

**Minutes of City Housing Liaison Board**  
**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017, 18:30 p.m. - 20.30 p.m.**  
**Committee Rooms 3 and 4, Council House, Victoria Square**

**Present**

**CHLB Members:**

Joan Goodwin-Chair  
 Zafar Mir  
 Arron Blake-Knight  
 Edward Howard  
 Mike McCartan  
 Eric Shipton  
 Andrew Thompson  
 Diana Horton-Griffiths  
 Michael Thawe  
 Jeff Horton  
 Herma Hughes  
 Bridget O'Brien  
 Jennifer Walters  
 Samantha Vaughan  
 Malcolm Nicholls  
 John Harrison  
 Gillian Richards  
 Alan Morrow

**HLB**

Yardley Wood & Warstock  
 Washwood Heath  
 Kings Norton  
 Highgate & Ladywood  
 Hodge Hill  
 Sutton Coldfield  
 Aston  
 Bartley Green  
 Quinton (Deputy)  
 Hall Green  
 Shard End  
 Weoley  
 Lozells & East Handsworth & Handsworth Wood  
 Perry Barr  
 Druids Heath  
 South Yardley (Deputy)  
 Ingoldsby  
 Billesley

**Officer/Councillors**

Rob James	Service Director – Housing Transformation
Tracey Radford	Service Integration Head Landlord
Guy Olivant	Head of City Finance- Housing
Colin Hanno	RI & TMO Manager
Evangeline Cripps	Tenant Participation Officer
Jessica Fitzgibbon	Resident Involvement Officer (Intern)
Peter Griffiths	Councillor
Zaker Choudhry	Councillor

**Apologies:**

Pete Hobbs	Service Integration Head-Housing Transformation
Debbie Kadr	Sheldon
Stuart Richings	Quinton
Albert Harrison	Frankley & Cockhill
Carl McCooty	South Yardley
Alex Harrison	Harborne

## 1. Apologies and Welcome

Chair of CHLB welcomed all members and went through apologies.

The meeting was opened with a minutes silence for the events that took place in Manchester. Joan promoted unity across Birmingham and the positives of living within a multi-cultural society.

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Agreed for accuracy

## 3. Matters Arising

Amendments to the previous minutes:

6.0 - Zafar Mir not Mia

4.1 – Eddie – St Georges Hub the police have made amendments to the dates for funding to commence in September 2017.

- Arron Blake-Knight – requested minutes for the previous AGM. Rob James requested the minutes to be circulated to all CHLB members. The AGM procedure will be updated to ensure the previous AGM minutes will be sent to members before the AGM.
- Eddie mentioned TPOs were to attend the tenant training programmes being carried out across the city.

Minutes were agreed

## 4. Chair Comments

The Welfare reform and financial inclusion group met on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. We were given a demonstration on the payments using smartphone apps on a new way to make rent payments to BCC. The programme is proposing to use a Barcode/PingIt payment scheme along with Direct Debit.

Individual rent details are held on barcodes instead of plastic cards, which cost £1.06. Barcodes are the low cost solution – These barcodes can be scanned in a post office and also in Barclays Bank, which will allow you to pay at their counters. Everyone will receive a barcode rent detail on their debt recovery letter, quarterly rent statements and annual rent variation letter. Tenants can apply for new barcode details to be sent, if lost or if it stops working. This method of payment only costs .36 pence to replace instead of £1.06.

Am Kabil is looking for volunteers to test the new PingIt Smartphone App. You must own a smartphone, volunteers will be asked to pay their rent by this method and their phones will be downloaded with the PingIt App and set up barcode in App. Anyone interested can you give your names in to Colin Hanno to pass on to Karen Markell and Javender Singh.

Financial inclusions new strategy was passed by BCC Cabinet and will be launched on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Andrew Thompson – requested the publication of the Terms of Reference for the sub groups and their agenda's, agreed minutes and any papers relating to their business. A request was put forward to an officer from the Resident Involvement Team and as yet no papers have been produced. It appears the sub-groups are not being run in accord with the democratic process in line with the constitution. The update in the Chairs comments is not enough to satisfy the constitution regarding regular updates of the sub-group's working. The sub-groups need to be re-elected at the CHLB AGM as they are the sub-group of the board, and the board's constitution officer may change at the AGM and then the sub-groups need to be reconfirmed. The terms of reference for the sub-groups need to be reconfirmed every 12 months.

