# Minutes of City Housing Liaison Board

# Thursday 24th November 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 |
| Malcolm | Nicholls | Druids Heath |
| Tony | Coles | Washwood Heath |
| Michael | Dodd | Quinton |
| Pat | McCartan | Hodge Hill |
| Jennifer | Walters | Lozells |
| Diana | Horton-Griffiths | Bartley Green |
| Carl | McCooty | South Yardley |
| Collette | Bailey | Aston |
| Bruce | Pitt | Kings Norton |
| Elaine | Tarpey | * Hodge Hill |
| **Officers/Councillors** |  |  |
| Councillor Zaker | Choudhry |  |
| Steve | Wilson | Interim Project Director- Asset Management |
| Paul | Langford | Interim Strategic Director City Housing |
| Rishi | Spolia | Interim Head of Housing Management |
| Alla Uddin | Islam | Senior Service Manager Capital |
| Mohammed | Naveed | Acting Homeownership Manager |
| Vicki | Pumphrey | Strategic Director Support |
| Colin | Hanno | Engagement Manager |
| Winnie | Edwards | Change Management Officer |
| Jean | Campbell | RI & TMO Support Officer |
| **Apologies** |  |  |
| Stephanie | Dudt | Weoley |
| Val | Carter | Sheldon |
| Derek | Novell | Acocks Green |
| Councillor Richard | Parkin |  |
| Dadirai | Tsopo | Harborne |
| Louise | Fletcher | Senior Service Manager |
| John | Jamieson | Head of Housing Management |

1. **Apologies and Welcome**

**0.2 Introduction to the Meeting**

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

**0.3 Housing Strategic Priorities by Paul Langford**

The key themes of the presentation are below:

**Vision- The Boldest and the Best:**

* We want to be recognised for delivering brave, innovative and creative services
* We will put the best interests of Birmingham citizens at the heart of everything we do

**What does ‘best in class’ look like for City Housing?**

* City Housing are universally respected, receiving significant investment to deliver excellent services
* City Housing empowers citizens to be independent, helping to develop safe, sustainable communities where people can thrive
* City Housing provide reliable, proactive services that prevent citizens from reaching crisis

**We won’t meet our objectives overnight Prolonged, permanent investment**

* that enables stability across the directorate giving us strong foundations from which to build
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**Service Improvements/Priorities**

* Specific project focused on reducing Disrepair & Litigation claims, including additional investment and capacity
* For further details see the full presentation slides.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding people who are homeowners and have adequate property space. Is it possible to offer funding? For the homeowner to have a granny flat or bedsit annexed to the property with the view of accommodation for an elderly relative, parent’s or in-laws that could be moved into the flat/bedsit which would giving up one or two-bedroom properties.

**Paul Langford** responded you are referring to hidden homes this could be some land, loft conversions. Possibly, an under croft anywhere where we could get additional homes. We have previously investigated this area and considered whatever opportunities there are to create more homes. There are no Government grants to support the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) with this type of idea/scheme. Anything we do in this space would be the at the expense of BCC. Our plans there are three key priorities. BCC will continue with the compliance work regarding building safety and fire safety. BCC is 60% towards the Decent Homes standard. The expectations and statutory requirements for BCC properties to be energy efficient, well insulated towards 0 carbon. There is a requirement for BCC properties to have an Energy Performance Certificates (EPC’s) minimum rated C, the above three priorities BCC have to deliver. A scheme in relation to the above idea, would need to be self-funding and not affect the business plan.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked is this something that could be put on the back burner and keep as time goes on because it would release one and two-bedroom properties. it would save money on Social Services where Carers are having to visit and would cut down the number of visits. Unfortunately, in our society, we put elderly people into Care homes. Whereas people from Asian, or Arabic origin, there are very few of these nationalities in Care homes. The Asian community look after their elderly relatives within the family.

**Paul Langford** responded we will take this away as an action. Regarding Social Services BCC need to keep people as independent as possible, either in their own homes or supporting them to live with family members. We should be looking at the best outcome for the individual. Also, more cost-effective ways that reduce the cost on the Social Care budget. Independent living through technology, through support through all the various techniques are important aspects.

