



HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL FOR BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL (BCC) Annual Report April 2024-March 2025

Foreword by the chair of the Panel Peter Edwards

This year we have been able to welcome one new member to the panel. We hope to sign up other prospective members. But like other groups it is very hard, but we must keep trying.

The Regulator for Social Housing gave the BCC Housing Service a poor rating in June 2024 and since September we have been meeting every month with Richard James who oversees the Housing Consumer Standards improvement programme. This change in Panel's workload has led to being able to see some positive improvements, including progress on the gas servicing programme and the fitting of the carbon monoxide detectors and the finding of asbestos. However, the Council still seems to be failing on the repairs reporting yet again, with residents finding it difficult to report repairs. There will be a new telephone system in September 2025 which will hopefully improve this situation. The damp and mould performance is at last showing some improvement.

As we have said on this panel before, the department had not learned to communicate all together yet. It would be a great help to residents, and the Council would progress in the right direction if they did. The housing officers are still a problem to contact or speak to. But Mark Goodey and Kate Ryan from the Housing Management and Estates Team are working on this and this includes housing officers making regular site visits.

Even though residents have seen an increase in the service charges for things like gardening, we have not seen much improvement since last year.

Unfortunately, I have had to give my resignation as chair, after many years, due to ill health, but I hope to continue on the housing scrutiny panel as a member.

Peter J Edwards

Chair, BCC Housing Scrutiny Panel.

Scope

This report summarises the main activities the Panel has undertaken from the Financial Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Meetings

The Panel meets regularly on the second Tuesday of every month and during the year we agreed to meet face-to-face at least three times. We have used community rooms in various locations as venues for face-to-face meetings and this gives us opportunities to see different Bristol City Council (BCC) housing schemes.

We have:

- Held 12 monthly Business meetings
- Held a Special Meeting on 7.1.25 on BCC Corporate Strategy
- Organised one networking event with Selwood Housing Association based in Wiltshire
- Held two recruitment interviews where the applicants were accepted, but where both candidates could not take up the role, due to changes in personal commitments
- Attended national TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scrutiny Club meetings and the TPAS Southwest Regional Meeting in Weston Super Mare in May 2024.
- Supported Housing Forums and Service User Groups
- Continued to consider how to improve the way we work in terms of Scrutiny.
- Met with the Chair of the new for Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee
- Continued the duty of scrutinising Tenant Satisfaction Measures performance data once a quarter, and now receive some updates on the Complaints Performance Data

Projects and activities

The Panel members have been developing their scrutiny skills and have engaged with BCC senior officers and other members of staff. They have

also met with tenants, leaseholders, and staff from across the country.

A major development for the Panel from September 2024 was taking on monthly scrutiny of the Housing Consumer Standards Programme which aims to improve services which were criticised in the Regulator for Social Housing judgement of the Council. They meet with the Lead Officer for the Programme and after each meeting the Panel's comments are sent to the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee. This is a significant step forward in the influence the Panel can have.

This is a summary of the issues covered by the activities of the Panel's main meetings:

April 2024

The main part of the meeting was given over to a useful meeting with representatives from Selwood Housing Association looking at the way they practice scrutiny and other aspects of engaging with their residents. The Panel also reviewed their draft Annual report and looked at the forward plan for the year including the idea of introducing "Bootcamp Scrutiny" sessions to look in more detail at certain topics.

May 2024

The Panel looked at the Tenant Satisfaction Data for Quarter 4 and then at the Transparency, Influence & Accountability Consumer Standard including Staff Training on four issues: 1) Tenant voice being heard 2) Service Standards 3) BCC Website 4) Performance reporting directly to tenants

June 2024

There was a detailed discussion on Estate Grading and Visibility of Housing Officers following questions from the last meeting with Mark Goodey, Housing Manager for North and Central. There was also a planning session for the July Meeting with Cllr Parsons.

July 2024

Face to Face Meeting with Cllr Barry Parsons, Chair of the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee. On the same day BCC announced its self-referral to the Regulator for Social Housing and so Cllr Parsons explained the implications to the Panel. The second focus for the meeting was an update on the performance data

from Acuity.

August 2024

Presentation on the Regulator for Social Housing Judgement on Bristol City Council focusing on repairs and maintenance issues. The panel discussed their future work programme and agreed to a three-month rolling plan rather than an annual programme to increase flexibility and responsiveness.

September 2024

A major change in the work of the Panel introduced with the start of monthly presentations by Richard James, Lead for the Housing Consumer Standards Improvement Programme (HCSP) to respond to the negative judgement from the regulator. The focus was on Repairs and Maintenance with the Head of Repairs and Maintenance and the Head of Business Development both involved in discussions with the Panel. The Panel also reviewed the draft BCC Annual Report to Tenants.

October 2024

Richard James reported on progress on the HCSP. The other main speaker was Mark Goodey, Housing Manager for Central and North with Progress Report on Tenancy Management since March HSP including Estate Inspections/ Grading – Reports and Tenant Involvement; Visibility and contact with Housing Officers. Mark also introduced a Report from the ASB Improvement Group and the new ASB Policy.

November 2024

In addition to the HCSP report from Richard James, there was consultation from the Policy and Practice team on the new Damp and Mould policy and a significant discussion on the performance of the Customer Service Centre with Darin Hedges and Rizwan Tariq.

December 2024

There was a key focus on ASB in this meeting with a presentation from the Deputy Manager of the Safer Communities Team and a review of the data connected with ASB and how residents feel about the service. There was also the HCSP report from Richard James which included the fact that the comments of the Panel are now being fed through to the Homes and Housing Delivery

Committee.

January 2025

The first main topic was on Complaints performance and update on Compensation Policy. The update on the HCSP included a summary of the findings of the group that had looked at the key reasons the Council had performed badly leading to the C3 grading (1=best 4=worst) from the Regulator. The Panel also planned for their meeting with the Director of Housing and Landlord Services.

January 2025 – In addition to the regular Panel meeting, a Special Extra HSP Meeting was held on 7/1 to look at the draft new BCC Corporate Strategy

February 2025

First part of the meeting was a wide-ranging conversation with Fiona Lester, Director of Housing and Landlord Services. The Panel then discussed progress on the HCSP and the Acuity Tenant Satisfaction Data for Oct-Dec 2024.

March 2025

As part of the HCSP review, Richard James introduced the main milestones being planned for the HCSP Strategy that is being developed. The Panel took part in a Consultation carried out by the Retrofit team on letter BCC are required to send from the Government to certain residents with cladding, together with an accompanying explanatory letter from BCC.

Training

- Panel members joined online training events by TPAS and Four Million Homes. Four Million Homes is a new government funded training programme for the equipping and empowerment of social housing tenants and landlords.
- The Panel also received briefings on various key housing topics, both local and national, from the TP team.

Recruitment

The Panel was supported by the Tenant Participation Team to promote membership of the Panel to tenants and leaseholders. Two people applied for membership, but after interviews did not take up their places due to personal reasons.

Plans for 2025/2026

- Continued exploration of “Scrutiny Bootcamps” as a way of sometimes looking in more depth at issues than is possible in the current format.
- Team building and training activities
- Support efforts to improve two-way communication
- Consider how the work of the Panel can be shown to other residents