Joan addressed the above questions. The CHLB no longer elects onto the sub-groups. Following the Kerslake review it was decided at the HLB transformation meeting (which took place at Highbury Hall in 2014) that all our sub groups would stand down. The PMG group was the only group that continued and the agreed format was changed to 6 members from CHLB and 3 members from HLBs chosen from volunteers from quadrants and all had to meet the set criteria. The process for election was discussed with Colin's previous line manager and Colin has been tasked to include in the amendments of the constitution along with any other changes relating to the outcome of tenancy conditions review. The welfare reform group initiated as a result of the nationwide changes to welfare reform, the group operates similar to PMG.

Individuals on the boards are aware on how the groups are run; regular updates/feedback is provided on Welfare reform. Full minutes of the Welfare Reform group are available on the web-cast. CHLB have been through a major exercise to meet the government's requirement on the Kerslake review. There are 2 existing sub-groups Performance Monitoring and Welfare Reform.

Andrew apologised for any offense his comment caused, however mentioned that he was asked to sign a constitution, without any alterations or amendments being passed. The constitution he was asked to sign states that subgroups will have their terms of reference set by CHLB and the information is incorrect. Any amendments should be added to the constitution and resigned.

Rob James addressed all members- stating that the terms of reference will be circulated to all members of CHLB. In terms of the constitution the official minutes of the sub-groups should be presented at the meeting. If the constitution does not reflect that then we need to make sure it does. A formal meeting needs to be reported in a formal manner and we need to make sure those sub-group meetings are put on the agenda to ensure all information is formalised and feedback is circulated down to all HLBs.

Andrew asked if there are regular reviews the membership of the Sub-groups along with the TOR at the AGM.

Rob James provided clarity on the membership of the groups, which are on the minutes, Terms of reference should reflect on how we elect members on to the board and we need to formalise that and look at the TOR along with any additional amendments to the constitution, if there are any queries please inform Colin Hanno. The main focus of today at the AGM is to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair and move the other suggestions forward.

Andrew Thompson thanked the Chair and Rob James for their clarification and response to his comments, and apologised for the manner in which he expressed his initial comments.

Members raised questions on the new barcode system for paying rent. Rob suggested that an officer from the rents team to provide a presentation to CHLB members providing more clarity on the new scheme. Colin Hanno will extend an invitation to the rent team for an officer to attend CHLB in the near future.

## **5. AGM**

Joan Goodwin – Chair of CHLB stood down from the board. Returning Officer Rob James chaired the AGM election process

All members were handed envelopes with their voting and nomination cards for the positions of Chair & Vice-Chair. Members were asked to open the envelopes. Rob addressed all members stating that only 1 person put their name forward for the position of Chair for CHLB and asked Joan to provide her Chair's speech.

### **Chairs Nomination Speech**

This last year has been the Housing Liaison Board movement's most successful, I am extremely proud of what we have achieved with all your commitment and of your confidence in my leadership of the movement.

At the recent tenant's conference and the workshops around Welfare Reform and Universal Credit from a tenant and claimants point of view have been widely acclaimed and we have been asked to present this at the ARCH Conference in September 2017. A wonderful climax to a conference and the workshops, which was all organised in house by HLB members and BCC Officers.

Our review of the Tenancy Agreement at the conference brought about 48 volunteers, the most we have ever had. All 10 workshops have been reviewed and have been held. We now await the outcomes. We still have more to do on our Kitemark status which will be out soon.

This year marks our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for our HLB movement and I personally have been a member since its very beginning and what a mountain we have climbed together over those years. We are the longest serving housing movement in the country and still retained housing with our council. Partnership working has brought about many changes, all for the good because we are still here. Power to influence does pay dividends and we will continue to work in partnership for the good of social housing.

I wish to thank all past and present members for their commitment and for giving me support and backing.

