



Minutes of BerneSlai Homes Board held 25th September 2025

4.00 p.m.

Gateway Plaza

Present:

Ken Taylor (KT)	-	Chair
Richard Fryer (RF)	-	Board Member
Adam Hutchinson (AH)	-	Board Member
Mark Johnson (MJ)	-	Board Member
David Leech (DL)	-	Board Member
Gez Morrall (GM)	-	Board Member
Kevin Osborne (KO)	-	Board Member
Jo Sugden (JS)	-	Board Member

In attendance

Amanda Garrard (AGa)	-	CEO
Dave Fullen (DF)	-	Executive Director, Customer & Estate Services
Rachel Taylor (RT)	-	Executive Director, Resources and Company Secretary
Russell Thompson (RTh)	-	Interim Executive Director, Property Services
Paul Clifford (PC)	-	Service Director BMBC

Observing

Sarah Clyde (SC)	Head of Strategic Housing BMBC
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	ACTION
<u>Item 1 – Apologies</u> Rebecca Mather, Sarah Tattersall - Board Members	
<u>Item 2 – Declarations of Interest</u> RF declared an interest in Item 5 (Board Succession Planning and Recruitment Update)	

<p><u>Item 3 – Tenants Voice – People of Barnsley – Getting to know tenants</u></p> <p>Video presented and received.</p>	
<p><u>Item 4 – Governance Update (including Annual Governance Statement)</u></p> <p>RT presented the report informing Board that it had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at their last meeting. A key aspect is the Annual Governance Statement which also covers the Modern Slavery Statement; which when approved will be uploaded onto BH website, demonstrating openness and transparency.</p> <p>Board noted the review of the Board Succession and Recruitment Policy and the Board Remuneration Policy. Attention was also drawn to the Board's responsibility for CEO recruitment. A time limited group, consisting of KT, JS and RF was proposed to oversee this process</p> <p>Board's attention was drawn to the DTP review, particularly the proposed changes to the Customer Services Committee which may not be in place until February 2026. Work is taking place on the development plans, based on the skills assessment and a report will be produced for the December Board meeting.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board approved the Annual Governance Statement and the associated appendices. • Board approved the formal 2 year review of the Board Succession and Recruitment Policy • Board approved the formal 2 year review of the Board Remuneration Policy • Board noted the progress of the DTP review and that the proposed change to the Customer Services Committee may not be in place until February 2026 • Board ratified the decision to appoint a time limited group to oversee the Chief Executive recruitment consisting of 3 Board members, Ken Taylor, Jo Sugden and Richard Fryer 	
<p><u>Item 5 – Board Succession Planning and Recruitment Update</u></p> <p>RT presented, advising that now Board have approved the Board Succession and Recruitment Policy, it will be applied.</p> <p>Board noted the SID, MJ is retiring in January 2026 – the proposal is to offer this role to existing Board members to increase the diversity of the Chairs group.</p> <p>MJ retiring creates a vacancy and this needs to be filled to replace the skills gap. Increasing the diversity of the Board is important and it is proposed the</p>	

recruitment of this vacant Board member role is overseen by a working group. AH and JS volunteered to work with the Chair.

The report also recommends to the Council the extension of RF's tenure by 1 year (RF confirmed his agreement) and asks for Board to approve the Chair's proposal, and in accordance with the policy, a three year extension for both Councillor KO, AH. KO and AH both confirmed their agreement to continuing.

ST retires from the Board today and DL will be formally appointed at the AGM and commence his term of office as a Board member.

At this point the Chair advised that discussions had taken place with the independent members regarding the Senior Independent Director role and based on these discussions, would like to offer the position to JS. JS accepted and thanked everyone for their confidence in her.

Resolved:

- 1. Board approved the proposal to open the Senior Independent Director Role to Current Board Members. The role was offered and accepted by JS.**
- 2. Board approved the proposal to create a Board Working Group to oversee the Recruitment of an Independent Board member.**
- 3. Board recommended to the Council the extension of Richard Fryer's tenure by an additional year**
- 4. Board approved the Chair's proposal of the three year extensions for Councillor Kevin Osborne and Adam Hutchinson.**
- 5. Board noted the retirement of Sarah Tattersall and appointment of David Leech as a full Board member from the AGM 25th September 2025.**

Item 6 – Final BH Ltd Annual Accounts and Financial Statements 2024/25

RT presented the company's final annual report and accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025, prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

The Audit and Risk Committee at their meeting in August considered the draft audit letter and draft annual report and financial statements. BDO were in attendance at the Committee to discuss with members. The final report is attached, which has been amended since the Committee and has received a clean audit opinion.

Board were referred to the Executive Summary which highlights the key financial results. RT also stated that the annual report and accounts focuses on both financial and non-financial information and will be available on Companies House website.

The financial position, including the pension position, at the end of year is a £888K deficit. Excluding the pension provision, the financial position is a £566K surplus, this is very similar to the figures presented to the Board in May.

