



Minutes of Berneslai Homes Public Board Meeting held 5th December 2024

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
- Gez Morrall (GM) - Board Member
- Kevin Osborne (KO) - Board Member
- Eric Smith (ES) - Board Member (Co-optee)
- Jo Sugden (JS) - Board Member
- Rebecca Mather (RM) - Board Member
- Sarah Tattersall (ST) - Board Member

In attendance

- Amanda Garrard (AGa) - CEO
- Dave Fullen (DF) - Executive Director, Customer & Estate Services
- Arturo Gulla (AGu) - Executive Director, Property Services
- Rachel Taylor (RT) - Executive Director, Resources
- Sam Roebuck (SR) - Head of Governance and Strategy and Company Secretary
- Sarah Clyde (SC) - Head of Strategic Housing (BMBC)

	ACTION
<p><u>Item 1 – Apologies</u></p> <p>Mahara Haque - Independent Chair of Customer Services Committee</p>	
<p><u>Item 2 – Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>There were none declared.</p>	

<p><u>Item 3 – Customer First Video – The Difference Tenants’ Make</u></p> <p>Board received the video presentation which highlights the difference tenants’ make.</p>	
<p><u>Item 4 – Governance Update</u></p> <p>SR presented the report which addresses various governance issues. Key points were highlighted. All Board appraisals have been completed and the draft Annual Board Development Plan has been prepared for approval. Additionally, the Terms of Reference for the Repairs and Engagement Champion and Maintenance and Assets Champion have been produced for approval. An action plan has been developed following the DTP facilitated Board annual self-assessment. At the Board Strategic Planning Day it was agreed the governance structure be reviewed and a separate report has been produced.</p> <p>ST inquired about the timeline for recruitment of the trainee Councillor Board Member and was informed that this was discussed at the Remuneration Committee held on the 2nd December. The recruitment process will commence in January.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board approved the proposed annual Board Development Plan for 2025. 2. Board reviewed and commented on the Board Member Personal Development Programme. 3. Board Approved the Engagement and the Repairs, Maintenance & Assets Board Champions Terms of References. 	
<p><u>Item 5 – Governance Changes – Following Board Strategic Planning Day</u></p> <p>RT presented the report. During the Strategic Planning Day in November, it was agreed to review the Board structure with a view to streamlining. A follow up meeting took place with David Tolson Partnership (DTP) and they provided the note attached at Appendix A, including recommendations and timelines. DTP also provided Board with assurance that similar actions are being taken in other organisations. Further sessions will be arranged with DTP to look at the implementation of the remainder of their recommendations and information will be available for the next Board meeting.</p> <p>AH highlighted the impact on the diversity of the group, emphasising the importance of considering this factor in decision making. Addressing this issue should be a priority. Assurance was provided that DTP will be including this as part of succession planning</p>	

The Chair acknowledged the difficult decision regarding ES and MH, noting that it is the correct one. He emphasised the importance of the Board being effective, efficient and duplication being avoided. MJ commented that both ES and MH are co-optees, therefore the composition of Board remains unaffected.

AGa reported on the sessions already conducted with all staff on savings that need to be made, and noted as part of governance and leadership, that applying these principles at Board level is beneficial.

Resolved:

Board approved the following:-

- 1. The termination of Eric Smith Co-optee to the Board and the termination of Mahara Haque Independent Customer Services Committee Chair from the 6th of December 2024.**
- 2. The recommendation to dissolve the Remuneration Committee from 1st April 2025.**
- 3. The recommendation that the Customer Services Committee is reviewed and updated, including a review and update of the Terms of Reference and the role of the Committee. The outcome of this review will form part of a report to Board for decision. With the termination of the current Chair of Customer Services Committee Board are also asked to approve the appointment of the current Customer Services Vice Chair, Richard Fryer as Chair of this Committee. In turn, to appoint Rebecca Mather as the Vice Chair.**
- 4. The review of all Committee work plans, scheduling of meetings, Terms of Reference, membership and a further review of reporting lines to reduce duplication.**
- 5. A review of the focus of the Chairs meeting and an update of the Terms of Reference.**
- 6. The extension of the remit of the Engagement Champion Rebecca Mather to include the Complaints Champion role.**

The Chair took the opportunity on behalf of the Board to extend gratitude to ES and MH for their diligent efforts. MH was commended for taking the Customer Services Committee forward into the community and ES was acknowledged for his progression from a Tenant Board member of the Board to pursuing a MA at Reading University.

