# Minutes of City Housing Liaison Board

# Thursday 23rd March 2023, 16:30 p.m. -18.30 p.m.

# Microsoft Teams

| **Present: Members: Name** | **Surname** | **Housing Liaison Board** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Eric | Shipton | Sutton Coldfield |
| Malcolm | Nicholls | Druids Heath |
| Jennifer | Walters | Lozells & East Handsworth |
| Michael | Dodd | Quinton |
| Dadirai  | Tsopo | Harborne |
| Diana | Horton-Griffiths | Bartley Green |
| Carl | McCooty | South Yardley |
| Collette | Bailey | Aston |
| Samantha | Vaughan  | Perry Barr |
| Bruce | Pitt | Frankley |
| **Officers/Councillors** |  |  |
| Councillor Zakar | Choudhry |  |
| Councillor Richard | Parkin |  |
| Paul | Langford | Interim City Housing Director |
| Louise | Fletcher | Senior Service Manager - Tenant Engagement |
| Rishi | Spolia | Interim Head of Housing Management  |
| Wayne  | Davies | Director - Asset Management |
| Natalie  | Smith | Head of Service Housing Management |
| Wendy | O’Malley | Housing Manager |
| Alex Warsama  | Warsama  | Housing Manager |
| Colin | Hanno | Engagement Manager |
| Winnie | Edwards | Change Management Officer |
| Jean  | Campbell | RI & TMO Support Officer |
| **Apologies** |  |  |
| Paul  | Langford | Interim Strategic Director – City Housing |
| Jeff | Horton | Hall Green |
|  |  |  |

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 checked for points of accuracy. The minutes were approved by the CHLB members

**0.4 Matters Arising**

**0.5 Chairs Comments**

**Eric Shipton** stated I was present at the Birmingham in Bloom event with other tenants and some members, we all had a very good evening. I would like to say thank you to Councillor Maureen Cornish, Councillor Sharon Thompson and John Jameson for giving up their time from a very busy schedule.

Also, thank you to the BCC staff and the Tenant Participation Officers who worked very hard in the background and organised the event. Such events take time to arrange and set up. Thank you all for your very hard work.

**0.6** – **Security Service Care Line Service Update by Amanda Walker**

**Eric Shipton** asked when tenants phone the Care Line Service to make a request for help and assistance, there are no staff to answer the call. Do you have enough members of staff?

**Amanda Walker** responded the service manage the 101 tower blocks in the city that have the BCC intercom system. The control room is operated 24 hour per day. Over 7 days per week. The service has 10 teams, which cover four areas of the city. There are four teams per night that cover the whole of the city. We will contact the mobile patrol officers and delegate out to the teams the issues that are raised in the tower blocks.

**Eric Shipton** stated if there is avery slow response from the Police. The mobile units become more important because they are taking care of vulnerable people. When a tenant reports an issue, it is happening there and then. Does the service need more staff and vehicles?

**Amanda Walker** responded regarding the mobile patrol teams if here is an at risk situation in a block, the Police are contacted. The staff would not be deployed to situations which would put them at risk. When a tenant phones the control room, either via the intercom in the property or by dialling 0121 303-7300 number, the control room operators will log the details of the phone call in the book and inform the nearest petrol team to that block.

**Eric Shipton** asked does the team work closely with the Police?

**Amanda Walker** responded before COVID 19 pandemic, the team worked closely with the Police and were doing joint patrols. The team have built up a working relationship with the Police. Also, the front door panel of the block will start recording when the door panel is pressed, and information has been passed to the Police. The mobile patrol teams work 7:00pm-7:00am.

**Eric Shipton** asked does the team work closely with the Anti-social behaviour team?

**Amanda Walker** responded any incidents/issues classed as anti-social behaviour are forward over to the anti-social behaviour team for the specific area.

**Collette Bailey** asked do the night security team only come out when there is a problem in the block. Also, are the teams sent out at particular times or anytime?

**Amanda Walker** blocks in the city will receive three checks each week. Unless there are issues with rough sleepers or a lot of anti-social behaviour issues. The team will check each floor of the block, check the chute rooms and each stairwell.

**Collette Bailey** statedI have phoned the control room to report issues regarding the tenants who occupy temporary accommodation within the block. The control room operator has stated the issue needs to be reported to the Contact Centre.

**Amanda Walker** responded the control room operators will phone the property, to inform the tenant a complaint has been received. The control room will advise tenants phone calls are recorded and logged in a book. Tenants should contact their individual allocated anti-social behaviour officer to report issues.

M**ike Dodd** stated there have been various anti-social behaviour issues/incidents raised with the control room which take a long time to resolve.

**Natalie Smith** responded regarding anti-social behaviour policy, the team work to performance indicators, when customers raise queries, we respond to customers within certain time scales. The team will focus on making improvements on performance to improve the service to tenants.

