



Minutes of Berneslai Homes Public Board held 27th May 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	-	Board Member (trainee)
Rebecca Mather (RM)	-	Board Member
Gez Morrall (GM)	-	Board Member
Kevin Osborne (KO)	-	Board Member
Jo Sugden (JS)	-	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 and Company Secretary
Sam Roebuck (SR)	-	Head of Strategy, Governance and IT
Paul Clifford (PC)	-	Service Director BMBC

Observing

Sarah Clyde	-	Head of Strategic Housing BMBC
Livia Williams	-	Head of Repairs Berneslai Homes

Prior to commencement the Chair welcomed David Leech to the Board and introductions followed.

	ACTION
<u>Item 1 – Apologies</u>	
There were no apologies	
<u>Item 2 – Declarations of Interest</u>	
None declared.	

<p><u>Item 3 – Tenants Voice – Young Care Leavers</u></p> <p>DF introduced the presentation and provided background information.</p> <p>The video showcases the work of Berneslai Homes’ ‘Tenancy ready’ pilot course to aid and assist young people leaving care in Barnsley in becoming tenancy ready for a Council property. The project was designed and delivered in partnership with the BMBCs Targeted Youth Support service.</p> <p>The programme looked at a wide range of topics such as properties BH would offer young people leaving care, tenancy management, budget management and utilities management. The video shares the positive outcomes of the course from the young people and the staff involved and the future of the course and its offer for the young people in Barnsley that will benefit in the future.</p> <p>Board praised the initiative and suggested there could be an opportunity to use the data to look at other applicants and flags that may suggest there could be a better set of outcomes for our cohorts – DF agreed to explore further. Additionally, there was a suggestion for tenants to get involved in a mentoring capacity. DF will take back to the group who developed this</p> <p>Board extended their thanks to the team involved.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <p>The video was received</p>	
<p><u>Item 4 – Annual Governance</u></p> <p>SR presented the report on the annual governance activities which includes several recommendations for Board.</p> <p>Following discussion a number of comments, observations were made:-</p> <p>Annual Governance Performance data – JS raised a query with regard to the attendance target for Committees differing to that of Board. It was therefore agreed the attendance target for both Committees and Board be aligned, set at 90%</p> <p>Board Diversity Targets – AH inquired if Board was content to address ethnicity/diversity in the recruitment round or if more proactive measures could be taken sooner. The Chair suggested addressing this issue when the 2 Board members leave next year.</p> <p>Reporting mechanisms - feedback from self-evaluation – SR had distributed to Board and responses were collated. Positive feedback</p>	<p>SR</p>

<p>indicated that seven members felt Board worked well as a team. MJ highlighted the need for further consideration and reflection on strategic and operational issues.</p> <p>PC referred to the Council vision/strategic direction, offering to facilitate a session or hold 1 to 1 meetings if required.</p> <p>It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be convened to look at the information in detail, reporting back to Board in July. JS, RF volunteered plus the Chair and 1 EMT member</p> <p>NHF Code of Governance – PC queried stress testing and how it is working in relation to business plan. RT advised that while it is not intended to carry out stress testing to the level performed at a Housing Association, a lighter version could be undertaken in relation to services to customers, to be included in the next budget setting. AGa suggested it may be beneficial to organise a similar exercise to the one conducted a few years ago, as part of a Risk Session at officer and Board level.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <p>Board</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewed and commented as necessary on the annual governance performance data included in this report. 2. Agreed to the continued collection of the governance indicators and for the information to be published on the Berneslai Homes website. 3. Considered whether to align the board diversity targets in Appendix A to the associated BH customer data – no further comments were made 4. Considered whether targets are necessary for the Reporting Mechanism section in Appendix A. Agreed, but with an amendment to the Committee attendance target to align with that of the Board. 5. Discussed and agreed how it wishes to consider the areas where it could do better based on the feedback from the self-evaluation (Appendices D and E). Task and Finish Group agreed. 6. Considered the Self-Assessment against the NHF Code of Governance, agreeing the areas of non-compliance and the actions required to achieve compliance (Appendix F) 7. Agreed that a statement of compliance with the NHF Code of Governance be included into the Annual Accounts on a comply or explain basis 	<p>SR</p>
<p><u>Item 5 – Governance Changes (DTP Review)</u></p> <p>SR referred to the recent briefing session that had taken place to look at the proposed changes in detail and asked if there were any further comments.</p>	

