

Leaseholder forum

Meeting summary / actions

Date: Tuesday, 14 July 2026

Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Location: Online (Microsoft Teams)

Chair: Julie McKay (BCC)

Transcribe: Henry Murray (BCC)

Attendees:

Residents: 55 signed up for the Forum

BCC: Julie McKay, James Bannerman, Ilona Marciniak, Henry Murray, Andrew Grogan, Barbara Reid, Francesca Carroll.

1. Welcome, Housekeeping and Introductions

- Julie McKay (Home Ownership Service Manager) welcomed attendees and noted that 55 leaseholders had requested to join the forum.
- Attendees were advised that a live transcription was being used to assist with minute-taking but the meeting was not being recorded.

Introductions were made by:

- Julie McKay – Home Ownership Service Manager
- James Bannerman – Home Ownership Team Manager
- Ilona Marciniak – Tenant Participation Project Officer
- Henry Murray – Engagement Support Officer
- Andrew Grogan – Asset Management Officer (Energy & Renewables Team)
- Francesca Carroll and Barbara Reid – Home Ownership Officers

- The forum's purpose was clarified:
 - It is intended for discussion of general leasehold matters.
- Individual casework should be raised directly with the Home Ownership Team – contacts were provided in the chat.
- The Code of Conduct was referenced and attendees were reminded to be respectful and avoid sharing personal information in the public chat.

2. Action Points and updates since the previous forum (April 2026)

Section 20 Process

- The Council acknowledged previous concerns regarding delays in Section 20 consultations.
- A review of internal processes has been undertaken.
- Changes are being introduced to ensure work continues when staff members are absent and to prevent cases from being overlooked.

Service Charge Cost Breakdowns

- Leaseholders can request detailed breakdowns of service charge items.
- Actual service charge statements for the previous financial year will be issued in September 2026.
- Supporting information will be provided on request, with personal information redacted where necessary.
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Lightning Protection Guidance

- FAQs accompanying service charge information are being reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy.

Property Damage Reports

- Leaseholders were encouraged to continue reporting issues through the Leasehold Team.
- The team will liaise with relevant departments to obtain information and resolve issues. Repairs can be reported either via an online form on the website or via the Customer Service Centre.

Leaseholder Portal

- No significant improvements/changes have been made since April.

- The portal currently provides limited functionality, mainly allowing leaseholders to:
 - View account balances.
 - Access links to report repairs.
- Further development is planned but timescales for these are unknown. Will update at future meetings.

Collective Enfranchisement and Handbook Review

- Both items raised at the previous forum were included in this meeting's agenda.

3. Buy Back Programme

(Presented by Julie McKay on behalf of Claudette McDonald)

Update

- The Council's Buy Back Programme remains effectively paused.
- No funding has been confirmed for 2026/27.
- Some purchases approved previously are still progressing to completion.

Questions and Answers

Q: Is there any new funding available?

A: No. The position remains unchanged since April 2026. If funding becomes available before the October forum, an update will be provided.

4. Energy Efficiency

(Andrew Grogan, Asset Management Officer – Energy Team)

Retrofit Programme

Andrew outlined the Council's energy efficiency programme funded through:

- Warmer Homes Social Housing Fund (formerly the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund).
- Current programme funding:
 - £10 million between 2025–2028.
 - Potential additional £10 million between 2028–2030.

Current Delivery Areas

- Henbury
- Brentry
- Lawrence Weston (next phase)

- Future work likely to move into South Bristol.
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District Heating Networks

- New regulations mean district heating schemes are now subject to greater regulation.
- The Council will effectively become an energy provider for these systems.

Bristol City Leap

- Partnership with Bristol City Leap continues.
- Energy efficiency projects are coordinated through the partnership to maximise grant funding and reduce costs.

Questions and Answers

Heat Pumps

Q: What is the Council's policy on installing heat pumps in leaseholder properties?

A:

- There is currently no specific policy.
- Grant funding only permits a limited number of heat pump installations.
- The Council is presently prioritising Council-owned homes.
- Future district heating and shared-energy solutions may provide options for leaseholders.

Electric Vehicle Charging

Q: Is there a strategy for EV charging?

A:

- EV charging is under consideration.
- Work is taking place with internal services and highways teams.
- No formal rollout plan is currently in place.

EPCs and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

Q: How will future EPC requirements affect leaseholders?

A:

- Government consultations are still ongoing.
- EPCs are expected to move to a new Home Energy Model.
- The Council recognises leaseholders may be affected where building fabric improvements remain the Council's responsibility.

Solar Panels

Q: Are there plans to install solar panels on blocks of flats?

A:

- Yes, there is strong interest.
- Solar is being explored alongside roof replacement programmes.
- Challenges include:
 - Grid capacity.
 - Funding arrangements.
 - Electrical infrastructure in blocks of flats.
- No adopted policy yet, but future implementation is likely.

Green Roofs

Q: Are green roofs being considered?

A:

- Not currently a priority.
- No active programme exists.

Individual Heat Pump Requests

Q: Can a leaseholder replace their own boiler with a heat pump?

A

- Potentially, but permission must first be requested from the Council. These can be submitted via the online permission form or by emailing the Home Ownership team.
- Applications would be assessed individually.

5. Collective Enfranchisement Presentation

(James Bannerman, Home Ownership Team Manager)

What is Collective Enfranchisement?