Item 6 – BH Strategic Plan and Annual Business Action Plan and Update on Actions from the 24/25 Plan and 3 Year Vision

SR introduced the Strategic Plan, noting that it has undergone an annual review, resulting in only minor adjustments. A comprehensive review of the plan is scheduled for 2025/26.

The Board were asked to note the Draft Annual Business Action Plan which outlines key areas of focus for the upcoming year and includes budgetary information etc.

<p>The Social Housing Regulatory inspection findings were also noted.</p> <p>Appendix 3 is a new draft internal action plan for Board comment. The plan for 2025/26 was discussed and will be finalised for presentation to Board in May 2025. This replaces the 3 year vision from 25/26.</p> <p>ST inquired about plans for an all Member Briefing, noting the success of a recent session. SC concurred that this was well attended and committed to holding these sessions quarterly, each covering a different theme.</p> <p>SC also referred to the effective action plan put in place following the inspection but emphasised the need to develop a ‘golden thread,’ linking the internal plan and annual business to demonstrate how the information is interconnected.</p> <p>SR brought to the attention of the meeting the progress made on the Annual Business Action Plan for 2024/25 and 3 year vision.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board approved the light touch review of the 10-year Strategic Plan. 2. Board Approved the draft Annual Business Action Plan for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 and delegated any minor amendments to the Strategic Plan and Annual Business Action Plan to the Chief Executive, as the plans go through the approval process with BMBC. 3. Board noted the draft internal BH Action Plan and provided comment on the key actions and milestones 4. Board noted the six month update on progress against the Annual Business Action Plan and 3 year vision. 	
<p><u>Item 7 – Disrepair Policy</u></p> <p>AGu presented the Disrepair Policy which has been produced to ensure that BH manages disrepair claims appropriately. It is a comprehensive document and aligns with all the statutory requirements. Board are requested to approve the policy, which will subsequently be subject to approval by BMBC Cabinet.</p> <p>Board expressed their appreciation of the policy, noting its relevance to the current national issues concerning the pressures on repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>AGu mentioned his recent attendance at a Disrepair Conference where it was highlighted that claims have increased significantly since 2018, exacerbated by claims harvesters. He referred Board to an insightful report ‘The Evolving Landscape of Housing Disrepair’ (on LinkedIn) produced by Rosie Willis from Mid Devon Housing which provides well researched figures on the issue.</p>	

<p>SC suggested it would be beneficial to see a detailed breakdown of total costs, including address, specific repair/associated cost, the compensation paid including any decant costs etc.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>Board approved the Disrepair Policy.</p>	<p>AGu</p>
<p><u>Item 8 – Draft Council Tenancy Policy and Update to Introductory Tenancy Policy (Review Process)</u></p> <p>DF presented the report for approval which has been produced as a result of the requirements of the Localism Act and to meet the duties of the Tenancy Consumer Standard.</p> <p>The Draft Council Housing Tenancy Policy will replace the 2019-2024 Tenancy Policy when approved by BMBC. The majority of changes are minimal, however there are 2 changes of significance relating to the use of 5 year flexible tenancies and the review process for flexible tenants (details are contained within the Executive Summary of the report.) Customers have been consulted and fully support the policy.</p> <p>Board noted that the vast number of tenancies are introductory/secure tenants. There are only a very small number of flexible tenancies, and these are usually 4 bed+ properties or those significantly adapted. KO queried the use of demoted tenancies. DF advised these are used infrequently but is a tool available. When they have been used in the past it has led to the ending of tenancies, however the numbers are very small and they have not been used for several years.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board approved the Draft Tenancy Policy for implementation once approved by Barnsley Council. 2. Board gave delegated authority to the Executive Director of Customer and Estate Services to make any amendments as authorised by BMBC. 3. Board noted the timeline for BMBC approval, 4. Board noted that they will be made aware of any significant changes requested by Barnsley Council ahead of its approval by them. 5. Board noted that a report on the effectiveness of the Tenancy Policy will be presented on an annual basis at the start of the financial year commencing in 2026/27 6. Board approved changing the Introductory Tenancy Policy Panel Appeal Process to a senior officer independent review process. 7. Board noted the Introductory Tenancy Policy will be updated and submitted to Barnsley Council for Approval along with the Tenancy Policy. 	