<p>AH referred to an error in the Terms of Reference for Audit and Risk Committee where the Treasury Strategy is referenced and this should be Investment Strategy– to be amended. KT queried when the work on the Board’s role in providing assurance to the Council would be completed and reported to Board. RT noted the intention was to report to Board in July 2025.</p> <p>Resolved</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board approve the revised terms of reference for Board (Appendix B), Audit and Risk (Appendix C) and Customer Services Committee (Appendix D) with one amendment required to the Audit and Risk Terms of Reference. 2. Approved the draft Statement of Preferred Composition (Appendix E) to align the Terms of reference with skills and competency requirements and succession planning across the governance structure. 3. Approved the Customer Committee Member role profile (Appendix F). 4. Approved the recruitment of four tenants to sit on Customer Services Committee (2 paid and 2 unpaid roles). Salary to be determined and within budgets available. 5. Approved the remit for the Chairs Group (Appendix G). 	<p>SR</p> <p>RT</p>
<p><u>Item 6 – People Strategy</u></p> <p>RT presented the report, highlighting key points.</p> <p>The proposed new People Strategy is built on the previous version and is centred around 4 key themes as outlined in the report. This is a high level Strategy and if approved then further plans will be developed. Additionally, there is a detailed culture plan. A significant amount of work has taken place on the culture change programme, particularly focussing on progression, self-development, and the 3C values.</p> <p>JS referred to the link to improve customer service and satisfaction and feels wording needs to be included in the key themes under the culture heading which highlights fostering a positive culture and its connection to customers. Additionally, she feels a measure needs to be included in the success metrics.</p> <p>Clarity was requested and provided on the graduate programme, RT explaining that this is not an addition, but an encouragement to use graduates as part of the establishment.</p> <p>JS also mentioned a conversation with RT and the Chair regarding the EDI Champion role. As the current strategy is ending it was felt a separate strategy is no longer required and EDI could be incorporated into the People Strategy, demonstrating it is embedded; also suggesting the EDI Champion be renamed to Culture Champion.</p>	<p>RT</p> <p>RT</p>

<p>PC, while welcoming the success measures, feels they need to be tangible and suggested a baseline be established with stretch targets. The Chair also felt it would be beneficial to include a measure relating to increasing productivity. RT to action.</p> <p>MJ made a suggestion to include information on skills, training and collaboration with local provider providers, meeting gaps etc.</p> <p>JS observed that some of the language was inconsistent, preferring the term “colleagues” instead of “staff”.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>Board approved the proposed People Strategy 2025-28 with the above additions.</p>	<p>RT</p> <p>RT</p> <p>RT</p>
<p><u>Item 7 – Annual Self Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman (HOS) Complaint Handling Code</u></p> <p>DF presented the report. The self-assessment concluded with full compliance with the HOS Handling Code for the period 2024/25. Board are asked to approve the report to the Council. The responses from Councillor Franklin and the Board, once finalised will be circulated to Board before being added to the document and publishing to the website.</p> <p>AGa reported on a recent session she had attended where Richard Blakeway, the Housing Ombudsman was present. He indicated they will be examining the self-assessments in more detail this year than previously. It was noted that Barnsley’s assessment is comprehensive and honest.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board approved the draft self-assessment and delegate authority to the Executive Director of Customer and Estate Services to make final amendments and sign off ahead of BMBC’s final approval. 2. Board noted our Board Complaint Champion will meet with the Council’s MRC and will draft their response to the self-assessment by 18th June 2024. 3. Board will be made aware of any emerging and significant issues which may affect continued compliance with the Complaint Handling Code in 2025/26. 	<p>DF</p>
<p><u>Item 8 – BH Annual Investment Strategy (referred from Audit and Risk Committee)</u></p> <p>RT reported that Audit and Risk Committee had a productive discussion on this and recommended to Board to approve.</p>	

<p>The primary focus is ensuring that investments are secure with reputable institutions. AH concurred and appreciated the Council's presence at the meeting. PC welcomed the prudent approach.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <p>Board approved:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Investment Strategy. 2. The investment limits set out at paragraph 3.4. 3. The instruments list set out at paragraph 3.8 4. The scheme of delegation outlined in Appendix A and the policy statement outlined in Appendix B. 	
<p><u>Item 9 Quarterly Risk Update</u></p> <p>RT presented the report which has already been reviewed and discussed at the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee did not propose any changes. However, they referred the Risk Appetite Statement to Board for discussion as ownership is at Board level.</p> <p>RT advised that EMT will consider the risks highlighted; more work will take place and will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in June.</p> <p>RF stated he felt the Risk Appetite Statement was fit for purpose. However, he referred to the recent cyber security issues encountered by Marks and Spencer, the Co-op etc and questioned the robustness of our own defences and whether this needs to be reviewed. RT advised that Audit and Risk Committee had also requested further assurance on this issue, therefore the Council's Cyber Security License and Records Manager will be attending the October Committee meeting. It was agreed that other Board members can attend this meeting if they wish to do so. DF/RT will discuss approach for Customer Services Committee tenant members.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <p>Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewed and commented on the Risk Management Quarterly Update. 2. Reviewed and commented on the Strategic Risks. 3. Reviewed and commented on the Risk Appetite Statement 4. Reviewed and commented on the action plans being monitored as part of this report. 	<p>All DF/RT</p>
<p><u>Item 10 – Annual Complaints Handling and Learning Report</u></p> <p>DF presented the report, noting that it is discussed in detail on a quarterly basis at Customer Services Committee. The Quarter 4 report has not yet been considered; however, the trends, volumes, performance and learning have remained consistent. He referred to complaint volumes, informing Board that the additional resources have improved the response rate.</p>	

