Councillor | Richard Parkin |  |
| Paul  | Langford | Interim Assistant Director  |
| Steve | Wilson | Programme Director |
| Louise  | Fletcher | Housing Management |
| Colin  | Hanno | Engagement Manager  |
| Sarah | Ager | Head of Capital Investment |
| Natalie | Smith | Housing Management |
| Justin | Cotton | Operations Director - Equans. |
| James  | Lindsay | Head of Operations for Voids, Disrepair Litigation and Sustainability - Equans. |
| Elliott  | Payne | Head of Operations |
| Heidi | Eades | Social Value Officer – Equans |
| Jessica | Moore | Change Management Officer |
| Jean  | Campbell | Resident Involvement Support Officer |
| **Apologies** |
|  |  |  |
| Allan | Middleton | Mirfield |
| Dadirai | Tsopo | Harborne |
| Julie  | Griffin | Director of City Housing  |
| Councillor Zaker  | Choudhry | Councillor |
| John  | Jamieson | Head of Housing Management |

* 1. **Apologies and Welcome**

Apologies are noted above

**0.2 Introduction to the Meeting**

**Malcolm Nicholls** welcomed all to the meeting**.**

* 1. **Minutes of last Meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting were checked for points of accuracy and agreed by the Board. Please E-mail Resident Involvement team if any changes to the minutes are required.

**0.4 Matters Arising**

**0.5 Chairs Comments**

**Eric Shipton** stated the Performance Monitoring Group report for August 2022 was good. There is continuous improvement in the figures. During the PMG meeting there were representatives from the Domestic Violence team. Julie Windsor Price and Rachel Fulwell gave an overview of the Domestic Violence work. This included the challenges involved in the work. Unfortunately, there is an increase in domestic violence cases. This is cause for concern because it also involves tenants and children. We do not want to encourage this; the matter is getting worse. I would like the Domestic Violence team to be invited to attend CHLB meeting in 2023. To help us understand the work involved.

**Eric Shipton** stated regarding the Council House for CHLB face to face meetings. There are still issues with access for people with disabilities. Also, the German market takes place in November. The decision has been made to stay on virtual team’s meetings until the New Year. The Margaret Street extension building was put forward as a possible venue where CHLB meetings could be held. The building has lifts and seems better which would suit CHLB purposes. The Resident Involvement team are looking into this as a possible venue.

I would also like to inform the members that Jessica Moore will be leaving BCC for pastures new, I would like to thank Jessica for all the hard work with the Resident Involvement team and wish her every success in her new job on behalf of myself and the City Housing Liaison board.

**0.6 Voids and Lettings update by Natalie smith**

The main themes were:

* **Moving Out Support:** BCC requires 4 weeks’ notice**.** Moving out team visit made to meet the customer
* **Lettings**: A high quality service will be delivered by making best use of stock and sustaining tenancies.
* **Challenges:**  Voids standards and the cost involved. IT changes. Void performance is 32 days. There is improvement in the Equans areas. Improvement plan in place for other arears.
* **Customer Interaction:** The customer letting process and interaction will be seamless.Service delivery will be professional. Customer needs and satisfaction
* **Lettings**: Pre let workshop also given, tenancy agreement, contact by Housing Officer. Full income, e.g., benefits, financial support. Advice on lettings process. Also proof of who will occupy household.
* **Pre-Let:**  Workshop launched for BMHT and care leavers from 3/8/22.
* **Letting’s appointment:**  To ensure the customer has no other tenancies with BCC or elsewhere. Ensure the customer knows how to pay their rent and Council Tax. Support to apply for welfare provision such as furniture.
* **Complex Case Team:** Complex cases will require extra support, in the first 5-6 weeks of their tenancy. Team will provide tenant with support to sustain their tenancy.
* **Standard Cases:** Check tenant has moved in. The tenant can raise any issues with property or estate.

For full details see presentation slides

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated when tenants are given properties, such as a bungalow with gardens. I raised this at the PMG meeting that a tenant with multiple disabilities had been given a bungalow. Diane explained the neighbour endured nine years of the back garden being completely unkept except for one occasion the support team cleared the garden, but unfortunately the tenant did not maintain the garden. The gentleman concerned had multiple disabilities, the grass and brambles were overgrown. The tenant made efforts to try and maintain the garden. The Housing officer informed the tenant it is up to the tenant to clear the garden. Diane was able to ask a BCC senior officer to intervene and provide help in clearing the garden. The tenants received support to clear the overgrown garden.