**Malcolm Nicholls** asked the 101 blocks are they only sheltered housing or a mixture. The 3 checks by the mobile patrol teams each week. Do the Control team get it confirmed the checks have been done.

**Amanda Walker** responded it is a mixture. The Mobile Patrol teams record the checks on a new mobile phone app, also they complete paperwork to record the block checks these are submitted to the team managers.

**Malcolm Nicholls** stated tower blocks are not secure, when the tenant walks through the door to go outside, someone can walk in.

**Rishi Spolia** responded there have been reports of people who are not tenants that are getting through security doors and into our blocks, which make the tenants feel unsafe. We need to inform tenants not to let people who are not tenants follow (tailgate) them into the block. We are trying to reintroduce community walkabouts with different landlords, because some of the issues are not specific to BCC blocks. We need to identify individuals with Police support and develop measures to improve this.

**Malcolm Nicholls** stated he has a complaint from the Postal Service. They cannot gain access to the tower blocks. The Postman has to keep pressing buttons until a tenant answers and let them into the block. Other delivery companies raised the same issues with parcel deliveries.

**Amanda Walker** responded the Postal Service with deliveries, would need to contact the BCC for fobs. Other delivery companies would need to have ID as proof for the driver to be allowed automatic access to the block.

**Carl McCooty** stated there are many issues with tailgating at Bakeman House. The tenants need to consider their safety before any attempt to engage somebody who is tailgating, especially if it is an elderly tenant. The blocks would need concierge present all the time.

**Mike Dodd** stated there are issues with people tailgating. There was a camera in the block, which was paid for through the aerial funds for the block. The camera was taken down by BCC without consulting the tenants. A camera would help the Police to identify the people who are getting into the block. Let us know why a camera is not allowed to be up in the block.

**Natalie Smith** responded BCC made the decision in 2018-2019 because the CCTV and cameras within properties were non-compliant in relation to GDPR regulations. It was a citywide decision that the cameras were to be removed because there were non-compliant. All the CCTV cameras were removed from within the blocks. We need to look at ways of securing the high-rise blocks.

**Wayne Davies** responded BCC would need to carry out an Impact Assessment which is an assessment of the reasons why CCTV would need to be installed. There would need to be support from the residents and evidence provided that the residents need CCTV in place. Currently there is no evidence why residents want to have cameras installed. BCC would need to carry out an Impact Assessment and have full agreement from the residents to install cameras. Also, technology has changed, there are quite high service charges and expenses to manage particular types of cameras. Also, the cameras can get damaged.

If there are serious concerns from residents, Housing Management and Asset management can look at each case on a case-by-case basis. BCC can talk to residents, do consultations which may improve the situation.

**Collette Bailey** statedI was followed into the block by a non-resident. This happens often where tenants are followed into the block by people who are not residents of the tower bock. There are incidents that have occurred because people who are not residents of the tower block have gained access to the tower block and this needs to be investigated by BCC staff.

**Dadirai Tsopo** stated regarding security in the tower blocks on Welsh House Farm Estate, there have been various young people who are pulling the front doors from tower blocks, including low rise blocks. There are reports of residents feeling very unsafe. We need this to be looked at on the estate, because this is increasingly an occurrence, we are seeing this also happen on the low-rise blocks. There are young people who gain access to the tower/low-rise blocks and cause incidents on the ground floor.

The communal door at the back of the block has been pulled out. The young people unscrewed one of the latches and left the screws on the floor to show us that they can do it. Every evening the residents check to see whether that door is closed or not. Because if it is not fully closed then we cannot get in, this is not safe for us and our children

The residents have this on video footage of the young people pulling the doors and getting into the blocks. Because of GDPR the residents cannot use the information. How will we provide proof to the Council to show how this has happened? There needs to be changes made so that people who live in tower blocks or low-rise blocks can feel safe. These incidents have increased in the past few weeks

**Natalie Smith** responded there is a new Estate Officer who will be working in the area. We need to work with the Community Safety team and the local Police to improve the situation in the area. The high-rise blocks and some of the low-rise blocks regarding safety, we need to develop a strategy. There are questions in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey regarding communal space and feeling safe.

**Carl McCooty** asked if Bateman house is part the Night Security Service patrol?

**Amanda Walker** responded if there are incidents of anti-social behaviour or rough sleepers in the block. The residents would need to contact Tracy Lee.

**Jennifer Walters** stated it would be useful to determine how many residents would want cameras on the building or around the building, considering there may be several people in the building who have motives not to have cameras installed Also, there may be people who would want cameras installed. Should cameras be installed for safety reasons?

**Natalie Smith** responded an Impact Assessment must be done before CCTV can be installed with the agreement of the residents in the block. BCC will need to consider installation of CCTV on a block-by-block basis.

