

BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

Housing Sub Board, Birmingham City Council

11th March 2024, 14:00hrs to 16:00hrs

Council House

Board Members

Jackie Belton, Commissioner (JB)
Myron Hrycyk, Commissioner (MH)
Paul Langford, Strategic Director City Housing (PL)
Stephen Philpott, Service Director, City Housing Solutions and Support (SP)
Wayne Davies, Service Director, Asset Management (WD)
Guy Chaundy, AD Housing Strategy & Enabling (GC)
Andrew Healy, Finance Business Partner (AH)
John Jamieson, Head of Service, Housing Management (JJ)
Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling (NM)
Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness (JF)
Councillor Ken Wood, Housing Lead, Conservatives (KW)
Councillor Penny Wagg, Housing Lead, Liberal Democrats (PW)
Haydyn Brown, Head of Category (HB)
Lucy Ford, Subcategory Manager (LF)
Rose Horsfall, Cabinet Support Officer (RH)
John Biggs, Political Adviser (JB)
William Moody, Personal Assistant, Commissioners Support Team (WM)
David Facey, DLUHC Chief of Staff (DF)

Apologies

Deborah Cadman, Chief Executive (DC)
Pam Parkes, Commissioner (PP)
Max Caller, Lead Commissioner (MC)
John Coughlan, Commissioner (JC)
Chris Tambini, Commissioner (CT)
John Hutton, Political Adviser (JH)
Tom Smtih, DLUHC Chief of Staff (TS)
Liz Thomas, DLUHC Chief of Staff (LT)
Stephen Gabriel, Service Director, Housing Management (SG)

1 Welcome & Introductions

1.1 Jackie Belton welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2 Previous Minutes

2.1 As this was the inaugural Housing Sub Board, there were no previous minutes for the board to consider.

The Commissioners:

Max Caller CBE, John Coughlan CBE, Chris Tambini, Pam Parkes FCIPD, Jackie Belton, Myron Hrycyk, Lord John Hutton, John Biggs.

3 Action Tracker (Action Tracker – Housing Sub Board)

- 3.1 As this was the inaugural Housing Sub Board, there were no previous actions for the meeting to reflect upon.

4 Terms of Reference

- 4.1 Jackie Belton opened the discussion surrounding the terms of reference and asked colleagues whether they felt any alterations or amendments should be made.
- 4.2 No comments were made or put forward for changes to the terms of reference.
- 4.3 Paul Langford welcomed the approach of the Housing Sub Board.
- 4.4 Jackie Belton advised that the terms of reference will be reviewed in three meetings time to ensure that they remain relevant.

5 Repair and Maintenance Contract Procedure:

- 5.1 Interim contracts are almost complete and sign off is expected by the end of this week.
- 5.2 A detailed procurement plan has been produced due to the need to award new, fit for purpose, R & M contracts in two years' time, significant work is required to ensure deadline area achieved.
- 5.3 Re - procurement and redesign is taking place for the 2026 contract.
- 5.4 The 2026 contract is being worked on simultaneously alongside the go live of the interim contract.
- 5.5 It is expected that the new procurement will attract more bidders and a higher number of contractors working for BCC, the terms and conditions will be simplified, and transfer of risk reviewed.
- 5.6 Haydyn Brown and Lucy Ford have been involved in the negotiation of interim arrangements. Additional procurement support will be provided moving forward.
- 5.7 Commissioners challenged whether there is sufficient resource to support this piece of work. Officers felt that there was, and this will be monitored closely.
- 5.8 Myron Hrycyk asked whether there would be the opportunity for himself and Jackie to engage with officers relating to the high-level thinking and geographical split of areas. Wayne Davies welcomed this approach.
- 5.9 Councillor Wood expressed his relief that contract sizes are now being reviewed.
- 5.10 Councillor Wood asked the board whether the review ARC would be conducting is for the same terms of reference or different. It was confirmed that the terms of reference would be the same.
- 5.11 Jackie Belton expressed looking at the documents that there seems to be a lot of activities taking place between March to June. Jackie recommended that these were broken down into monthly summaries and progress reported at the next board and monitored through the board.
- 5.12 Jackie Belton and Myron Hrycyk asked that Commissioners were briefed on the work of the procurement group.