Diane raised concerns regardingElderly or sheltered tenants who inherit properties with gardens and may eventually have overgrown gardens. Diane suggested improved training for Housing Officers.

**Natalie Smith** responded where people need support with their gardens, we will consider the options with them. We must try and work with the tenancy conditions and the ability to be able to clear gardens or signpost the tenant to correct areas. This is a challenging area we have a vulnerable person’s gardening scheme which consists of two officers for city. There is focused support when people are moving into a property. We are working on a pilot which involves an assessment with tenants and visits during the year. There is a Customer Charter that is being launched across the city. BCC staff will receive Customer Services training across all Directorates. Bcc staff need to ensure that we put the customers at the heart of the services BCC provide. Staff need to ensure that they apply empathy when dealing with tenants who need support.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** raised concerns regarding the funds that need to go towards helping to support the officers.

**Natalie Smith** responded there has been some available funds that has gone to the local areas where we have cleared some of the properties. There should be an improvement as a result of some targeted work.

**Carl McCooty** asked how long is the probationary period for tenants who move into one of the properties?

**Natalie Smith** responded we have introductory and secure tenants. Anyone that moves into a property or a new tenant moving into a property they are placed on an introductory tenancy for 12-month period. If during the 12 months period the tenant causes any issues or concerns, there is the ability to extend the introductory tendency for a period of six months. After a 12-month period it will change to a secure tendency.

**Brenda Grigg** asked how long before a new tenant moves into a property? In my area we have an empty property for around 4 weeks’.

**Natalie Smith** responded, currently the average turnaround time to re let an empty property is 32 days, the overall target is 28 days. There have been significant improvements in certain areas such as the north, west and east arears. In the north area the turnaround time to re-let an empty property is 24 days. We are focusing on the south area. The tenants who are leaving a property must notify us and return the keys to BCC. If you are aware of an empty BCC property, please inform the voids team of the address.

**0.7 Equans Social Value by Justin Cotton, Elliott Payne, James Lindsay and Heidi Eades**

The main themes were:

* Equans are BCC repairs and maintenance contractors, the arears covered are North, East, and west Birmingham. Equans are self-delivery reduced subcontracting of the work, this ensures improved control and ad provides a better service to customers:

**Mobilisation Size and Scale (East and West)**

* Over 300 employees working in Repairs and Maintenance
* 154 frontline Operatives (mobile working)
* Complete new team on West contract
* Significantly outperforming previous contractor within first month!

**Huge increase in satisfaction with the Responsive Repairs Service**

* Over 45,000 Repairs completed in first 5 months
* The number of formal complaints has also reduced (pro-rata) by over 300%
* More than 95% of Repairs completed within timescale

**Over £2m of social value return delivered on contract to date - £6.8m annual commitment:** for example,Equans have created 32 partnerships. 63 work placements. £4,000 raised by the team for local charities.

For full details see presentation slides

**Collette Bailey** stated regarding repairs to property a special thank you to Equans contractors for the repairs carried out on my property. It was a quick response from the repairs team, and this is appreciated. I think Equans are doing a better repairs job than the previous repairs contractors (Wates)

**Elliott Payne** stated the customer comments are fantastic to hear regarding the work which Equans have picked up, this has been a difficult task for us. It is great to hear that the contractor team are doing a great job.

**Steve Wilson** stated there were problems with the previous contractors Wates, there were a number of people who raised complains. It was a very difficult decision to terminate Wates contract.

Earlier in the year the board members were advised that there may be a dip in performance because there will be a new contractor that will be mobilized. There were high levels of confidence from Equans regarding service delivery. We should celebrate Equans success. Regarding the employment of young people in the workforce, it is pleasant for me to see the level of detail that Equans have gone to with particularly employing young people. Also, promoting female staff working in the construction sector. Equans have addressed the issue of diversity.

It is important to remember that Birmingham is the youngest city in the country. Equans are providing young people aged 14 to 16 with work experience BCC wish to encourage this. Also, I would encourage our tenants to become employees and technical apprenticeships for Equans. We wish to thank Equans on behalf of Birmingham City Council for all the hard work.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated the report was very comprehensive, interesting, which is very commendable to Equans.

**Collette Bailey** stated BCC need to inform the contractors also the contractors need to find out if the tenant has a mental health problem or a disability before they visit the property to do the repairs.

**Steve Wilson** stated regarding tenant disability the information is shared with the contractors and the contractors will share with their workforce if it is appropriate. Also, the tenant’s needs to allow us permission to share their information. But there are occasions when that information does not get through to the correct sections. Also, there are some tenants who do not want us to share their information. Where possible we will endeavour to share information and take that forward.