**Eric Shipton** asked would it be possible to fit a second door inside the property so that the person leaving opens the inner door, stays in the hall until the outer door, opens and then goes outside. There would always be one door closed so nobody can tailgate.

**Wayne Davies** responded on new build high rise blocks which have a security entrance, and it is part of secure by design. It may be possible to put a secondary door in as long as there is enough space, and it does not compromise fire escape requirements. There are various issues to consider. The camera's may be an option, which must comply and meet the requirements. BCC could look at a security door as a second option. If we can meet the requirements and the building safety legislation, we would need the Building Safety manager to ensure compliance with the fire requirements.

Regarding non-residents who enter buildings and unscrew doors and latches. We can put in anti-screw latches and anti-vandal latches. We need to look at what the issues are and then carry out individual assessments of each block. This will be a safety strategy and not about individual blocks, there is a common theme/issues raised by members. As a HLB strategically we should be saying these are the issues that we have found. Also, we will look at the issues raised by members and feedback to the board at a future date.

**Rishi Spolia** stated the walkabouts will help to identify what the issues are on each block. We can create an action list, each block seems to have some common problems, there will also, be individual problems to each block. As part of our strategy, we need to commit to doing walkabouts with Housing Officers in order to identify what needs to be done as part of the investment strategy.

**Wayne Davies** stated regarding the fire doors being damaged and not able to open, this is a repair, through proper inspection and block checks the work will be undertaken as a matter of priority. Regarding cameras in the blocks, we will look at security which is an issue in the blocks.

**Mike Dodd** asked will walkabout include tenants and the managers.

**Wayne Davies** regarding the issues raised, tenants will be included in the walkabouts. We need to be able to carry out the walkabouts complete the inspection checks, in order to resolve the issues.

**0.7 Sheltered Accommodation update by Natalie Smith, Wendy O'Malley and Alex Warsama**

**Sheltered Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures-Perception Measures**

The purpose of the survey was to seek tenant’s views on the 12 Tenant satisfaction measures that will introduced from April 2023.

The key themes of the presentation are below:

* **Sheltered Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures**
* Tenants to be consulted on improvement plans to address issues raised.
* **Sample Approach:** High Rise, Extra Care and Cat 2 Schemes, The questions asked were: Overall satisfaction with Housing Services. Satisfaction with repairs service over the last 12 months. Satisfaction that your home is well maintained. Satisfaction that BCC keeps communal areas clean. Satisfaction with approach to floating support. Satisfaction with BCC approach to handing complaints.
* **Service Improvements planned 2023/2024:** Review local lettings policy. Review service charge. Wider review of Sheltered Housing.

**Malcolm Nicholls** stated we hold a meeting in a room at the sheltered housing scheme in my area, the roof leaks and this has been reported. Also, the room has not been cleaned and it is clear the windows have not been cleaned for a while. This is not good as the residents are paying service charges. Is there support offered to tenants by the scheme?

**Wendy O'Malley** responded the surveys were done on a random tenant selection basis, also by the number of properties on each scheme. I am aware the leak is on the balcony above the common room, there is ongoing work with contractors. The cleaners have job specifications, the staff on site will check weekly on how the cleaners are performing, which links into the KPIs. The staff have direct contact with the cleaning contractors’ issues can be reported to the staff. The windows are part of that cleaning contract, which are cleaned twice a year, this is due now and it will be investigated. The contractors have cleaning scheduled that they work to.

In the common room there is a staff rota, which gives details of when staff are due on site this is updated on a weekly basis.

**Mike Dodd** stated regarding the condition of the tower block on the inside. It looks beautiful on the outside needs to be improved. The paving slabs by the bungalows, need to be looked at. Also, I understand support officers have stopped reporting tenant repairs. The tenants must report repairs online. There are tenants who do not have access to a computer/internet. Another tenant received a letter regarding rent rebate the only option given was reply online or lose the rent rebate. There was no option to reply by telephone. This was a very vulnerable tenant.

**Wendy O'Malley** responded wehave worked with colleagues to improve the way to report communal repairs online. The new system now logs all sheltered scheme tenant properties and can report communal repairs online. The support staff can report tenants’ repairs if the tenants is unable to report the repairs themselves, this must be reported via the Contact Centre. Provide a copy of the letter which will be raised with the team who sent the letter.

**Mike Dodd** stated when the grass is cut the ground maintenance crew do not clean up the grass cuttings. The tenant’s suggested the boxes should be used. The machine will blow the grass cuttings and grass is left in lumps on the lawn.

**Wendy O'Malley** responded the machines allocated to do grass cutting changed and box cuts as they are referred to have been taken off the sheltered contract. The type of grass cut will depend on the machine used, as part of the specification if there is grass on foot paths, it should be removed. The issue of aftercare when the grass has been cut will be raised with the team.