**Collette Bailey** asked regarding penalty, does the employee receive the penalty or the company receive the penalty? for example if someone is here working and attends the property for longer than expected. Is this classed as giving the penalties? If the worker does not get to the next job on time.

I raise the concern because the workers who attend a property are sometime under pressure to finish the job. The worker while attending a property can receive a phone call to attend another location. The worker may have to return on a different day to finish the job.

**Paul Langford** responded to reach the point where BCC would seek damages/compensation from a contractor would have to be a serious issue. There are a number of steps that we can take before we would get to that point. The contractors perform in a key area, we need to ensure performance from the contractor.

**Eric Shipton** asked are there any unused Army camps in Birmingham that could be used for temporary accommodation? This would solve some problems for the homeless people. If feasible significant repairs would be required to the Army camps.

**Tony Coles** stated there was a Cadet camp located in Falcon Lodge, Sutton Coldfield area. What happened to this site?

**Eric Shipton** responded that it is a private housing estate now.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated Michael Gove, the Minister for Housing - levelling up scheme he has shown great concern for tenants. The Government could be approached for funding.

**Paul Langford** responded Mr Gove wrote to all the local Authorities and Registered providers in England. BCC needs to respond to Mr Gove regarding the need for investment across the sector in Birmingham. There has been no additional grants towards all BCC’s existing homes for a number of years. Changes were made to the whole regime around 2010. We do not receive a major repairs or allowance funding, it is all self-funding within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), BCC needs to go back to the Government for more flexibility and more resourcing.

**0.4 Minutes of last Meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting were check for points of accuracy and agree

**0.5 Matters Arising**

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated regarding the process of matching new tenants to a property. Is the information detailed in the e-mail I received, the hard and fast rule that it is going to be kept? Would it be possible for Housing Officers and Support Officers to include digital inspections on properties that have a garden? Currently, this is not being done. There are Conditions of Tenancy which should be kept by the tenant’s or can be enforced by BCC. Would it be possible for the Housing Officers and Support Offices to carry out visual inspections? This should be added to the process of letting or matching people to suitable properties. Dianne gave an example: Where there are three properties and the person in the middle has got a beautiful garden, and plan to enter the Birmingham in Bloom competition, if the garden on either side becomes overgrown this will affect the tenant with the garden located in the middle. It is the tenant responsibilities when they sign for a property, they are committing to keeping the property in decent condition, including front and rear gardens. There should be more inspections and enforcement e.g. Housing Officers and Support Officers knocking on the tenant’s door, sending a letter is not sufficient.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked for an update regarding the housing development in Long Nuke Road, we were informed a request has been made for Housing Development to provide the information.

**Rishi Spolia** responded he will provide an update at a future meeting.

**Michael Dodd** raised concerns regarding the way Sheltered Housing is run, and stated that there are a lot of issues on the Sheltered Housing schemes that need addressing

**Eric Shipton** stated I understand sheltered Housing is under review. We have been asked to wait to see what the plan is for the future. When we receive some answers, we will be able to provide the information relating to what is wrong with the Sheltered Housing system.

**Rishi Spolia** we are aware of the dissatisfaction regarding Sheltered Housing, any issues can be raised now the team will investigate them. Sheltered Housing is a project BCC have put under review.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated regarding Sheltered Housing there are elderly, vulnerable people. There are grants allowed by the Government. There is a BCC employee who holds sessions in a community hall every two weeks. I have helped people by making appointments for some elderly people to see the lady. Information is given on what type of support is available to them, individual applications can be made. Elderly or vulnerable people may not have access to a computer and the internet. The situation for liaison with vulnerable people is very poor. The elderly and vulnerable are missing out on funds that could help with their energy bills and take some of the worry from them. Action needs to be taken regarding Sheltered schemes.