Members were asked to complete their nominations, 2 volunteers were requested to oversee the counting of the votes.

17 Ballots were received, 1 non vote, 13 in favour for Joan Goodwin as Chair and 3 spoilt ballots. Joan Goodwin was duly elected in as Chair of City Housing Liaison Board 2017.

Rob James stated there were 2 nominations for the position of Vice Chair; each nominee was requested to put forward their opening speeches.

#### **Eric Shipton – Sutton Coldfield**

This board has seen many changes over the past year, more changes are expected and not only will they affect the board they will affect everyone CHLB and HLBs and everyone the HLBs represent. The main focus is on Universal Credit and the affects from it; Birmingham is miles ahead from other authorities in identifying areas of concern and is aware of the difficulties that are being faced by many families and individuals. Birmingham has the support of CHLB and will perform better through open communication.

#### **Eddie Howard – Highgate & Ladywood**

As a dedicated HLB member, my main focus is working with the Chair of CHLB and local HLBs, in working together and be united as 1 to achieve positive outcomes. I work tirelessly in making positive differences to individuals' lives, supporting tenants, home-owners and leaseholders and putting people and their needs first and endeavour to carry on the good work.

Members were asked to complete their nominations for the position of Vice Chair, 2 volunteers were requested to oversee the counting of the votes.

17 Votes were cast:

Eric Shipton – 8 Votes

Eddie Howard – 9 Votes

Eddie Howard was duly elected in as Vice-Chair of City Housing Liaison Board 2017.

Rob James thanked all members for their participation in the voting process, the floor was handed back to Joan Goodwin the New Chair of City Board.

## **6. Financial Update – Guy Olivant**

Rob James extended thanks to everyone around the table. The management of the Housing Revenue account is complex business, and this could not be achieved without the help and support of the staff within housing; including the support of CHLB. We all play a part in ensuring the rent collection; and that grants are all spent effectively and efficiently in accordance of the priorities that we set each year for the Council and for Housing and ensuring we get best value for money.

### **Housing in Birmingham**

- Birmingham City Council had 62,070 properties as of 31<sup>st</sup> March, more than all housing associations together
- 1 in 5 people live in a council house
- Major Social Enterprise- £290m Annual Income, with the value of our homes is over £2bn

### **Financial Performance 2016/17**

- Continuing Financial challenge in 2016/17
- Small Underspend of £43,000
- Small increase in borrowing to fund BMHT (19m)- we now owe £1.122bn
- Good performance on Voids, offset by worse than budgeted rent collection and equal pay costs
- 83% of total budgeted Capital Investment programme spent

	<b>Budget £ per week</b>	<b>Actual £ per week</b>
Repairs (including Empty Properties and Gas Servicing)	19.31	18.24
Local Housing and Estate Services	18.80	19.70
Mortgage Interest Repayments	15.76	15.77
Debt Repayments	0.34	0.85
Rent used to Fund Investment in New Stock	22.83	22.28
Other Costs (including Voids, Arrears and Historic Pay Liabilities)	4.74	5.14
<b>Total (Average Weekly Rent Over 52 weeks)</b>	<b>81.78</b>	<b>81.98</b>

### **So far in 2017/18**

- Balanced budget agreed for the year- including a second year of 1% rent reductions, new repairs contractors bedding in, and risks around Universal Credit
- Planned Capital Investment of £149m (or £2,400 per home)

### **National Developments**

- Legislation and consultations: Housing White Paper, High Value Voids, Pay to Stay no longer being mandatory, and the rent reduction until 2019/20
- HCA Grant funding- there has been a return of funding for social/affordable rent.

Members engaged in an open discussion on the following items

- Pay to Stay – A proposal on tenant of social housing in receipt of high income including families of an annual income of over £30k should pay market rents - fairer rents within Social Housing.

- Capital Investment works and the life span of social houses – Zafar Mir stated those involved in the works missed issues with his property – this question will be put to Martin Tolley for response
- The accounts for the finance presentation was provided from the Housing Revenue statutory accounts from the previous cabinet meeting
- Financial budget on adaptations and a limited spend. A proportion of the Capital budget is set aside for adaptations on social housing. If there is an over spend of the budget, a review would be carried out and the overall budget would be reprioritised. Rob James to request the details of Andrew Thompson's case and the criteria for adaptations from the overall manager of Enablement Services.