Item 9 – Regulator of Social Housing – Regulatory Judgement

DF presented the report, detailing the outcome of the inspection, summarising the process and different key stages. The Regulatory Judgement issued for BMBC was brought to the meeting’s attention, attached at Appendix A. This was discussed in detail at the Strategic Planning Day held in November.

DF referred to the collaborative working that took place between BMBC and Berneslai Homes, a good example of working together. It was felt that this teamwork had a significant impact on the outcome. AGa said the work done by SC and DF was formally recognised recently by full Council

DF reiterated the C1 grading, which means the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the Consumer Standards etc. There are no ongoing meetings planned with the Regulator to look at an action plan, however if Board were to notice any failings in meeting the Consumer Standards or material changes in performance standards, the Council would need to be notified, and this was emphasised at the close down meeting.

Board extended their thanks to the team, also advising of some special mentions they had heard in various fora.

Resolved:

- 1. Board noted that the Regulator of Social Housing issued a Regulatory Judgement for Barnsley MBC of C1 against the Consumer Standards.**
- 2. Board considered the findings and areas where further continued focus would deliver improvements to the stock and services provided to tenants.**

Item 10 – Performance Summary Q2 2024/25

RT presented and summarised the key points.

Board were asked to note that there are 9 green, 6 amber and 16 red KPIs. Additionally, 7 KPIs do not have a RAG status due to unavailable information.

Two KPIs, TSMs RPO1 and RPO2 are not reported. BH is working to obtain the necessary information that meets the definition by Q3. EMT are closely monitoring.

BH strengths were highlighted, including 100% compliance on Building safety, complaints handling, local spend, disability disclosure. However, areas of weakness include void rent loss, staff sickness, priority calls in target on DH and satisfaction measures.

The report was considered in detail at the last Customer Services Committee

<p>ST expressed concern at the void figures. AGu advised that the figures have improved since the report was produced (currently standing at 318). A Voids Task Team has been established, and collaboration is ongoing. Improvements are anticipated in the new year. The Chair requested a year end forecast be provided and emphasised the importance of managing within budgets. KO also referred to new voids coming on stream. DF confirmed this was the case but noted that numbers are at a lower level than traditionally seen. 60% of those coming in are on the death of a tenant or transitions into residential care. Many of these properties have not had DH works carried out for various reasons, necessitating additional work to get them to a lettable standard. DF highlighted measures implemented to address the situation, such as conducting more joint visits to plan in work during the notice period. However, there are more major voids, with work averaging £12K per property</p> <p>JS referred to the upward trend in staff sickness and informed Board this was discussed in detail at the recent Remuneration Committee. They felt assured with the actions being taken, including the introduction of business partners within HR. Work is ongoing and mandatory training for Leaders and Managers is being arranged for 2025.</p> <p>MJ commented that overall performance is strong in many areas, which is not the case for some others in the sector.</p> <p>SC referred to a report that had been presented to Cabinet on funding for accumulated works during 2024/25 brought forward from 2025/26 budget.</p> <p>AGu provided a summary of the current financial position and works discussed at the Asset Management Stock Board.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Board considered quarter two performance.2. Where performance targets have not been achieved, Board were 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.	AGu
---	-----

