# Minutes of City Housing Liaison Board

# Thursday 20th October 2022, 16:30 p.m. -18.30 p.m.

# Microsoft Teams

| **Present: Members: Name** | **Surname** | **Housing Liaison Board** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Eric | Shipton | Sutton Coldfield |
| Jeff  | Horton | Hall Green  |
| Samantha | Vaughan | Perry Barr |
| Malcolm | Nicholls | Druids Heath |
| Dadirai  | Tsopo | Harborne |
| Michael | Dodd | Quinton |
| Jennifer  | Walters | Lozells |
| Diana | Horton-Griffiths | Bartley Green |
| Carl | McCooty | South Yardley |
| Collette | Bailey | Aston |
| Bruce | Pitt | Kings Norton |
| Pat  | McCarton | Hodge Hill |
| **Officers/Councillors** |  |  |
| Councillor Richard | Parkin |  |
| Steve | Wilson | Programme Director |
| Louise  | Fletcher | Housing Management |
| John | Jamieson | Housing Management |
| Helen | Shervington | Housing Strategy & Modernisation Service Manager |
| Winnie | Edwards | Change Management Officer |
| Jean  | Campbell | RI & TMO Support Officer |
| **Apologies** |  |  |
| Stephanie  | Dubt   | Weoley |
| Val  | Carter | Sheldon |
| Paul | Langford | Interim Director Housing Management |
| Rishi  | Spolia | Interim Head of Housing  |
| Naomi | Morris | Housing Modernisation & Partnership Manager |
| Colin | Hanno | Engagement Manager |
| Derek | Novell | Acocks Green |
| Ron | Lees | Kings Norton |

1. **Apologies and Welcome**

**0.2 Introduction to the Meeting**

**Eric Shipton** welcomed all to the meeting**.**

**0.3 Minutes of last Meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting were check for points of accuracy.

**0.4 Matters Arising**

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated regarding new tenants renting a property with a garden which may not be suitable for them. Also, there are other people on the waiting list for help with their gardens to be maintained. There should better matching of tenants to a property first.

Tenants who are unable to manage the garden themselves who may not have any tools or family to help support them, financially are unable to employ a gardener. The garden may be come overgrown which may affect the neighbouring gardens. Diane also, raised the query regarding Housing Officers whether tenant checks are carried out.

There as two BCC staff who currently work on the vulnerable garden scheme.

**0.5 Chairs Comments**

The Performance Monitoring group for September 2022 was very good. There are improved customer satisfaction levels. The tenants are providing feedback.

The PMG meeting was attended by Mr Alla Uddin Islam from Capital Works to at an gave an outline of how the Capital works programme will be planned in the future. A request for the Capital Works team to be an agenda item for CHLB meeting.

Regarding the in-person meeting venue unfortunately, Margaret Street building is no longer available to hold CHLB meetings. We are considering other locations with the help of the RI team and management.

**Steve Wilson** responded the Woodcock Steet building could potentially be a venue to hold CHLB meetings. The building is in the city centre, special permission would need to be granted for the building to remain open until 6:30pm. Steve asked the resident involvement team to look at other possible venues.

**0.6 Council Housing Repairs, Maintenance, and Investment 2024 Contract**

**Re-let by Steve Wilson**

The key themes of the presentation are below:

The key principles of BCC repairs maintenance contract

* Birmingham is the largest social landlord in the country. Responsive Repair & Maintenance Services, Gas Servicing and Capital Improvement Work Programmes.
* Current contracts expire 31st March 2024
* Promotes fully committed contractors, focussed on partnership working, delivery at scale, proactive approach to asset management, continuous improvement
* **Procurement Process:** All routes acceptable to market – use Competitive Procedure with Negotiation. Evaluate on 70% quality (including social value); 30% price
* **Tenant Participation in the Procurement:** How tenants will be involved in the procurement process.

* Identifying tenant volunteers.
* Timetable and amount of time required to spend taking part
* Briefing / training plan and timescales
* Communications approach for wider residents once contracts awarded
* 4 x CHLB volunteers; suggested 2 years, experience/ understanding BCC strategy & operations from customer perspective

**Steve Wilson** explained the recruitment and training process for the CHLB members and asked for volunteers. Five CHLB reps put their names forward to be involved in the contract procurement and will received relevant training which will take place in 2023.