**0.6 Chairs Comments**

**Eric Shipton** stated most of the PMG report is very good. I understood there were improvements. The improvements have not been sustained; therefore, we are back to square one. I will bring further information/updates to the board. Officers from the Rent team were invited to the PMG meeting to give an overview on how the rent is collected. Also, to explain why there is a difference each month this was very informative. We were given information to explain why the amounts collected fluctuates, where the funds go and what happens to the rent collected. We need to say thank you to: Tracy Holsey, Matthew Morrison, and Diane Jones we hope to invite them to a future City HLB meeting.

Regarding face-to-face meetings we are waiting for a response from Woodcock Steet as a possible venue. If Woodcock Street is not possible, we will try a different location as a venue. It is difficult to find a venue with suitable access, IT facilities because we plan some meetings to be hybrid as not everyone will be able to return to face to face meeting straight away. We will keep members updated regarding any changes/progress.

**0.7 - Leasehold Charges by Mohammed Naveed**

The key themes of the presentation are below:

* The service charges are specific to the individual leaseholder and where they live. They are sent out to the leaseholder on an annual basis.

* **The charges are broken down into various areas.**
* Five core areas that cover Caretaking services, Night Security, Cleaning services, low rise blocks, cleaned by a Contractor and other services for example day-to-day Repairs, Insurance and Management costs.
* The service handbook that is issued to each leaseholder, will give a breakdown of the service charges, also, shows how the charges are calculated
* The handbook shows how charges are broken down in the various areas such as electricity, lighting, lift maintenance, insurance and inspection of fire extinguishers and grass cutting.
* This will show the costs per block or per flat. These costs are also broken down on an annual basis.
* For further details see the full presentation slides.

**Eric Shipton** queried the leaseholders do not receive a detailed report which explains the charges made. The leaseholders consider they are paying charges for things they should not pay for; they need a breakdown of the charges. Also, when the leaseholders try and get in touch with BCC staff, they do not receive a response and answer to their questions.

**Mohammed Naveed** responded we have a complaints procedure if there are any issues in relation to the service that we provide. We review our services. We also, liaise with our leaseholders on a regular basis. The written breakdown of the service charges is sent to the leaseholders these are comprehensive. This is done on an annual basis. The leaseholders should have a detailed breakdown of the actual service charges in relation to those areas.

Regarding the service if there are any queries or any concern’s we respond to them properly. I have worked with the team for the last 12 months; I have not come across any major concerns. We receive complaints in relation to customer service, quality of service, information is provided on a timely basis, but some of the delays are of our control. We have to wait for certain information to come through before we can provide it to the leaseholders. The team try to respond to any complaints promptly, effectively, and efficiently

**Collette Bailey** asked regarding Security call response time. Collette explained there was sick (vomit) in the lift. We tried to phone out of hours Security, but we did not receive a response. We do not know who else to phone. There are other people in the block who have buzzed for Security, but do not receive a response day or night. I am a volunteer Block Inspector; the residents need a phone number to contact regarding cleaning issues.

**Mohammed Naveed** responded we will raise it with the Caretakers/Night-time Security. The details will be sent to the local housing team and the local Housing Manager for them to raise the issue with the night Security Manger. Security carry-out night patrols of all the blocks.

**Carl McCooty** asked regarding the cleaning service within the communal block, we have not received the cleaning service for about 3 months this issue relates to the whole block. I understand the contract is out for tender, but I am still paying £13.00 each month, along with all the other tenants in my block. We have not received the cleaning service.

**Mohammed Naveed** responded there should be a sign within the communal area stating that the block is cleaned by a particular contractor. Are you aware of the name of the contractor who comes out to clean the block?

**Carl McCooty** stated during the local Housing Liaison Board meeting with the members, also with the Housing Officer. We worked through and completed a questionnaire, which was about what we thought of the level of service we had previously received. But no one has given an answer or an explanation why we are not receiving the cleaning service. We are still paying each month for the cleaning service.

**Rishi Spolia** responded we will investigate this issue

**0.8 Capital Works update by Alla Udin Islam**

The key themes of the presentation are below:

**Capital Investment Priorities**

* Fire Related and Health and Safety Works
* Statutory Related Works

Expired Life Cycle and Decency Works (Decent Homes standard).

* Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency Works

**Statutory and Programme Works**

* New Kitchen and Bathroom Programme in addition to the voids
* Whole House Retrofit pilot scheme, LAD2 and LAD3

**Fire Related and Health and Safety Works**

* New Q Mark Door to all High-Rise Blocks, circa 4000 to be completed by this year
* CO2 and Smoke Detector Replacement

For further details see the full presentation slides.

**Eric Shipton** asked the work that needs to be carried out does it follow a set program. Also, is there a set pattern, and will there be no changes to the set pattern?

**Alla-Uddin Islam** responded the health and safety also, the fire related work must be carried out because we need to ensure that the buildings are safe. There may be delays which is mainly because we need a structural solution. For example, Jordan House. When the design solution is agreed, we will start to commence the work. There are also delays in obtaining license agreements, which is a legal issue between leaseholders and BCC. This will hold up the work some delays are outside our control. But does not always cause a change in pattern. The start of the work can slip into the next year. The team have been informed BCC will try to improve the decency work. Regarding kitchens, bathrooms, and roofing.

**Elaine Tarpey** asked regarding Jordan House the tenant have been rehoused due to the poor conditions they lived in. Also, regarding Bridge Meadow and Thistle House. Work on the scheme started but the work stopped, half of the scheme has been fitted with new doors. The tenants were informed the glass above the doors needs to be removed. We have not been given any more information for nearly 18 months.

**Alla Udin Islam** responded the previous contractor has been removed from this contract work, the new contractors are Equans. There is a suspension in works Equans realized that the glass must be fire rated or Q mark accredited before the glass can be fitted.

**Steve Wilson** stated possibly the glass that was put in was not fire rated, we need to make sure we look at the technical solution for the fire doors and ensure that the fire doors are fire rated, compliant and safe. Jordan House was a project with the former contractors Wates. Equans have taken over the contract work. BCC made the right decision to terminate Wates’s contract. This was due to poor performance with repairs across a large part of the city, West Central and East.

The tenants are more satisfied with the contractors Equans than what they were with Wates. Some of the work has been delayed in Jordan House. As regards tenants moving out of Jordan House the majority of people can stay in if they wish. BCC will encourage and support people where possible if they want to stay in Jordan House. BCC only needs to move tenants out of the top few floors, this is where we are doing the works that would be more disruptive to the tenants.

There has been issues about pest control, Equans are preparing to increase their spend, to resolve the pest control issue. If tenants wish to move out of Jordan House BCC will support their move. Birmingham has very limited housing supply. This is the case if tenants prefer to remain in the Bromford location.

It may be some time before they can find suitable alternative accommodation and may involve moving to a different part of the city.

**Elaine Tarpey** stated the meetings are held in Ambridge House by BCC senior Officers who have kept the residents informed. Also, the residents have been able to make their comments.

**Collett Bailey** asked regarding the glass in the doors when will it be fitted?

**Steve Wilson** respondedusually the glass is retained at the top of the fire door. The glass needs to be fire resistant. I will investigate and report back.

**Mike Dodd** stated I believe this comes under the Health and Safety Act. I had a new cooker brought in last week I was informed by the gas fitter that my gas fittings are not up to the new regulations. During the last few months, a gas service check was carried out at the property, which passed the service check. Are there new regulations? Is the work up to standard?

**Steve Wilson** responded we will look at your case. We will contact you directly. If we have done the Gas Safety check, we will have checked that this is compliant.

**Any Other Business**

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** stated I understand at the end of the year that Rob James will retire from BCC. City HLB should thank him for the time that he has given to City HLB in the past and for all the good work. He was always very informative. We should show some appreciation before he retires.

**Colin Hanno** the RI team will draft a letter on behalf of the CHLB Chairperson and request his approval.

**Eric Shipton** wished the season’s greetings to everyone and hope to see you in December at the Extraordinary CHLB meeting for members to discuss the Constitution. Members are asked to attend.

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: 26th January 2023 Time: 4:30pm - 6:30pm**