**Carl McCooty** asked regarding information in the presentation on the topic of domestic abuse the acronym (EDAC) was used. Could you explain what this means? Also, how would Equans be involved?

**Justin Cotton** responded it is the Employers Domestic Abuse Covenant (EDAC) which Equans have signed up to. it is a commitment that we have given. This will involve providing alarms, security cameras, lighting, and the installation**,** which would reduce the risk of post separation abuse. Such as security enhancement scheme where we are trying to do something practical to make people feel more secure in their homes. This will help people to make a new start and feel safe.

**Carl McCooty** asked does this involve working in conjunction with West Midlands Police, and the City Council?

**Justin Cotton** responded we will be working in conjunction with the Birmingham City Council also there will be some West Midland Police involvement. The scheme launches in October 2022.

**Heidi Eades** responded we work with various companies and charities. Referrals are received from West Midlands Police and charities.

**Eric Shipton** stated I am involved in the Performance Monitoring group I can verify your comments regarding improvements which we are pleased about because it is good for the tenants.

**Any other Business**

**Eric Shipton** stated this time of the year the Performance Monitoring group normally give out certificates to the companies/contractors and the staff who work with the tenants from Birmingham City Council. Unfortunately, this year we have not been able to organise this for varies reasons such as a change of BCC officers. Changes have been made to the repair’s teams and contractors. The contractors are doing an absolute brilliant job and they certainly deserve the certificates, we considered it would be unfair to give out certificates because some the people that earned them may have left or are now doing different jobs.

It has been decided this year to put them on hold until things have settled down and are working smoother. In 2023 we plan to start the process again. I hope you all understand.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked what is happening regarding the proposed changes to the Constitution. Has it been dropped or how are we going forward with it?

**Eric Shipton** responded currently we are still trying to gain more members to be interested in taking part in it. I have contacted the TPO’s and asked them to bring the subject up again at their HLB meetings. We need to encourage four more people from HLB's to take part. This should be from different parts of the city if possible. If not, we will include members that have done two-year service with the HLB. The Constitution has not been put on hold. We need to get it reviewed. The thing that is lacking is the enthusiasm for members to come forward and assist. We need the wider HLB group members to agree the first draft. We need to make a draft then the document comes to CHLB. The document goes to the to the HLB’s to agree. The document needs to be ratified.

**Eric Shipton** asked were the Resident Involvement able to come up with any new formula for the constitution please.

**Jessica Moore** responded regarding our previous conversations and the attendee’s discussion at the special meeting. The action decided on to try once again to get as many people as we could interested in order form a steering group, which would be led by Vice Chair Malcolm Nicholls. We could go ahead with the people who have put themselves forward so they could start the process. The group could have a discussion which would potentially then involve the wider members in the points raised.

In looking at the Constitution, if there were particular questions that were more direct rather than generic, any issues with the Constitution, or something specific about a specific clause, for example, that could be put to either CHLB or potentially the wider members to involve as many HLB members as possible to give an opinion. This would give the wider members the opportunity to respond. Hopefully, another request will encourage more HLB members will show interest. Members may wish to give their opinions, but they may not be able to give their time to attend a meeting.

We would need to consider a different approach in order to ask members for their opinions. A smaller group could highlight key issues that they want the wider members to give their opinions on. This could be used to redraft sections of the Constitution. It would need to be ratified at the final draft. During a meeting members would vote on the new constitution. This would be at the final end stage. CHLB would have to ratify the new constitution. Once it has been agreed the HLB's would all sign up to that Constitution. The HLB constitutions would need to be resigned at the HLB level also because we are talking about two different constitutions. This will then become one document which is the agreed approach.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** suggested we could allow until the last CHLB meeting this year? If there are still less members than we need, we could form a small working party for January and get moving with the Constitution?

**Malcolm Nicholls** stated I have been through the Constitution by myself, going through its page by page, line by line, looking at things that need to be altered I have my list prepared.

**Eric Shipton** responded we appreciate the suggestions. A small group can create the first draft. It needed to be the wider group to get all the different opinions. It is in our interest to have a constitution because it is our set of rules, and we all have to abide by it. No one can complain because we will sign up to it as HLB members. TPASS plan to recruit new members which will bring in new ideas.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated during the HLB session the TPO organised a Doctor Green session. This involved a verity of agencies to attend the meeting. It was a very interesting session because people brought their problems such as people who claim welfare benefits, different agencies were there to help people. I would urge this type of session as facility was available for people to get some help.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked if we could go forward in the new year to have HLB meetings recorded for the purpose of the minutes. This is because sometimes during the meeting if an issue comes up and if it is not recorded in the minutes and in 12 months’ time, that issue comes up again, we do not have a record to fall back on.

