



MINUTES

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
Housing Forum	13 September 2024	1pm	Online (via Zoom)
<i>Attendees</i>			
<i>Residents</i>	<i>Councillors</i>	<i>Staff</i>	
Bob (BO) Clara (CL) JM Lorraine Francis Lou Micha Nigel Varley (NV) Tim De La Rew Yaakov (YV)	Cara Lavan Don Alexander Shona Jemphrey	Richard James (RJ) Miles Tilling (MT) Mark Kempt (MK) Ilona Marciniak David Maggs Henry Murray	
<i>Apologies</i>		<i>Minutes</i>	
		Henry Murray	

Agenda items

1. Welcome and housekeeping
2. Regulatory judgement and next steps
3. Future 'hot topic' ideas
4. AOB
5. Dates of next Housing Forum meetings: 18 November and 20 November 2024

<i>Agenda Item</i>	<i>Discussion Points/ Outcomes & Actions</i>	<i>Actions</i>
1	Welcome and housekeeping	
2	Regulatory judgement and next steps Presentation by Richard James on the recent findings of the Regulator of Social Housing, who set	

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	<p>the rules and standards Bristol City Council (BCC) must meet as a social housing landlord.</p> <p>BO: [via Chat] What is the cost of the change?</p> <p>RJ: Advised there isn't a direct cost. Explained the consumer standards are not new. Advised that if you are a landlord compliant with previous standards, then it would be more likely to be compliant with new standards. Advised that at this point BCC can't put an exact figure on the cost of changes required. Estimated that is likely in the millions. Advised BCC will have to spend more and figures will eventually become available.</p> <p>NV: [via Chat] How many high-rise flats?</p> <p>RJ: Advised that there are 62 high rise blocks.</p> <p>MT: Advised it is roughly 4,000 flats.</p> <p>RJ: Advised that more information can eventually be provided on the costs for cladding, sprinklers, alarm systems.</p> <p>NV: Explained that their question was on government funding.</p> <p>MT: Advised there are a couple of government streams available. Advised that BCC has applied for all funding streams for which they are eligible.</p> <p>NV: Asked how much funding BCC is eligible for in total.</p> <p>MT: Advised that they believe it to be £60 million (approx.).</p> <p>Richard James asked residents two questions:</p> <p>1. Are there any questions on the background and findings of the Regulator of Social Housing?</p> <p>2. Do the findings fit with your experience as residents?</p> <p>NV: Asked if Grenfell Tower fire could have occurred in Bristol. Cited email from BCC that said its cladding is</p>	

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	<p>different and safer than the cladding on Grenfell. Suggested there must be a cultural change within BCC whereby any problems found are immediately made clear. Expressed opinion that BCC isn't complying with fire risk assessments. Asked what measures are being put in place for residents waiting for cladding removal.</p> <p>RJ: Answered that yes there could have been a serious fire in any number of places including Bristol. Acknowledged that the whole sector needs to do more.</p> <p>NV: Expressed opinion that the problem has always been denial. Expressed reluctance to put blame onto local councils due to reduction in funding from central government. Expressed opinion that it took two fires for BCC to take notice.</p> <p>RJ: Advised that BCC's approach is to be more open and honest with residents, such as this meeting. Acknowledged that they won't be able say they are compliant with all regulations for some time, and that is because of the work ahead of them.</p> <p>MT: Explained some of the post-Grenfell processes taken on by Bristol City Council and advised that BCC was proactive with fire safety, despite the lack of guidance from central government at the time.</p> <p>NV: Suggested the important thing is where the council goes from here.</p> <p>YV: Advised that they see safety issues in low rise, semi-detached houses due to cost of living. Explained they see a lot of modifications being made by residents that are not safe. Asked if any part of the programme that includes houses and not just high-rise blocks.</p> <p>RJ: Acknowledged they speak a lot about high rise flats. Advised the consumer standards are not just for high rise flats but for all types of homes, not just a specific type.</p> <p>RJ asked for a raise of hands in the response to the question:</p> <p>Do you as residents feel that the findings fit with your experience as a resident?</p>	

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	<p>4 residents raised their hands.</p> <p>NV: Suggested that residents with dementia and older people are at risk of starting fires themselves. Cited incidents at their building. Advised that residents with limited mobility who don't have adequate facilities to charge their devices are also at higher risk.</p> <p>RJ: Advised they only touched on a few examples but acknowledged that NV's points are correct. Advised that vulnerable residents in these categories will be a priority for fire evacuations.</p> <p>NV: Advised that they have been waiting on evacuation plans for some time and that they aren't clear about what evacuation plans would be if there were a fire.</p> <p>TDLR: Asked if fireproofing lifts is an option being considered.</p> <p>RJ: Advised that work being done on blocks will come through fire risk assessments which advises to not use lifts to evacuate a building. Advised that lift shaft shouldn't be a vulnerability during a fire and that a risk assessment should pick up on that.</p> <p>TDLR: Advised that they recently heard a fire officer mention it is possible to fireproof a lift shaft.</p> <p>RJ: Advised that a change in position on lift use is unlikely. However, they will take this away and share with a fire officer.</p> <p>TDLR: Advised that it wasn't from an Avon Fire and Rescue official. Suggested there is a question of why more isn't done to look at possibility of fireproofing lift shafts.</p> <p>RJ asked residents the following questions:</p> <p>How would you like to be kept informed of what BCC's Housing & Consumer Standards Programme is focusing on and what progress is being made?</p>	<p>RJ</p>