## **7. Apprenticeship Scheme Update – Tracey Radford**

Hand-outs were circulated to all members and Tracey spoke on the Trainee/Apprenticeship programme.

The new programme will see the creation of traineeships and apprenticeships with Birmingham City Council.

### **Traineeships- Started May 2017**

- Twelve 18-24 year olds working in our neighbourhoods as part of the Customer Services Teams. Further cohorts of trainees will start throughout the year
- This is unpaid work experience, and trainees can gain an accredited work qualification for unemployed young people with limited qualifications
- The traineeships are 8 weeks long, ending with a guaranteed interview for the apprenticeship programme

### **Apprenticeships- Interviews W/B 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

- To date, 70 have applied, for 40 placements (32 in Neighbourhood Cleaning/ Caretaking Services, and 8 in Tenancy Management Services)
- Open to 18+ year olds, and will last for 12-14 months including a day release at college
- There will be a guaranteed interview for a permanent job for those who successfully complete
- This will be a paid role, earning 80% of a Grade 2 with a Contract with BCC
- Rolling programme as vacancies appear

There will also be trained mentors in place to support both trainees and apprentices throughout their programme.

Members unanimously supported the programme and offered to champion the scheme within their wards via their local HLBs. Andrew Thompson expressed how pleased he was about the programme, again apologised for his comments at the beginning of the meeting, and asked for flyers of the programme to be sent to HLB members who could help to promote the scheme. Members provided positive feedback on the existing apprentices working on the estates.

Gillian asked if young individuals were considered for any of these apprentice positions – Tracey informed members this would be identified once all the interviews were completed and feedback would be provided.

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **Questions from members**

#### **Sheltered Housing Support within High-rise blocks**

Concerns were raised relating to these schemes being suspended. Consultation had taken place, but no formal response with final plans had been sent out - Tracey to provide an update report to CHLB on 27<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **Contractors sending threatening letters**

Andrew Thompson raised the issue of Wates sending unnecessary letters threatening fines and forceful entry. Rob to liaise with Martin Tolley regarding this issue.

#### **New Boundary Changes and how will it effect to the HLB budget**

Rob provided some clarity on the increase from 40 to 70 wards. HLB Budgets are not allocated by wards they are allocated by property, some wards have more than 1 HLB, we will ensure that we maintain HLB budgets and review on the amount of money that goes into localities from various sources, HLB, Capital Environmental Improvement, Aerial, Community Safety Fund – Police & Crime Commissioner, Proceeds of Crime monies on a bidding process by West Midlands Police. We need to bring all these funding streams together to improve neighbourhoods as a whole and our contribution from the HRA need to complement the whole of the locality funding. We also need to ensure that the Environmental Improvement Budget is spent wisely ensuring value for money as some districts do not spend the allocated budget.

#### **Training Programme for Tenants and HLB Members**

Members put forward a suggestion to Simon from Central Training Consultancy to incorporate a bid writing course, as funds available to the community depend on the skills and experience of the individual submitting the bid.

#### **Innovation Funding within Harbourne**

Michael from Quinton stated that almost £40,000 was allocated to a large organisation and not for the benefit of social housing - Rob explained to members the Innovation fund is not controlled by housing, however we have a responsibility to review this along with other funding as mentioned will discuss this with Chris Jordon manages the locality/staff and will look at drawing this together.

Arron Blake-Knight – Kings Norton – suggested utilising social media to promote the

positive work CHLB and local HLBs carried out.

Eddie Howard – Highgate & Ladywood- requested for the Police Commissioner to attend CHLB in the future

Joan mentioned Housing Liaison Board will be celebrating their 25 Anniversary on the 19 October 2017. Details will be clarified nearer the date.

**9. Date of next meeting**

Arranged for Thursday 22 June 2017 6.30-8.30pm, in Committee Rooms 3 & 4 of the Council House