**0.7 Financial Inclusion - Winter Support by Helen Shervington**

The key themes of the presentation are below:

Update on the work relating to the rising cost of living and the support that BCC has developed. There is a formal cost of living governance structure in place. There will be access to benefits and money advice, food provision, warm spaces, energy efficiency support.

There is a Financial Inclusion partnership, this includes a range of different partners to help BCC understand what support is currently available and how residents can access the support.

**A toolkit** which has been produced. BCC’s officers can use this to help sign post and inform tenants how to access appropriate support and advice

**Mobile markets:** available from various providers if the tenant is in receipt of certain welfare benefits a discounted rate can be applied. For example: in receipt of Universal Credit, Pension Credit or any other benefits listed. For example: BT unlimited broadband. Details available from Ofcom web site:

**Money Adviser Network:** this allows BCC to refer tenants/residents for free debt advice from accredited organizations. Also, advice for Government support packages that were announced, such as the £650 cost of living payment. Also, access to funds for the energy price cap.

BCC is focusing on tenants with prepayment meters. BCC needs to find out how many BCC tenants have prepayment meters this is for targeted offer of support and information to be sent out to tenants. The Local Energy Advice Partnership can advise tenants. Also, BCC needs to concentrate on arears of deprivation to provide support.

**There is a Warm Space programme in Birmingham**. The purpose is for residents to have access to a safe place to keep warm this winter. Organisations need to register for this programme if they have a building that can be used as a suitable Warm Welcome location. Details regarding the criteria and how to register are on the BCC web site.

For further information see the presentation slides.

**Eric Shipton** asked regarding advise how long will debt advise be available? Regarding the change of Prime Minister will the timeline to receive advise change?

**Helen Shervington** A change in Prime Minister means a change in policy that has been promised. The Money, Advice and Pension service, are funding the advice available to residents. The advice; will be available for the next 2-3 years. Regarding the change of Prime minister there are changes that have been announced relating to the benefits allowed.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked when will the Council finish paying out the £150 Council Tax refund. I believe there is a new Household Support fund running from October 2022 - March 2023. Tenants who did not previously receive a payment may be entitled. Do people need to reapply for the refund?

**Helen Shervington** respondedregarding the Council Tax rebate I will clarify with the Council Tax Office. I understand the rebates have all been issued now. The Council Tax office issued the payments to people where they had the Bank details. If you paid by direct debit, the rebate would be paid directly to the individuals Bank account. If anyone did not apply for the rebate specifically or the Bank details were not accurate, then the individuals were sent out a Post Office voucher for £150.00.

Regarding the Household Support fund, this will be made available in December 2022. The Government has set the criteria regarding who will be eligible to apply.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated the Government granted Birmingham 12.8 million for this fund. Is this for the people who missed out the last time or is this for people that still have difficulties.

**Helen Shervington** the new criteria is due to be released which will set out the criteria for eligibility. Also, will provide information on whether there will be priority for different people.

**Bruce Pitt** stated the Parish Council building in Frankley is used in the morning up until 1pm. The building is empty in the afternoons. Regarding the Warm Welcome could this building be considered as a possible venue. Please contact me to discuss:

**Helen Shervington** respondedregarding the Warm Welcome our team have mobilized quickly to carry out this task. I will send out the details regarding how to register for the Warm Welcome. If any of the CHLB members are aware of any organizations that would be willing to be involved in the Warm Welcome, please contact me with the organisation’s details.

**Dadirai Tsopo** stated regarding the Warm Welcome, we have a building on Welsh House Farm Estate, which is owned by the Council which may be a suitable location. There is an organization that works in that building along with the Children's Trust. It would be a great opportunity for the building to be used for the Warm Welcome. This would require liaison between yourself and the building manager. I will contact you directly for further information and details of how we can go forward. Also, the Welsh's Farm Hub would like a list of the organisations which are offering the Warm Welcome for people to have a choice and are aware of the locations.

Regarding the Household Support fund in this area, we do not receive the information and we are often mis-informed, people are not aware of the support available. People are not aware if support is means tested. Also, there are various rumours such as only elderly people are entitled. Some people were previously missed out and did not receive the support they were entitled too. If BCC produced information and made it clear in a statement who is entitled to receive the funding. We work very hard to identify people who we consider are eligible, but later we are informed they are not eligible for the funding. This causes disappointment, for a lot of people.