6 Housing Revenue Account – Business Plan Update:

- 6.1 The business plan report has been passed through Cabinet – the next task is ensuring effective delivery of this.
- 6.2 The HRA will be managed and have intensive oversight through the Corporate CMO and Commissioners.
- 6.3 An overview of capital was given. There is the budget of 183.7m for housing improvement.
- 6.4 The 60m budget has been reset and requires reset for the next financial year.
- 6.5 Rent income is funding the day to day running, however, there is an overspend in repairs and maintenance.

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- 6.6 Jackie Belton asked whether it can be evidenced that there is a reduction in the number of voids.
- 6.7 Business as usual operational voids were commented to be in a bad place last year. Major voids are also deemed still too high.
- 6.8 An explanation on the general fund was given to the board, there was an underspend therefore meaning savings could be achieved earlier.
- 6.9 HRA scaling up has not worked well in the past, it was commented that this is the first year of seeing what BCC could achieve.
- 6.10 Affordable homes need to be maximised more.

7 Asset Management Update (Compliance and Decency)

- 7.1 The Housing Sub Board will see the asset management update prior to this going to the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 7.2 The areas which had been breached were presented to the board.
- 7.3 Housing management have implemented a self-imposed deadline to get all data and compliance indicators into the correct place. This is also monitored by scrutiny.
- 7.4 One external support contractor has withdrawn due to capacity.
- 7.5 All independent audits are on course to delivered by September.
- 7.6 40% of homes are still considered non decent due to historic issues, however, BCC now has much better knowledge about what they are buying.
- 7.7 BCC is going to meet the 12000 live stock target by the end of April 2024.
- 7.8 The average number of repairs per property is 4.
- 7.9 An investment example (before and after) was presented to the board.

8 Regulator of Social Housing

- 8.1 The first regulator meeting was held in July 2023, following an initial conversation in June and notice of breach in May of 2023.
- 8.2 The Regulator of Social Housing have informed BCC that as of February 2024 they will be ceasing all formal work with BCC.
- 8.3 Actions are being monitored at a detailed level.
- 8.4 Year to date picture of complaints suggests that BCC is a month in arrears.
- 8.5 Complaints are reducing and BCC are looking to maintaining a stable position in SLA performance.
- 8.6 There is a significant historic backlog which is affecting current complaint waiting times.
- 8.7 A data cleanse exercise is being undertaken to work through the historic cases to ensure there are no duplicates. Four members of staff from the service area are going to look into the backlog only.
- 8.8 Since the government have launched the tenant satisfaction measures, individuals' expectations have changed in regard to satisfaction upon completion of works.
- 8.9 Management is hoping that complaints will be within the business-as-usual targets by the end of June 2024.
- 8.10 The remodelling of the housing management model is considered crucial for progression. Currently there is around 2000 households per housing officer. The aim is to reduce this to 5-600 homes to allow for a far more proactive service.
- 8.11 It was commented that housing officers need to be consistent in their approach and there therefore needs to be an investment in training.

The Commissioners:

Max Caller CBE, John Coughlan CBE, Chris Tambini, Pam Parkes FCIPD, Jackie Belton, Myron Hrycyk, Lord John Hutton, John Biggs.

9 Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

- 9.1 Overall number in temporary accommodation is going up. There are currently 5078 TA households.
- 9.2 BCC is accommodating around 37 households on average every week – equating to 160 moves each month.
- 9.3 Presentations are up 20% last year due to the cost of living.

10 Actions

- 10.1 A forward plan is to be provided to ensure that the areas of interest to the board detailed in the TOR would have sufficient attention throughout 24/25.
- 10.2 Housing performance including void performance is to be reported to the board for 23/24 alongside the proposed targets for 24/25 with an indicative date of June 24.
- 10.3 Report on performance on complaints, including MP's and Ombudsman cases are to be added to the forward plan.
- 10.4 Corporate complaints colleagues to be invited to attend the board to discuss the above report.

11 Date of the next meeting

- 11.1 8th April 2024 at 14:00hrs.