- A legal right allowing qualifying leaseholders to jointly buy the freehold of their building.
- After purchase, leaseholders become responsible for management of the building.

Eligibility Requirements

Generally:

- Minimum of two flats in the building.
- At least two-thirds must be qualifying leaseholders.
- At least 50% of qualifying leaseholders must participate.
- No more than 25% commercial use.

Benefits

- Greater control over management.
- Ability to grant longer leases.

- Potential protection of property value.

Considerations

- Significant financial commitment.
- Legal, surveyor and valuation costs.
- Ongoing responsibility for maintenance and management.

Leaseback Arrangements

- Where Council tenants remain in the building, the Council would receive a 999-year lease on those homes.

Questions and Answers

Cost

Q: How much does collective enfranchisement cost?

A:

- Costs vary depending on property value.
- Professional fees and the premium would apply.
- Individual advice should be sought.

990/999-Year Lease Extensions

Q: When will 990-year lease extensions become available?

A:

- No date has been provided by Government.
- Current expectations are that reforms may continue through to 2029

Commonhold

Q: What is the difference between commonhold and leasehold?

A:

- Commonhold involves shared ownership of the freehold.
- Government proposals remain unclear regarding how existing leasehold properties would transition.

Current Lease Extensions

Q: What extensions are available now?

A:

- Current leases can be extended from 125 years to 215 years.
- Indicative Council fee: approximately £1,500 plus legal costs.

Payment Options

Q: Can lease extension costs be paid monthly?

A:

- No.
- Payment is required at completion as an upfront cost.

6. The Leaseholder Handbook – Interactive Session

The Forum members were split into breakout rooms to discuss the following questions and provide feedback:

Question 1

Did your Solicitor fully explain the rights and responsibilities under the terms of your lease when you purchased your home?

Question 2

Have you used the Leaseholders handbook, if yes:

- I. What have you used it for?
- II. Was it helpful

Question 3

Do you find the section on Service Charges helpful?

Question 4

Is there anything from the handbook that you would like to see included, if yes please let us know

Question 5

What formats would you like to see the Handbook:

- I. Hard copies
- II. Online links
- III. Videos explaining rights & obligations
- IV. Other options ...

Key Themes Raised

Information at Purchase

Many leaseholders reported:

- Their solicitors did not adequately explain leasehold responsibilities.
- They were largely given large amounts of paperwork without explanation.
- They were unaware a Leaseholder Handbook even existed.
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One prospective Right to Buy purchaser stated that attending the forum was helping them understand leasehold obligations before purchasing.

Repairs Responsibilities

Residents requested clearer information regarding:

- Doors.
- Windows.

- Structural items.
- Who is responsible for repairs.

The Council explained that responsibility varies between leases and blocks.

Service Charges

Several leaseholders reported:

- Difficulty understanding service charge estimates versus actual costs.
- Confusion over categories such as caretaking and maintenance.
- Frustration where billed services did not appear to have been delivered.

The Council acknowledged that service charges remain one of the main areas where more explanation is required.

Preferred Formats

Residents suggested:

- Hard-copy handbook.
- Interactive online handbook.
- Videos.
- Short animations.
- Large-print versions.
- More accessible formats for people with disabilities or language barriers.

Additional Content Requested

Leaseholders suggested:

- Welcome packs for new leaseholders.
- Practical building-specific information.
- Maintenance responsibilities.
- Explanation of service charges
- Estate information.
- Maintenance schedules.
- Short videos explaining "who pays for what".

7. Leasehold Reform – Standing Update

(Julie McKay and James Bannerman)

Current Position

- No substantive government update since the previous forum.
- Further leasehold reform remains expected during this Parliament.
- Significant uncertainty remains around:
 - Commonhold.
 - 990-year lease extensions.
 - Service charges

Key Questions

Q: When will reforms be implemented?

A: No confirmed timetable. Current expectation is that implementation may extend up to 2029 following recent Government announcements.

Q: Will Bristol City Council sell freeholds to private companies?

A: The Council stated that there are no current plans to sell leasehold freeholds.

8. Future 'Hot Topic' Ideas for the Leaseholder Forum in October 2026

Suggested topics included:

- Service charges.
- Forward maintenance plans.
- Commonhold.
- Asset Management programmes
- Long-term replacement plans for:
 - Roofs.
 - Windows.
 - Lifts.
- Building maintenance schedules.

The Council confirmed that an Asset Management representative is expected to attend the October forum to discuss forward maintenance plans.

9. Any Other Business

Insurance

- Buildings insurance is provided by the Council through Protector Insurance.
- Costs are recovered through service charges.
- Liability claims can be submitted directly to the Council.

Individual Issues Raised

Residents raised concerns regarding:

- Tree roots affecting properties.
- Estate maintenance.
- Parking arrangements.
- Cleaning standards in blocks.
- Fly tipping and bin storage.

The Council asked residents to email details so these issues could be investigated individually.

Closing Remarks

- Attendees were thanked for their participation. The Council confirmed that feedback from the handbook exercise would be used to improve communications, welcome information and future handbook revisions.
- Residents were encouraged to continue providing suggestions and raising issues through the Home Ownership Team.

Next Forum

- **20 October 2026 Online via Microsoft Teams**