

Minutes of City Housing Liaison Board
Thursday 9 March 2017, 6.30 pm – 8.30 pm,
Committee Rooms 3 and 4, Council House, Victoria Square

Present:

CHLB Members

Joan Goodwin (Chair)
Derrick Novell (Vice Chair)
Eddie Howard
Jeff Horton
Bridget O'Brien
Gillian Richards
Mike McCartan
Zafar Mir
Herma Hughes
John F Harrison
Alex Harrison
Andrea Brown
Eric Shipton
Andrew Thompson

HLB

Yardley Wood
Acocks Green
Highgate
Hall Green
Weoley
Ingoldsby
Hodge Hill
Washwood Heath
Shard End
Yardley
Edgbaston/Leasehold LB
Eastside
Sutton Coldfield
Aston

Officers/ Councillors

Jim Crawshaw
Pete Hobbs

Colin Hanno
Brenda Gallagher
Firoza Loonat
Jessica Fitzgibbon

Head of Service – Housing Options
Service Integration Head - Housing
Transformation
RI & TMO Manager
Senior Service Manager
Tenant Participation Officer
Resident Involvement Officer (Intern)

Apologies

Allan Middleton
Samantha Vaughan
Jennifer Walters

Ann Holtom
Carl McCooty
Stuart Richings
Councillor John Lines
Councillor Zaker Choudhry
Councillor Peter Griffiths
Tracey Radford

Robert James

Mirfield
Perry Barr
Lozells, East Handsworth and
Handsworth Wood
Erdington/Tyburn
South Yardley
Quinton
Bartley Green
South Yardley
Kings Norton, Northfield
Service Integration Head- Landlord
Services
Service Director- Housing Transformation

1 **Welcome**

Joan Goodwin welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming.

2 **Minutes of the Last Meeting- 19th January 2017**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

3 **Matters Arising**

It was noted that Alex Harrison was missing from the previous minutes.

Gillian Richards clarified the reference to herself on page 9 of the previous minutes. The query was whether tenants with a disability would be able to use the sheds as extra space when needed.

The previous minutes will be changed to show these corrections.

4 **Chairs Comments- Joan Goodwin, Chair of CHLB**

Welfare Reform and Financial Inclusion Sub Group - met on Tuesday 14 February 2017. Margaret Calleja came and spoke about the Rent Service response to Universal Credit and its effects on some of our tenants' income. Margaret will be heading a workshop on this at the HLB Tenant Conference.

We had a demonstration from Javender Singh regarding Pre-tenancy and the need to work with our tenants on the waiting list. The sooner we can begin the better budgeting and work guidance they will receive; giving more of a chance that they will be able to manage a tenancy. Some need more support and guidance than others.

We have started our Food bank collection, it can be handed in at all the HUBS.

The HLB Tenant Conference - is due to be held on March 21 2017. All places have been allocated and invitations will be going out shortly.

Birmingham in Bloom - Award night city wide will be held on 27 September. Entry forms and posters are available. We need as many entries as possible and we need the city to be a winner again. Also remember the USA and Jamaican athletes' team are coming to train here ready for the World Championships. So let's put on a good show again.

Joan Goodwin – Chair of CHLB

5 **Housing Bill Update- Pete Hobbs**

We will forward updates and link to White Paper entitled 'Fixing our broken housing market', which talks about boosting housing supply looking at building 80,000 homes. There is not much about Council housing.

White Paper also covers:

- Improving the planning process
- When planning permission is granted that they don't sit on site
- Ensure land in the city is used - have a set procedure

Private Development

- Urban areas are currently been looked at encouraging modern methods of housing i.e. modern system build

Role of Housing Associations and not for Profit Organisation

- They will need to build significantly more homes. City will need to produce effective local plans of where developments should go

Monitoring how LAs look at small and medium contractors

Helping people now:

- Help buy and starter schemes
- Making rent fairer for tenants

The full white paper can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version.pdf

Questions:

Herma Hughes – Should we ask HLB members if they see any vacant land that they should notify their local housing team? Yes, and the City is looking for privately owned land.