**Mike Dodd** stated there are times when people who are not residents of the sheltered scheme who get into the property and cause anti-social behaviours issues.

**Natalie Smith** responded this will be raised with the local anti-social behaviour team to determine what action can be taken. Issues can also, be raised with the officer on sheltered scheme site.

**Mike Dodd** stated there are overgrown trees that are touching the buildings is there a responsibility by law for the trees to be cut back to the border? In my garden I have paid for an overgrown tree with overhanging branches to be cut back.

**Wendy O'Malley** responded we have contacted the tree surgeons/the tree team there is a green agenda for the city. The tree that is touching buildings is a hazard that we need to resolve and will raise with the tree team.

**Collett Bailey** What is defined as cleaning is it wiping/sweeping?

**Wendy O'Malley** responded in sheltered housing the common rooms have cleaning specification such as wiping surfaces, wiping the tables, also cleaning skirting boards. Windowsills should be cleaned it is all covered within the spec. Staff and tenants work together to monitor that the contractors are cleaning all arears. (Communal areas not individual properties).

**Carl McCooty** stated some blocks have been painted. My block now has new flooring, which is an improvement. Some of the tenants will keep the blocks clean. There are some tenants who create more dirt and rubbish within the block, than what is normally accumulated over the space of a week. Some blocks may need to be cleaned by the contractors more than once per week. Also, the HLB has been involved in projects in the area.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked were people who live in bungalows and part of a sheltered scheme included in the survey. Also, the service charge that are paid by the tenants of the bungalows, is high. There are no benefits such as common rooms.

**Alex Warsama** the actual surveys will start in April 2023. It will be a combination of using emails addresses, telephone numbers, tenants will be able to phone the contact centre. We will use text messages, and the internet. Also, hand deliver the survey. The pilot survey was a random selection of sheltered housing tenants. We will be communicating the survey to all of the tenants.

**Eric Shipton** statedthere are reports that people with mental or health issues are being placed in sheltered housing schemes. The people are not supported, what are the plans to ensure support is provided?

**Wendy O'Malley** we are working with the allocations manager and are looking at sensitive lettings. We must work within the legal boundaries of BCC Allocations policy. We will make a need’s assessment, conduct an interview with customers before they are allocated to a sheltered scheme. Sheltered housing is for people over 55 years of age. The main applicant must be 55 years of age. If the applicant has an older adult child still living with them, they would be allowed to live with the parent/s in the sheltered scheme.

**Collette Bailey** asked how do the Caretakers report repairs? Also, why is the bin room being left unlocked?

**Natalie Smith** respondedthere is amobile solution which allows the Caretakers to report communal repairs and block inspections via the mobile phone.

**Wendy O'Malley** responded the bin room is open on the day of refuse collection because refuse collectors need to be allowed access to the bin room. The bin room should be secured after refuse collection.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding sheltered housing in high rise blocks which are occupied by one person living in a 2-bedroom property. There is a proposal to increase charges. Will sheltered housing be exempt from this increase?

**Wendy O'Malley** responded in sheltered housing if the tenant is over 64 years of age, depending on their financial circumstances. The tenant would not be liable for the additional bedroom charge. The team are waiting to be updated on this issue. If the tenant is unable to the meet the Council tax, rent and the charges that is levied to them for being in a property that is deemed too big. If the tenants wishes to downsize to a 1-bedroom flat we would provide assistant in helping them move on to a 1-bedroom accommodation that is suitable.

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding sheltered housing tenants who have more bedrooms than they need could the tenant apply for a discretionary housing payment. This issue was previously discussed at the Performance Monitoring Group, there are people who want 1-bedroom properties but there are not enough properties.

**Wendy O'Malley** responded if a tenant living in a 2-bedroom property wanted to downsize to a 1-bedroom property, the tenant would be a high priority within in the allocations policy. We would work with the tenant to place bids on a 1-bedroom property.

**Any Other Business**

**Diane Horton-Griffiths** asked regarding HLB & City HLB Constitution. If a HLB member has missed three meetings. I understand that the person should receive a letter from the TPO asking them if they are still interested. What happens if the person only attends the biannual meeting and the Christmas dinner. The person still receives the emails inviting them to meetings because another member gives the person apologies. Please clarify the position.

**Colin Hanno** respondedit is written in the Constitution, if there is a person who has missed three meeting, the TPO should write to the individual, and we take the necessary actions. When we reconvene the Constitution meeting, we could pick-upon such points. A meeting was held with the CHLB chair, we are looking to reconvene the Constitution meeting shortly.

For a copy of the presentation 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 April 2023: Time: 4:30pm - 6:30pm**