

BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

Housing Sub Board, Birmingham City Council

Monday 13th May 2024, 14:00hrs till 16:00hrs

Room 2, Council House

Board Members

Jackie Belton (JB), Commissioner & Chair
Myron Hrycyk (MH), Commissioner
Paul Langford (PL), Strategic Director of Housing
Guy Chaundy (GC), Assistant Director, Strategic and Enabling
Stephen Philpott (SP), Director of Housing Solutions and Support
David Ashmore (DA), Director of Housing Management
Wayne Davies (WD), Director, Asset Management
Naomi Morris (NM), Head of Service, Strategic Housing & Enabling
Andrew Healy (AH), Finance Business Partner
Kerry Scott (KS), Housing Delivery Programme Lead
Councillor Jayne Francis (JF), Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Rose Horsfall (RH), Cabinet Support Officer
Councillor Ken Wood (KW), Shadow Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Councillor Penny Wagg (PW), Housing Lead, Liberal Democrats
Sarah Scannell (SS), Assistant Director
Simon Delahunt-Forrest (SDF), Assistant Director
Elizabeth Thomas (ET), DLUHC Chief of Staff
William Moody (WM), Personal Assistant, Commissioners Support
Wendy Bowen (WB), Personal Assistant, Commissioners Support (Observing)

Apologies

Graeme Betts, Interim Chief Exec (GB)

1 Welcome

1.1 Jackie Belton welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2 Introductions

2.1 Introductions of new attendees took place.

3 Minutes of previous meeting & action tracker ([Action Tracker – Housing Sub Board](#))

3.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

3.2 The actions tracker was reviewed, and all actions are still in progress.

4 Housing Solutions and Support

4.1 The average number of incoming applications for year 24-25 year is 13% down.

4.2 A summary of the weekly applications was presented. A summary of this was that there was a peak in 2022 which has now settled down. Every week on average around 500 more households are needing social housing in Birmingham.

4.3 There is currently an assessment backlog, and reviews that need reassessing. There are currently 10,000 applications in the backlog which require additional staffing. The staff recruited to work on this backlog are HRA funded.

4.4 The regulators new acceptable timeframe is assessments to be concluded in an 8-week period. 61% of the applications are currently exceeding this timeframe.

The Commissioners:

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

- 4.5 The housing register for Birmingham was presented by band and bedroom. There are currently 23890 on the housing register, with band A properties being the highest in demand.
- 4.6 A request was made by Commissioners for the housing stock to be split by lettings. Naomi Morris is to provide this to Commissioners.
- 4.7 Reviews are due to take place of individuals who have lived in temporary accommodation for ten years or more. A full review of the allocation policy will take place this summer.
- 4.8 Councillor Francis queried how long individuals have to accept offers upon these being sent. The offers are sent as soon as the property becomes available, and individuals must provide a decision almost immediately to BCC.
- 4.9 The number of properties that are available to let is declining as properties are being lost through right to buy schemes, but also less social housing being built.
- 4.10 The CBL system currently in place to monitor this work in city housing expires in 2025. Procurement is being undertaken to establish the best system to use moving forward, whilst noting there is only a handful of fit for purpose systems which connect effectively to BCC's current system. IT have going to review and then initiate the procurement process. Myron Hrycyk advised that he would check in with the procurement team regarding the status of this.
- 4.11 It was questioned how much money BCC would be losing through voids. The target for this is 20 days but BCC is currently running at a business-as-usual timeframe of over 50 days.
- 4.12 BCC is promoting the private rented sector to enable a discharge of duty. The promotion of this outlines the incentives for service users. However, to discharge duty, the properties must be affordable. Jackie Belton requested a report on the payment for PRS. The report should summarise the funding and look back at how it is used and prioritised moving forward. It was queried how the quality and safety of PRS properties is maintained. BCC reassured commissioners that controls had been tightened up in this area and historically not been viewing properties, but this has now changed.
- 4.13 The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are meeting with BCC on a regular basis and have set targets on the number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Currently this is in the range of 460 households, staying over six weeks. Supply issues over the last five years has had a massive impact on this. Jackie Belton advised the supply of affordable houses should be monitored through the Housing Sub Board as this is a big priority for Commissioners.
- 4.14 As part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan temporary accommodation and homeless prevention is being reviewed.
- 4.15 Temporary accommodation presentations are high, particularly single applications.