Some of the elderly residents do not make the effort to apply because they do not want to be informed, they are not eligible. For example, an elderly resident made an application for funding but was informed “you are over by three pounds” which means you are not eligible. We deal with this these situations on a regular basis.

**Helen Shervington** respondedregarding the,the toolkit that is being put together which contains information regarding the Household Support fund The toolkit is interactive which contains up to date information and you can get this digitally. Workers who supporting people directly, the toolkit could be used as a tool. BVSC administer the fund on behalf of the BCC a team member will need to attend CHLB meeting to explain the criteria and how to apply for the fund.

**Helen Shervington** respondedI would need to attend a future meeting to explain the different criteria’s also the process involved to make an application if this would be useful to members? The aim of Warm Welcome is to ensure that the locations are easily accessible distance for everybody to reach. There are a number of Warm Welcomes networks within each ward.

**Collette Bailey** asked regarding the funding that was paid, does it form part £650 Household support fund?

**Helen Shervington** responded (£650) cost of living payment for household on means tested benefits (split payment). This was administered directly by the Government, which was done in two parts. The first payment made in July and the second payment made in September. If the individual was eligible then the payment should have been received. There were additional funds available to people with a disability. People of pensionable age were also eligible to receive additional funds

**Collette Bailey** There is another payment yet to be made but I am unsure what the criteria is?

**Helen Shervington** responded the Household Support fund which is a grant scheme which households can apply for. Also, there will be a new criteria which has not been announced.

**Eric Shipton** stated because of the number of schemes available we will need some guidance, and clear advice regarding who is eligible to apply for which scheme.

**Helen Shervington** responded a request can be made to Birmingham Voluntary Society, to ask If the team would be able to attend a future CHLB meeting. We are compiling an information pack/toolkit for BCC staff. The intention is to use the information to assist residents. The cost of living, program is being led by the Corporate Communications team who produce all communications for the residents of Birmingham. We will be feeding the information that we have developed into the toolkit.

The Corporate Communications team will produce the overall communication for residents in Birmingham.

**Bruce Pitt** because of the location of my organisation it is possible to pass information on to the residents who are local to the area. Some people may be Birmingham City Council tenants and may not have heard of the HLB’s

**Helen Shervington** one of the benefits of the CHLB meetings, we are able to share ideas and resources. Warm Welcome is an opportunity to connect people to other services.

**Steve Wilson** stated the toolkit will be shared with all BCC staff. The staff will receive training and guidance. The toolkit will also, be provided to BCC’s frontline workers, for staff to help support tenants in the local communities.

**Any Other Business**

**Dadirai Tsopo** stated regarding the collection of rubbish from Walsh House Farm Estate. Residents from the estate have resorted to using tweets on social media to raise awareness in order for the Waste collection service to collect the rubbish. The residents have sent e-mails regarding non collection of rubbish. Dadirai explains the responses received from officers in the Council are not a nice thing at all. Dadirai is raising concerns on behalf of residents of the Community because people are aware of the HLB and have brought their complaints. Dadirai states the residents have to make repeated requests to the Waste service in order for the rubbish to be collection. The residents are considering writing a letter to BCC management regarding the amount missed rubbish collections. Dadirai states the residents feel they are forgotten abandoned regarding rubbish collection.

**Steve Wilson** asked for what the main issue is.

**Dadirai Tsopo** statedthe bins are not collected. Also, if the bin lids are not closed properly, the bin crew will not take the bins. When the bins are not collected, the bin will really get full and then it is up to a few residents who go around picking up the rubbish and putting it back into the bins. The normal collection day is Monday.

**Steve Wilson** responded we will take your contact details and investigate the issues raised.

**Dadirai Tsopo** statedon the estate there are leaseholders who have raised complains regarding the charges they have received from the Home Ownership team. The charges do not include, the breakdown figures of the charges made to leaseholders. The leaseholders have requested the breakdown of expenses for their individual portion they, consider they are being charged for something that does not relate to them.

Some of the leaseholders do not have internet access, they are unable to contact the Home Ownership team. Could the Home Ownership Team be considered to be invited to a CHLB meeting in order to raise some of the issues.