AH as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee provided assurance confirming he had reviewed the subsequent changes and was happy to recommend to Board for approval. The report and accounts require sign off by the Chair and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee; before this is actioned he requested assurance that there was nothing else Board should be aware of that has changed since the final document was produced. RT confirmed there was no post balance sheet events or fraud that need to be disclosed.

AH commended the Finance Team for producing a high quality report. The Chair asked that thanks be extended to the team

Resolved:

- **Board noted BDO LLP Audit Completion Report (Appendix A);**
- **Board noted the 2024/25 financial results;**
- **Board approved the 2024/25 Annual Report and Financial Statements (Appendix B);**
- **Board approved the statements are signed by the Chair, Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee and Company Secretary;**
- **Board approved the letter of representation (pages 22 – 24 (inclusive) of Appendix A) is signed, on behalf of the Board, by the Chair**

Item 7 – Quarterly Risk Update

RT provided the overview. Board was asked to note that this had not been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee due to specific focus areas at their August meeting.

Following the positive externally facilitated session undertaken by DTP with Board and EMT, information from discussions here was used to update the Risk Appetite Statement (Appendix B of the report).

Board's attention was drawn to the 2 new risk drivers discussed at the July session, Governance and Technological Innovation. However, due to the timeframes the Board did not get the chance to say what the appetite levels were and this still needs to be agreed. Board felt that good discussion did take place at the session and RF suggested with regard to governance, an 'adverse' appetite be agreed. On Technological Innovation he suggested a 'balanced' appetite be agreed, with the aspiration to move to open. Board members agreed with this suggestion.

JS inquired about updates on data quality, particularly regarding the resource challenges. RT confirmed that progress is ongoing, with additional resources being allocated; however these need time to become fully effective. The recent addition of RTh is positive. Data quality remains a collective

responsibility and while strategic leadership is essential the process is still evolving. RT is optimistic that future Board reports will reflect gradual improvement.

PC raised concerns regarding the current framework used, specifically noting the limited number of mitigating actions, the overall number of actions and the absence of risk scoring. AGa explained that this model was recommended to BH by a Council officer and has been in use for several years. RT confirmed that a review of the framework is scheduled for the end of the financial year with findings to be reported to Board.

MJ Referred to Asset Management moving to an operational risk which he feels is correct but to acknowledge that this can also have strategic impact – RTh to explore further. He made reference to the positive impact the introduction of the BH BMBC Asset Management Housing Board has had on active asset management of stock.

RTh

AH referred to the very recent water issue and asked if the process followed was in accordance with the major incident plan. AGa confirmed.

Resolved:

- 1. Board reviewed and commented on the Risk Management Quarterly Update.**
- 2. Board reviewed and commented on the Strategic Risks.**
- 3. Board reviewed, discussed and agreed the proposed refreshed Risk Appetite Statement**
- 4. Board determined the risk appetite for the two new risk drivers (Governance and Technological Innovation).**

Item 8 – Property Services Regulatory Update and Policies

RTh presented the report and policies, highlighted the key points.

Electrical safety – The Government is extending the five yearly EICRs to all social housing – BH are well placed as the majority of stock are already on a 5 year cycle. Remedial works completed within 28 day is a change that BH will have to respond to.

Disrepair and damp and mould – Policies addressing disrepair, damp and mould have been updated to comply with Awaab's Law and outlines how Berneslai Homes will respond. Adopting a zero tolerance approach is critical RTh stressed the importance of being mindful of HHSRS Cat 1's and ad hoc reports. The team structure is under review to ensure BH can meet the increasing demand. MJ raised a query regarding whether the timescales for HHSRS Category 2 hazards align with Awaab's Law. RTh confirmed that Category 1 hazards are assessed immediately, while Category 2's must be responded to and addressed within a reasonable timeframe, reflecting their lower severity.

RTh referred to the project plan in place advising that further gap analysis is also taking place in relation to Awaab's Law target dates, which was welcomed by Board.

RTh brought to the attention of the meeting that a company have approached BH regarding a new solution for eradicating damp and mould spores, already trialled successfully in Scotland. The product is safe for use on both hard and soft surfaces and completely eliminates the DNA of the spores. This aligns with Regulation 12, supporting BH's responsibility to keep tenants safe by addressing the issue at its source. Board were interested in this solution and hopes it is successful. Caution needs to be taken however on how this is communicated.

It was noted that there is no KPI in PRIP on disrepair and this needs to be considered.

Board noted that the Damp and mould roadshows will continue to take place in the community and publicity has commenced. Staff training also continues and local members were briefed at their all member briefing session.

Resolved:

That Board review the report and approved the following:

- **The approach to electrical safety**
- **The Disrepair Policy**
- **The Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy**
- **Implementation Plan for Awaab's Law**

RTh

Item 9 – Annual Report to Tenants

DF presented the report highlighting the key points.

It is a regulatory requirement under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard for registered providers to provide tenants with accessible information about their landlord services. Although information is published on the website, key elements are presented in an annual report to ensure compliance with the Consumer Standards.

