

# BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

<b>Housing Sub Board</b> <b>Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025</b>	
<b>Apologies:</b> Guy Chaundy Cllr Bruce Lines (Invited but did not attend).	
<b>Attendees:</b> Jackie Belton, Commissioner Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Andrew Healey, Finance Business Partner Dave Ashmore, Director, Housing Management Paul Langford, Executive Director, Housing Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Wayne Davies, Director, Asset Management Naomi Morris, Head of Service Councillor Penny Wagg, Liberal Democrats William Moody, PA, Commissioners Support Jodie Price, PA, Commissioners Support Lauren Whitmore, Business Support Co-ordinator	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome:</b>  The chair welcomed attendees and introductions were completed.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of Last Meeting and Actions:</b>  The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record. Attendees were requested to check the action log and provide updates to Commissioners Support. Attendees were also requested to make note of the date of reports and reports required on the forward plan for future meetings.
<b>3.</b>	<b>BCC Performance on Voids:</b>  The average turnaround time is 23 days for Equans. This timescale is considered an achievable target. Equans have taken an initial 10 voids to support Fortem whose performance is not currently hitting void turnaround target timescales. The increase in Equans void workload will be closely monitored by BCC. A cabinet paper is currently being drafted to request the establishment of a reserve set of contractors for void work. Progress on this will be reported at future meetings.  Fortem's turnaround time is currently at 46 days, this is below target and not acceptable to BCC. Fortem have added additional resources, and liquidated damages are being claimed. They have a performance improvement plan in place and are expected to return to a normal turnaround by the end of March. It is hoped to maximise

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	<p>Fortem's run rate to 20 per month, which will be a quarter of the normal run rate. Monitoring continues and will be reported at future meetings.</p> <p>Jackie Belton asked for clarity around the target figures for voids. It was confirmed that 28 days is the target with a 7-day tolerance on top of this. The level of work undertaken can range from extensive work to simple work. Mostly the work costs are in the region of 3.5-4k.</p> <p>Previously BCC have let voids below target performance drift, this is now being closely monitored and managed, and the reserve contractors will be an important mitigation to avoid poor performance from the main contractors.</p> <p>BCC are charged based on the run rate of the voids work.</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <p>Report and update on voids to be provided to the next Housing Sub Board.</p> <p>Jackie Belton asked the team to consider whether there was anything that they have learned that they would do differently in the new contract – this is to be fed back and included in the current procurement process.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Housing Solutions and Support/SLAs:</b></p> <p>The rough sleeping count for January was 51 families. Official national numbers will be available on 27th February 2025. There has been no adverse impact of e-bed reductions to date, monitoring will continue. SWEP has been activated regularly.</p> <p>Housing Solutions and Support will go out to contact in April 2025. The befriending and prevention initiatives were discussed, with a budget of 250k for befriending and 300k for the rest.</p> <p>Prevention performance was 56.29% in January 2025 and the second highest of the core cities.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the impact of moving housing development from the PPS directorate. It was confirmed an SLA would not be necessary if this function sat directly within the housing department as the service would be charged directly to the HRA.</p> <p>An update was provided on the HOC. Cllr Francis was appreciative of managers and staff's response to the incident at the HOC but raised some concerns about the time it is taking for the works to be completed. The walls and windows were being installed, and the CCTV was up and running.</p> <p>There is currently a DA contract provided by an external provider – with roughly 5-6 members of staff. The service is putting arrangements in place to insource the service, feedback is to be provided at the next meeting on progress.</p> <p>There has been a 22% increase in homeless applications between now and 2022. In January there were 704 applications over the course of 6 weeks.</p>

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	Around 90% of applications are assessed within the 8-week timescale.
<b>ACTIONS:</b> Feedback is to be provided on the progress of DA contract service insourcing at the next HSB.	
5.	<p><b><u>Regulator of Social Housing:</u></b></p> <p>The team reported another good and positive meeting – the team are continuing to work well with the regulator. There is a key milestone in March 2025 when Savills re-audits should be complete. In addition, it was noted that the RSH is interested in understanding how BCC gains assurance that the first-time fix on damp and mould repairs is accurate. This will be the subject of a deep dive at a future meeting.</p> <p><b><u>BMHT:</u></b></p> <p>The BMHT report has been presented for a decision at the February 2025 Cabinet and subject to decision the recommendations will be implemented. Progress is to be reported at a future meeting.</p> <p><b><u>Finance:</u></b></p> <p>BCC are in the process of setting the 25/6 budget, in February Cabinet and Council. The board felt it would be beneficial if a report could be provided on progress in reducing demand for TA and increasing the supply required to contain the service within the 25/6 budget. It was recommended that this be done after the first quarter.</p>
<b>ACTIONS:</b> <p>July's HSB is to discuss progress against budget and the impact of the wide range of TA interventions that are being implemented in 25/26.</p> <p>Update on BMHT report to be fed back in April 2025.</p>	
6.	<p><b><u>TA Interventions:</u></b></p> <p>Jackie Belton highlighted that within the TA interventions report it was indicated that Commissioners were supportive of the proposals. However, Jackie wished to make clear that any support for the proposals set out was dependent on receipt of a full business case with legal and financial comments.</p> <p>An update was provided on the progress of TA intervention as set out in the report:</p> <p><b><u>Regulation 10:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cobden Hotel agreement was signed on 1st December 2024, resulting in a cost avoidance of £134,514.38 per year for a minimum term of 18 months and a maximum term of 36 months.</li> <li>• The Edgbaston Palace Hotel agreement was signed on 1st December 2024, resulting in a cost avoidance of £183,280.37 per year for a minimum term of 18 months and a maximum term of 36 months and the</li> <li>• The Holiday Inn Express agreement was signed on 12th December 2024, resulting in a cost avoidance of £413,526.75 for a minimum term of 18 months and a maximum term of 36 months.</li> </ul>