The last set of my HLB minutes the chair and the vice chair were both missing for various reasons from the meeting. The chair of the meeting was a different person. A topic that I raised was only partly included in the minutes. It is sometimes difficult for the person taking the minutes to keep track, especially when people over talking in the room. Therefore, could recordings the HLB meetings be considered?

**Colin Hanno** responded we can look into this. We may have to look at potential GDPR issues, as would need to get consent from the HLB members for the meeting to be recorded.

**Carl McCooty** asked regarding face- to- face CHLB meetings will you clarify.

**Eric Shipton** stated meetings at the Council House re furnishment has been done. In the past when we held meeting at the Council House there were access problems and the access problem remain. Anyone with a disability in order to get into the Council house, they will need use the service lift. This will involve going down to the other end of the building and coming up in the service lift. The problem is it needs another member of staff to be present because the lift is operated using cards. Only the security officers or a member of BCC staff can use the lift. The lift is small, and it is not very accommodating. It is a service lift by definition and not suitable for other purpose.

During November the German market takes place this creates problems getting to the Council House, because of parking. Cars and taxes are not allowed to get too close because of the barriers. The Resident Involvement team are looking into how soon the Margret Street extension building can complete the refurbishment. Overall, Margaret Street extension is a better venue for CHLB meetings there the building has less problems. We need the information regarding accessibility which is important for all members

The second problem with the Council House is the IT system which is in poor condition during previous meetings we had problems with this. IT system would need to be overhauled so that we could have virtual teams’ meetings also. We are gathering the information in order to make the best choice and move forward with that choice with the agreement of the board.

**Malcolm Nicholls** raised the query regarding the meeting due to be held by TPAS

**Louise Fletcher** responded TPAS have planned to co design anything we do to move engagement forward, TPAS have asked for tenants that are involved along with HLB members. Also, to include tenants that are not involved with HLBs to come forward to attend a series of planned confidential meetings with TPAS. This will help to get tenants views to ensure that BCC is building a model for the future.

The meeting will take into account all the things that we need to do under the Social Housing regulator. We need tenants to pick up on some of the issues. The meeting is due to be held October 2022.

We have asked the TPO’s to discuss the planned dates directly with everybody to get as many people involved as possible. It is the tenant’s opportunity to tell us what they want. We are aware there is a currently a HLB movement now also aware of the Constitution discussion that we started earlier in the year which is still essential. We need to consider other ways that people want to get involved. Not everybody wants to be part of a formal meeting, but we still value the individual contributions which we want to hear.

We need to hear tenant voices on how we can improve our services. We have heard a lot of positive feedback this evening. We need to expand that in order for all tenants can give us their feedback which will allow everybody the opportunity make their comments.

We need to know regarding the housings, is it good or bad, or indifferent? We need to find the best ways to get tenants views, in order to improve the services BCC, provide in the future. We realise it is difficult, we need to find out what other innovative methods which we can use to sit alongside some of the formal framework that we have? Possibly the use of social media? We do not have a younger representation from our tenants. There are a lot of younger tenants, Birmingham is a young city.

We need to keep the enthusiasm that we have from everybody involved in the virtual group meetings and the HLB membership. Also, to find other ways and how we grow such enthusiasm across all of our tenants.

There will be a reward for people who attend for giving up their time attending the sessions. I encourage everyone to liaise with their Tenant Participation Officer so and give them your names if you are interested.

**Carl McCooty** stated regarding recruitment of HLB members. I can see results in some of the projects in my area. The feedback I receive from people regarding attending HLB’s meetings. An idea could be to provide training for HLB members on ways to recruit new member an incentive for new members could be to gain a qualification.

**Collette** Bailey stated regarding recruitment of new members to attend HLB’s meetings the person needs to feel valued, and to be to be listened by BCC staff.

**Jessica Moore** thanked all the members and BCC staff for their help over the years.

For the full presentation slides please e-mail ResidentInvolvement@birmingham.gov.uk

**Eric Shipton** thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

**The next meeting of the City Housing Liaison Board will be held on:**

**Date: Thursday, 20th October 2022: Time: 4:30pm - 6:30pm**