<p>JS expressed appreciation for the layout and the pictorial tables, noting alignment with the People Strategy in some areas i.e. culture, comms and colleague performance. Hopefully further improvement will continue. PC emphasised the importance of addressing root causes, highlighting the strain on resources at Stage 2, many of which are due to unmet promises at Stage 1.</p> <p>KO mentioned the decline in compliments and Board acknowledged the importance of passing these on. DF advised that fewer compliments are expected when satisfaction surveys transition to Voicescape. ST highlighted the increase in customer satisfaction, with tenants feeling they had been treated fairly and thanks were extended to colleagues.</p> <p>The Chair inquired about communication related to repairs and the actions in place to improve this. AGu confirmed that tenants are now updated more frequently, and additional training is provided when failures occur. When an operative is unable to complete a repair, they now ensure a further appointment is made before leaving the site which should improve future figures.</p> <p>The Chair also expressed concern for the wellbeing of staff in the Complaints Team. DF acknowledged the high pressure nature of the roles, but provided assurance that the team have an excellent Manager and they spend time together in the office to give each other support.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board were assured of the continued positive progress in improving our complaint handling service, responding to complaints within timescale and the strengthened governance oversight of complaint handling and learning. 2. Board noted that whilst learning is identified and action continues to be taken to improve both the complaint handling service and address the root cause of complaints, there are still a number of residual risks which challenge our compliance with the HOS code. 	
<p><u>Item 11 – Gender Pay Gap 2024</u></p> <p>RT presented the report noting it had been discussed at the last Remuneration Committee. The key points were highlighted.</p> <p>The Mean Gender Pay Gap has decreased with women earning 0.5% more than men. The Median Pay Gap has increased by 1.2%, indicating women earn 93p for every £1 earned by men. Bonus pay remains an issue and a plan is being developed to address. The information will be published on the BH and Government websites.</p> <p>AH commended the report and found the graphs were useful. Using last year as a comparison he suggested setting a target. It was agreed to link</p>	

<p>this back to the People Strategy as a success measure – RT to consider using a target of a pay gap of no more than 2%.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <p>Board discussed the report and acknowledged the Gender Pay Gap figures for 2024.</p>	RT
<p><u>Item 12 – 2024/25 Year End Performance Summary</u></p> <p>RT presented the report. This was discussed at Customer Services Committee. They requested targets for 25/26 which have been included. The key points were highlighted.</p> <p>Performance is positive with 12 green KPIs, 7 amber and 12 red. There are 2 not included as figures are awaited and there are also 4 KPIs not classified.</p> <p>Strengths include building safety compliance, TSMs, complaints performance and rent collection levels.</p> <p>Key focus areas are void rent loss, sickness, calls in target timescale.</p> <p>Board were asked to note the void reduction action plan and a report on sickness has been produced and will be discussed under the Confidential agenda.</p> <p>The achievements were acknowledged by Board.</p> <p>MJ said he continued to recognise the achievements made on complaints, noting the percentage of complaints not related to the quality of work but rather to processes. This is a national trend. It was noted the situation will not get easier with Awaab's Law as processes need to be more robust.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the Wates/Property Services PRIP performance dashboard and noted the significant difference between the two, requesting an explanation. AGu mentioned that transactional surveys returned show Property Services performing higher than Wates for the last quarter. He referred to the issues on the RPO2 calculations and added that learning continues from Wates. The Head of Service is prioritising, and hopefully better use of systems should help. Work by Savills is also expected to contribute positively.</p> <p>MJ referred to the discrepancies between the time repairs are taking and the satisfaction with Wates performing better on this; he feels it is important that consideration be given on whether it is better for tenants to have repairs done properly, or on time and suggested further analysis be undertaken on this. He feels KPIs are needed that reflect what matters to tenants. MJ/AGu to collaborate.</p>	AGu/MJ

<p>Resolved</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board considered the annual review report for 2024/25 and the 2024/25 year end performance for both Company and PRIP performance. 2. Where performance targets were not 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 on any customer focused KPI's. 	
<p><u>Item 13 – Update on Berneslai Homes Business Action Plan and 3 Year Vision 2024/2025</u></p> <p>SR presented the report, referring to the key highlights at Section 4.2 of the report. The report will be discussed at the Council's Cabinet on the 13th August.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <p>Board noted the year end update of progress against the Annual Business Action Plan 24/25 and 3 year vision</p>	
<p><u>Item 14 – Resources Information Papers</u></p> <p><u>14.1 – Board Fact Sheet</u></p> <p>Noted.</p>	
<p><u>Item 15 - Board Mins and Actions from meeting held 27/3/2025</u></p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record and the actions were noted.</p>	
<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u> – 24th July 2025</p>	