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	<p>Midland Heart supported accommodation block providing 92 units had received a new lease agreement and will be mobilised on a 10-year plus 1-day basis, enabling the Council to change affordable rents.</p> <p>Detailed rent rates for various providers and bedroom sizes were presented to the board, with a comparison between current payment rates and 80% affordable rates.</p> <p>Progress on converting the existing supply of TA to the 10-year + 1-day leases is to be reported again at the next board.</p> <p><b><u>Institutional funding of Social Housing</u></b></p> <p>A 40-year full-service model was briefly discussed and Jackie clarified that there was significant work required to build a business case for such a model. This would need full finance, legal and procurement contributions and should be discussed with the new S151 Officer and CLT, particularly because of the implications of the proposal needing borrowing.</p> <p><b><u>New Homeless Centre:</u></b></p> <p>Washington Court: 101-bed empty hostel, reducing to 80 beds. An offer of £7.5m was made and accepted by Trident, with an investment of £648k to bring the property up to Decent Homes Standards.</p> <p>Norman Power: 60-unit former care home owned by the Council. Valued at £2m, with £8m borrowed against the asset over the last 10 years.</p> <p>Brookpiece: 50-unit tower block at Druids Heath regeneration site, with an anticipated investment of £3m for 10 years of life.</p> <p>Perry Barr Plot 6: 278 1 &amp; 2-bed units: it needs to be considered whether there is a business case that supports the appropriation of this site into City Housing. It should be noted that any work on this option is in parallel with BCC property teams' marketing of the site, to potential external purchasers.</p>
	<p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <p>Jackie to raise with Civil Servant colleagues the question of when BCC may be notified of the continuation of the next exempt accommodation grant (2026/7). Stephen Philpott confirms that BCC would continue to provide the current service by utilising the available grant underspend.</p> <p>Individual detailed business cases to be presented for Commissioner comments for each of the proposed homeless centres/TA interventions, this is to be completed by the next meeting.</p> <p>If a proposal for the Institutional funding of Social Housing, Commissioners would require early sight and engagement and would want to understand how BCC would procure the model and manage any associated risks. This will need to be led by treasury management colleagues in finance to ensure it is in line with BCC's IRP, MTFP and borrowing constraints. The service area is to keep Commissioners informed and indicate when a report might come forward.</p>

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7.	<p><b>HRA Recharges:</b></p> <p>Jackie Belton asked for confirmation that the external auditor is satisfied with the corrections to the HRA account about the 2021/22 audit review. It was noted that the 22/3 and 23/4 accounts review of HRA charges were not yet complete.</p> <p>Paul Langford advised that as part of the HRA business plan review from January 2024, the review of HRA recharges was a key workstream that has been prioritised by the service. A report on this was first sent to CLT in late summer 2023.</p> <p>A list of recharges was presented to the board which had been completed. Housing has to ensure they have the necessary evidence to support the recharge. This includes an up-to-date SLA and clarity on cost and activity. This will be kept under annual review.</p> <p>A HRA governance board is in place and part of this board monitors the appropriate HRA recharging.</p>
	<p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <p>Jackie Belton requested an update on TA interventions in July 2025.</p> <p>Jackie Belton will consult with Chris Tambini and will write to BCC for details of BCC's assurance framework which evidences that the HRA recharges are appropriate and also seek confirmation that the external auditor is now satisfied with previous years' HRA recharge and the recharge corrections completed for 2021/22 and still outstanding for 22/23 onwards.</p> <p>Andrew Healy to ensure that Fiona Greenway is fully sighted on the likely further corrections on the HRA recharges and seeks confirmation that this has been reflected in the MTFP.</p>
<p><b>Date of next meeting: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b></p>	

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