Alex – No provision for the homeless, putting them in temporary accommodation is very costly. We need to provide long term accommodation for them.

Barretts are providing 770 homes in Highgate and the planners negotiate a percentage for affordable housing. Pete Hobbs will check on this issue, as he is unsure of the state of the negotiations. Unsure of what is happening with the community levy/section 106.

6 Tenancy Conditions- Brenda Gallagher

Joan Goodwin introduced Brenda Gallagher who will discuss Conditions of Tenancy at the HLB conference for an hour.

Conditions of tenancy was last reviews in 2010 and LAs are required to review it periodically due to changes such as:

- **Housing and Planning Act – changes the rules around Succession and Flexible tenancies**
- **Crime and Policing Act - Enforcement tools**
- **Prevention of Social Housing Fraud 2013 – subletting is a criminal offence**
- **Welfare Reform – keys issues reflected in Conditions of Tenancy**
- **Allocation Policy review**
- **Service reviews - i.e. Street Scene**
- **Address tenants behaviour**
- **Ombudsman /staff and tenant reviews to be looked at**
- **Key Themes**
 - Any revised Conditions of Tenancy will need to be enforced

- Clearly Define Tenant and Landlord relationship
- Make it future proof so if changes are required it can be done easily
- Efficiency Savings
- Cost Effective
- Regulation due in Autumn for Flexible Tenancy
- **So far...**
 - There is an Overseeing the Programme Board, the commissioning Officer is Rob James and the Project lead is Tracey Radford, Service Lead Officers (Rent, Regeneration, Legal and Finance. Timescale is pending regulation for the Flexible Tenancy
 - Chapter Leads - stakeholder groups to be established, review the clause or update them.
 - Phase 1 – Statutory stage, serving preliminary notice and send draft of notices to each tenant (during Autumn and Winter)
 - Stage 2 – Consider the comments and reasonable time frame
 - Stage 3 – Once finalised notice of variation is served giving 4 weeks to notice before new Condition of Tenancy takes effect (Spring into Summer)
 - The cost associated with the review, telephone, communication and analysing the feedback - Previous consultation cost £300,000 with 8000 comments. This time it is expected the cost will be higher and if we do not consult it will not reflect the key legislation.

Questions & answers followed accordingly:

- Zafar Mir – What will be the review cost this time? Costs not available at present, but it will be higher than last time.
- Eric Shipton - Your expecting more feedback so will you be allocating more resources? Yes, we will need to consider every single comment.
- Alex – This is enormous amount of work with the feedback; can you not box the comments together? We will record all the comments, however we will not write back to each one.
- Eddy Howard – I have been asked by Carl Hides to attend a meeting on 22nd March as part of the sub group
- Alex – By revising the Conditions of Tenancy, does it become enforceable? Many tenants have concerns about enforcement. In some LAs they have Community Penalty Notices.
- Joan - We have been given more powers to carry out enforcement.
- Alex – Is this subject to legal services supporting it? Legal services will be assisting with draft of documents. It will protect the interest of LA. We want to ensure we tackle any tenancy breach correctly. We are currently changing working practices and all officers are being trained.
- Alex – No courts will support an issue of overgrown garden. Eviction does not always have to be the response. Other tools are available such as injunctions or a community protection notice which would be earlier intervention.