The report has been prepared in collaboration with an editorial group of tenants, demonstrating good tenant engagement.

The annual report was approved by Customer Services Committee in August, subject to their request for an introduction being added from Berneslai Homes, which has been actioned.

The distribution plan was outlined. Particular reference was made to those people not online and proofs will be made available in libraries, community centres, independent living schemes etc. The tenant editorial group will be involved at the launch events in October.

Board was pleased with the report, commending the use of case studies. It was noted that feedback is included on the TSM's and AH queried if there was an obligation to do this. DF advised that as perception survey results and TSM's are on the website, it is felt appropriate to include them in an accessible document and he is confident it is in the spirit of regulation, building on the work that has been done so far.

Resolved:

Board noted the latest Annual Report prior to publication in September 2025.

Item 10.1 – Q1 Performance Report

DF presented the report which has been considered by the Customer Services Committee at their August meeting

Board noted the key area of strengths which is building safety, complaints handling response time, emergency and non-emergency repairs completed in target timescales and rent collection levels, particularly with the number of tenants migrating onto Universal Credit during this period.

Areas of focus are void rent loss, sickness and proportion of call centre calls in time.

With regard to sickness a positive impact has been seen as a result of the action plan put in place.

The Call Centre, which has been a concern has shown notable improvement following the implementation of the action plan, with calls being answered more promptly. It is hoped this performance will be sustained over a period of time. JS questioned if this would be possible with the implementation of Awwab's law in October and other winter pressures. RF advised Customer Services Committee would be monitoring and he will provide an update at the next Board meeting. A query was raised in regard to the correlation between digital and telephone contacts. DF advised that telephone contact is primarily used for repairs, with the Call centre handling approximately 90,000 repairs calls annually. The overall volume of calls is decreasing, especially follow up calls, which suggests greater sustainability. A detailed report will be submitted to the October Audit and Risk Committee on the repairs system which will highlight the reduction in follow up cases. Additionally, operatives are now scheduling follow-up appointments before leaving tenants' homes, ensuring continuity.

RF

MJ observed RP01(1) and RP02(2) non-emergency repairs and Emergency Repairs completed within target timescale are in the green category, demonstrating right first time.

RF reported that good discussion took place at the Customer Services Committee, their main focus was on complaints at Stage 2, which in some instances could have been avoided. He is pleased that training is taking

place and stressed the importance of this being rolled out, giving time to embed, which hopefully will result in a reduction in Stage 2 complaints.

The new DH standard was referenced. AGa confirmed that this will need to be implemented by 2035. We will be working with Council colleagues to model the financial implications linked to the stock condition data.

Resolved:

- 1. Board considered quarter one performance.**
- 2. Where performance targets were not achieved, Board were satisfied with the explanations provided and there are adequate controls and actions in place.**

Item 10.2 – Q1 PRIP Performance

RTh presented the report emphasising the substantial progress achieved by both partners since the last quarter. The under-performance of PSRT on the percentage of appointments kept has been attributed to operatives arriving before the designated 8 a.m. start time – a factor not captured by the system. As a result it is recommended that the reporting mechanisms be reviewed to ensure greater accuracy.

Additionally the proportion of recycled waste remains slightly below the target, presenting an ongoing challenge that requires further investigation. It was also noted that Wates subcontracting levels exceed the 25% target. MJ expressed concern regarding this issue. RTh agreed, indicating further analysis is necessary.

RTh

RTh reassured the Board that appropriate measures are being implemented to address the identified areas of under-performance.

Resolved:

- 1. Board considered the Q1 2025/25 PRIP Performance Report update summary report.**
- 2. Where PRIP performance targets have not been achieved, Board was satisfied with the explanations provided and there are adequate controls and actions in place.**
- 3. Board did not identify any areas where they feel more detailed consideration is required by Customer Services Committee on any customer focussed KPIs.**

Item 10.3 - Q1 Building Safety Compliance Scorecard

RTh provided an update on the performance of BH in delivering key services as set out in the Building Safety Scorecard in quarter 1.

Compliance remains good on the 7 key compliance areas.

The completion rate for sump pump checks stands at 47.75%. For context, Board noted that there are 67 across the borough, with 35 checks outstanding. As a result, the overall risk is considered low and there is no statutory requirement to service these units.

Resolved:

Board noted the Q1 Building Safety Compliance Scorecard.

Item 11 BH Annual Business Action Plan Update

RT presented the report, highlighting the key points with regard to the progress against the BH action plan contained in section 4.3 of the report. One of the key actions is the Property Services restructure, which has been subject to delays. The Chair expressed his concern about the moral of the teams and how this is being monitored. AGa advised that all Managers have been briefed and an update given to all affected.

Resolved:

Board noted and commented on the year end update of progress against the Annual Business Action Plan 25/26 quarter one.

Item 12 – Resource Information Paper**12.1 Board Fact Sheet**

Resolved:

The Fact Sheet was noted