5 Affordable Housing - Summary Position

- 5.1 In 2017/18 Birmingham started to dip in what other authorities could deliver in terms of affordable housing. New homes are being developed across the city however, there is no affordable housing within these schemes. There is an annual target of 1083 affordable homes to be developed over next year and for the next five years.
- 5.2 Two of the major regeneration sites, Ladywood and Druids Heath were reported on at the affordable housing development board.
- 5.3 Regeneration projects have been brought forward and BCC are now assessing sites early on, conducting a full appraisal. Partners are also now keen to work with BCC to move sites through quicker.

BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

- 5.4 The overall delivery of affordable housing is poor, unacceptable and an urgent plan needs to be developed to deliver affordable housing levels equivalent to that achieved in core cities. There needs to be closer working across the Council and with the PPS directorate in driving up delivery of affordable homes.
- 5.5 It was concluded that the homes that are being provided for housing are not the appropriate to assist with the housing need.
- 5.6 The relationship with HCA and RPs for the delivery of affordable housing in Birmingham is crucial. BCC is to undertake more detailed work to understand how they can maximise delivery of affordable housing in Birmingham.
- 5.7 The meeting queried the boundary for the City Centre. Jackie Belton asked to see a visual diagram for the areas.
- 5.8 Paul Langford discussed how strategic conversations need to turn into outcomes and that Birmingham does not have a good track record of delivery.
- 5.9 Commissioners concluded that there needs to be a more concentrated piece of work to work establish a more detailed plan, whilst there are tactical approaches to increase supply in the short term, background work needs to continue on the long-term plan and the delivery of this.
- 5.10 Druids Heath – a briefing with Commissioners and Politicla Leaders has taken place, and a master plan was launched to the community last Tuesday. This was generally received very well, and work is being undertaken with owner occupiers. Throughout the summer season workshops will be completed with the community.
- 5.11 Ladywood – there are a lot more challenging elements with this regeneration project. There is community anger and ambiguity, and work is being undertaken to reset the relationship. Phillip Nell and Sarah Scannell are working on this together.

6 R&M Re-procurement update

- 6.1 Soft market testing has commenced whereby 17 contractors were invited. BCC is expecting the normal players to come forward. Four companies have declined due to the historic reputation of BCC. In the middle of June BCC will have feedback from all stakeholders.
- 6.2 The process for obtaining feedback is robust and it is BCC's intention to keep contracts as simple as possible.
- 6.3 Once this feedback has been consolidated a meeting will be set up to feedback the conclusion to Commissioners.
- 6.4 Re-procurement had to be undertaken for Asbestos work.

7 Regulatory compliance

- 7.1 There have been two meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing, both of which went well. BCC believe they have a high level of confidence and a grip on pace. By the end of the calendar year, it is expected that all compliance areas will be 100%.
- 7.2 At the second meeting it was discussed that there is an agreement which exists between the council and RSH. The RSH has powers to exercise over BCC should they become non-compliant, or slippage begins to appear. The regulator will also be asked to attend a HSB in the future. They have key questions around assurance mechanisms.
- 7.3 Complaints are due to be discussed at the July meeting.

The Commissioners:

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

8 AOB

- 8.1 Cllr Woods has been elected as Birmingham's Lord Mayor and will therefore be leaving his current position.
- 8.2 Cllr Brooks will be undertaking Cllr Wood's role and will attend the Housing Sub Boards moving forward.

9 Actions:

- 9.1 BCC to circulate the forward plan and housing action plan. Forward plan to be added to the next agenda.
- 9.2 Housing stock data to be split by banding and reported back to Commissioners.
- 9.3 PRS report to be provided to Commissioners, summarising the funding and look back at how it is used and prioritised moving forward.
- 9.4 Visual diagram of the boundary of city centre to be provided to Commissioners.

10 Date of next meeting

- 10.1 Friday 21st June 2024 at 10am via Microsoft Teams.