- What do you mean by Flexible Tenancy? Tenancies to be offered for 2, 5 or 10 years. We are in discussion about what the criteria we will use to review the tenancy. The criteria will also be about the best use of stock. Currently 20 LAs are discussing this.
- Eric Shipton- Who will set the standard so that it is enforceable? Carl Hides will be looking into this a group.
- Eddie Howard – Every tenant should sign the Conditions of Tenancy. A housing association would do this, however as our tenants are statutory tenants, so once the statutory consultation process is complete, we serve a Notice of Variation and give 4 weeks' notice.
- Alex – If a person's financial situation changes does he or she have succession rights? If they fall into financial difficulty we will assist. There is no automatic right for succession. If their circumstances changes we do not know what the policy for Birmingham will be. We are not aware of any discretion.
- John Harrison - Right to Buy may come in and there may be a reduction in stock. Changes are imminent
- Derrick Novell – spoke about dogs in green space and in blocks and how enforcement is key to this.
- Need to be clear about Dog Warden Legislation. Advised that Senior Service Manager Arthur Tsang is leading on this chapter and he should be contacted for this.
- Eddie Howard - Also need to address tenants throwing food out of high rise block

7 **Allocations Update- Jim Crawshaw**

Jim Crawshaw raised the following points:

- Re-registering on waiting list or transfer list commenced on 3rd February 2017
- As of 8 March every single person on the waiting list received a letter – 24,000 letters have been sent out
- Reminder letters are also being sent out
- 19 April 2017 is the deadline date for applying. If you fail to reregister by then you will lose your original application date. Your application will commence as of 20 April.
- To-date 3500 completed online application have been received.
- 1900 forms not fully completed
- Where necessary we will undertake home visits and also complete applications over the phone (completed 60 home visits to date)
- So far 3500 calls have been taken about the scheme of which 98% have been answered.
- 20 April 2017 the New Allocation policy will commence

Jim Crawshaw invited Questions & Answers from the Group. They were as follows:

- Eric Shipton – If someone logs on to start the process how long do they have to complete the online form? They have 28 days to complete the form from the time of logging in.
- Andrew Thompson - Will this system be able to manage the last minute rush? This

programme has been used by other LA's and there have been no issues.

- Gillian Richards – Do they receive a reference number or some sort of acknowledgement? They receive login details and an email is sent.
- Home visits may be carried out by Occupational Health who will complete all the paperwork.
- Jim Crawshaw reiterated the importance of re-registering by 19 April 2017.

Joan Goodwin thanked Jim Crawshaw for providing an update

8 **HLB Training Programme 2017/18- Simon Lawrence**

Joan Goodwin introduced Simon Lawrence who is an external Trainer providing future training to Involved tenants.

Joan Goodwin reiterated the importance of all attending the training and ensuring that at least 5 members of each HLB attend all the courses.

Simon Lawrence distributed a briefing note and provided a general overview of the programme for the year :

- Training will be provided across the city in all the districts
- Training will be held at Sheltered Schemes
- Brochures will be produced and distributed
- Training is offered to HLBs, TMOs, Tenant Hall members, and Block Champions
- The training will cover leadership skill, working in a team, how to scrutinise data and hold organisations and departments to account, Funding and Budgets, Housing Act, how to engage with diverse communities and much more
- If you're fighting for Social Housing you need to know what it's all about

Joan Goodwin There are many of us who have now done 25 years of engagement and it has been a great achievement for us all to be sitting as tenants at the council house representing Social housing.

Derrick Novell - Birmingham council tenants have a voice. There are many Social Landlords that have no tenant representations such as Infinity Sutton.

Peter – How do you get young people involved?

Gillian Richards – Working with youth forums maybe is away forward. I work with young people and we could explore how we engage with them.

Derrick Novell – Why should we do the training Joan when you're doing such a good job?

Joan Goodwin - Whose going to look after the next generation if we have that view. We have the opportunity to enhance our skills and tackle the council and the government.

9 **Any Other Business**

Alex – HMO, Do they require planning permission when there are 5 or more occupants?

Yes. New sharing facility must be a licence property.

Joan Goodwin thanked all for attending.

10 Date of Next Meeting

**Arranged for Thursday 27th April 2017, Committee Room 3 and 4, Council House
6.30pm-8.30pm.**