**Eric Shipton** responded we could pencil them in for 2023 meeting.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding the BMHT update in January 2022. Could an update be provided regarding the proposed building site on Long Nuke Road, Northfield, Birmingham 31. Is there a start date for building work to commence? An issue was raised in January 2022 by Councillor Lines regarding Sports England has the issue been resolved? In the area there is a shortage of housing, and it has been 10 months since the first update.

**John Jamieson** responded we will request that colleagues in Housing Development to provide the information.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding a commercial building which is in private ownership and is not trading. Unfortunately, the building has been broken into on a number of occasions by the local youths. Recently scaffolding was put up on the building, also the roofing tiles were taken off, the property is not properly secured. On Sunday evening a number of local youths got into the building, they threw seven bricks at my lounge window. The owner of that building should be required to keep the building secured so that people cannot gain access and cause damage.

A planning application has been put in, the building was previously known as Woodcock pub, the location is near Hillwood Road and Moore’s Lane, Birmingham B31. Previous planning applications for an HMO were rejected. planning applications were made for an HMO twice. The planning department have rejected the applications. This building now has no roof, which allows people to have access. Because of the condition of the building a lot of people have are very concerned. Next to the building are three bungalows that are about 10 feet, away from the building. There are 5 Conifer trees which overhang part of the flat roof section of this building. Diana asked is there any enforcement to make the owner of this property keep the building secured?

**Steve Wilson** responded we will check the details and respond directly to you as quickly as possible. If it is a dangerous structure the building regulations, building control and the Council have got legislation under Dangerous Structures Act. But that is only if a property is dangerous. If it is not dangerous, it will be more difficult, and the responsibility will rest with the owner of the property and their insurance provider.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths asked** Housing Associations that build on land, does the land still belong to BBC? Regarding the Housing Association tenant’s, if there is no proper maintenance (tenancy conditions) by the Housing Association? Are BCC able to step in and request the Housing Association ask the tenants to maintain the tenancy conditions?

**Steve Wilson** responded the land can be leased, gifted, or sold to the Housing Association. BCC can liaise with the Housing Association’s? The enforcement would rest with the registered provider and not with BCC. It would be possible to discuss matters with the landlord and the neighbouring properties. Please provide further details for us to investigate the individual property.

**Collette Bailey** asked furniture/bulk items and rubbish that is left outside by the car park/bin area who is responsible to remove it even if it is fly tipping? The locations are Saddler House, Lloyd House and James House, Newtown area.

Also, there is a drain that is leaking at Sadler House who is responsible to report the issue.

Also, the water leak in my bathroom area has re occurred. The repairs service offers to attend within 24 hours. But it is more helpful if the contractor attends the property within 2 hours of the call being made, so they can see the water leak is still happening. If it is left until 24 hour’s the water leak may have stopped.

**Steve Wilson** responded BCC will contact you for more details and we will investigate

**Jeff Horton** asked regarding the TOA Taxis service, The service is not picking HLB members up on time to attend the HLB meetings. The Tenant Participation Officer can only use the TOA Taxi service.

**Eric Shipton** suggested change the Taxi service.

**Louise Fletcher** responded there are only certain taxi companies across the city that have gone through BCC’s procurement process and is managed through the Procurement department. TOA are recognized as BCC contractors, and we have to use TOA service. We are talking to our Procurement colleagues to look at the contract because it is not working. We are asking TOA to improve the service.

If the HLB member has a local Taxi company in the area which they could use to travel to HLB meetings, we could consider an arrangement where we reimburse the HLB member.

**Eric Shipton** stated we need an extra CHLB meeting in December for members to discuss the Constitution members are asked to attend.

**Eric Shipton** asked for an update regarding Sheltered housing, what has gone wrong? How does BCC intend to fix this? This has been ongoing which now needs action. I understand Sheltered housing is under review since April 2022.

**Diana Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding the Sheltered Housing Support Officer who has left the service. The scheme at Hillwood Road and Moor’s Lane Sheltered Housing. There are elderly vulnerable people who would appreciate the information.

**Louise Fletcher** responded Wendy O’Malleyhas recently recruited to the vacant posts. There should be an officer available to start in the near future.

**Eric Shipton** asked are the Support Officers fully trained or do they need to be trained?

**Louise Fletcher r**esponded the Support officers are experienced. They will need to attend an Induction period and be introduced to the people on the sites whom they will be looking after.

For a copy of the presentations 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, 24th November 2022: Time: 4:30pm - 6:30pm**