Item 11 – Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Mid Year Results and Actions

DF presented the report which provides analysis of the feedback from tenants completing the first round of the survey. This is a regulatory requirement for social landlords to gather tenant feedback in a prescribed way for 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The survey will assist in setting realistic KPIs for next year. The 2nd part of the survey is out currently and to date 353 have been completed against a target of 581 which is very positive. Results will be available at the end of January,

Board noted that satisfaction has reduced to 73%. Most of the indicators are RAG rated red; however, they are better than the Housemark Median benchmark. Complaints handling has improved, helped by the increase in resources to tackle this which needs to be considered when budget setting.

Attention was drawn to Section 6 which outlines the key issues, concerns and actions regarding customer insight.

ST referred to ‘tenants not feeling safe’ and inquired if information is available, why was this the case, and what actions are being taken. DF advised that factors include perceptions related to their neighbourhood, crime, anti-social behaviour etc. Whilst people feel safe regarding building safety, there is low satisfaction concerning anti-social behaviour.

DF referred to the challenging situation resulting from disinvesting in estates and environmental works in the capital programme, such as the removal of fencing security measures due to the backlog. This limits the ability to address anti-social behaviour collaboratively. Another element is the Council’s response to the rioting at Manvers in the summer. The Council has a plan that is progressing through the approval route to tackle issues. This will be overseen by the Project Board and DF will be attending these meetings, representing Berneslai Homes.

ST mentioned the PACT meetings, suggesting it may be more productive if representatives from BH, BMBC and the Police attended and that these meetings be proactively advertised on social media etc to give the opportunity for tenants and residents to speak to the Police. DF outlined the recent ‘Anti-Social Behaviour Week’ where lots of work took place. The approach taken ensured the messages were communicated effectively and victims were also contacted. One anti-social behaviour policy will be produced for all services, with everything being reviewed to ensure it is more victim focussed. An action plan will also be produced which will include the approach to PACT and MARAC meetings.

AH referred to the declining perceptions regarding the completion of repairs and the maintenance of homes. It was anticipated that the actions already taken would have increased satisfaction. AGu advised the performance is still in the high 90’s, but it is a matter of perception. He advised that improvements are continuing, but it is taking time.

<p>SC observed that satisfaction does not correlate with actions taken on repairs. Timescales will be considered as part of the PRIP review, looking at achievable opportunities in the future and focussing on getting repairs right first time, but acknowledged this may take longer.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board noted the TSM survey results • Board commented on the emerging issues and associated actions and noted the increased risks of delivering service improvements due to budget and resource availability • Board noted that the second wave of surveys are currently in progress and results will be available in the new year. Once received a report will be present to Board ahead of submission of the annual results to the RSH. 	
<p><u>Item 12 – Quarterly Risk Update</u></p> <p>RT presented the summary report. The more detailed version was reviewed at the last Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>The top 5 risks were summarised. Audit and Risk Committee requested the addition of the reputational risk of social media be considered being added to the Strategic Register. This was considered by EMT who felt this addition was not necessary at the moment.</p> <p>ST inquired about the red response rating for mould, damp and condensation and whether any additional measures had been implemented for the winter. AGu advised that the red rating was due to caution being exercised in this matter. A robust process is in place for Category 1 hazards; and a Task Group has also been established. Funding has also been set aside in readiness for the enactment of Awwab’s Law. The reasons for damp, mould and condensation occurring in some homes were discussed and AGu mentioned that tenants are provided with information on how to reduce moisture in their homes.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board reviewed and commented on the risk activities for the quarter. 2. Board noted the details contained with the Strategic Risk Register and did not recommend any further risk for inclusion 3. Board reviewed and commented on the action plans being monitored as part of this report. 	
<p><u>Item 13 – Resources Reports:-</u></p> <p><u>13.1 Board Fact Sheet</u></p> <p>Board noted the fact sheet</p>	