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	<p>What role would you like residents to have in the Housing & Consumer Standards Programme?</p> <p>What do you feel should be the priorities of the Housing & Consumer Standards Programme?</p> <p>NV: Suggested that in relation to question about being informed, communication should be done on a more local level. Suggested communication should be directly made with people affected. Acknowledged they aren't a good representation for residents.</p> <p>RJ: Asked if people agree that communication should be localised to speak to a broad a range of residents as they can?</p> <p>MK: Agreed with NV that with certain blocks they'll need to take a very specific approach but also acknowledged they need to take a blended approach with the resources they already have in place.</p> <p>NV: Suggested it would help to recognise tenant's associations.</p> <p>DM: Advised that feedback often states that yes, residents do want meetings in their blocks. Explained that there is a large amount of interest for city-wide fire safety meetings. Given the numbers of people interested, it would be around 500 people attending meetings if it translated one to one. Advised there will be a safety engagement plan to each block.</p> <p>RJ: Advised they are looking to ensure there is an update to each specific plan in Housing News, for those that don't attend meetings. Asked attendees if there any other ways that residents would like to be informed.</p> <p>NV: Expressed belief that main issue is not about communication but about getting things done which they feel is an enormous frustration.</p> <p>RJ: Advised on the role of Housing Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>NV: Suggested engagement with residents should be more specific. Gave example "we are doing X to your home, what do you think?". Expressed opinion that if you</p>	

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	<p>just call general meetings about a topic it is not enough and instead making it about a direct response to an action. Suggested reestablishing a more local organisation of blocks.</p> <p>RJ: Acknowledged the changes over time across the country. Acknowledged that organising used to be localised but it was shut down.</p> <p>NV: Suggested this was due to cost-cutting.</p> <p>CL: Suggested letters through letterboxes should be the default as most residents don't engage with emails. Advised they would tell neighbours about local meetings if they were taking place. Advised that residents want to know how things affect them, and that means communicating with them locally. Advised they have made complaints and put through feedback for things like repairs. Advised that when making complaints they have cited standards and not heard back from BCC. Asked if BCC can ignore a complaint, then what else are they ignoring. Advised they were told they were over-mopping their floors because the flooring was of a low quality.</p> <p>RJ: Advised they will take that complaint point away and acknowledged BCC's complaint's process is a long way off where it needs to be.</p> <p>CL: Asked what training takes place on a Wednesday morning when telephone service shuts down.</p> <p>MK: Advised BCC doesn't have a voice on the Wednesday morning shutdown as it is a separate entity. Advised the shutdown is for cross-training of all the different subjects and departments. Acknowledged that is isn't a great system.</p> <p>CL: Suggested BCC has got away with a bad telephone system for too long. Expressed opinion they don't know of any other service that shuts down on a Wednesday morning.</p> <p>MK: Agreed with point. Asked for issue to be taken away.</p> <p>YV: Asked if the Renters' Rights Bill has been considered alongside new changes being made. Asked if BCC</p>	<p>IL</p>

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	<p>representatives have ever thought about going to parent evenings at local schools where there is many BCC residents. Suggested BCC go to youth clubs.</p> <p>MK: Advised Renters' Rights Bill hasn't gone through just yet and that it is unlikely to affect the current programme. Advised that many things covered by the Bill are already being implemented by BCC. Advised they are aware of it and will be working within any new framework that gets passed as new legislation.</p> <p>TDLR: Thanked CL for bringing the topic of sending letters as main communications method. Advised that envelopes shouldn't have BCC logo and they should be addressed to the tenants and not to 'legal occupier' as residents will ignore letters. Advised they have volunteered several times to speak to neighbours about events. Expressed opinion that having meetings in difficult to get places is to deliberately keep residents away.</p> <p>MK: Acknowledged points on letters being good for communicating updates. Asked about letter received to TDLR.</p> <p>RJ: Agreed that 'to the legal occupier' should absolutely be avoided and it is something they will look at. Asked residents if there's anything that hasn't been discussed that we should be covering.</p> <p>NV: Answered yes but suggested it would take all day to answer.</p> <p>YV: Asked if any meeting is planned to discuss energy. Advised an organisation came to them asking if they wanted solar panels installed for free. Asked if BCC residents can improve their properties with things like this.</p> <p>TDLR: Suggested anti-social behaviour (ASB) needs to be brought to BCC's attention.</p> <p>RJ: Advised this will be looked at by MK's team. Asked what approach they would prefer.</p> <p>TDLR: Advised there used to be fortnightly meetings with</p>	<p>RJ</p>

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	<p>police and asked if it is all due to funding that those things don't happen anymore. Suggested nothing really gets done.</p> <p>MK: Asked that in general if TDLR would like to see more action with ASB. Suggested raising it in the next Service User Group (SUG) meeting.</p> <p>TDLR: Advised that other councils have forums that just focus on ASB.</p> <p>NV: Citing large cost with complying to standards. Suggested those costs should not fall onto tenants, citing extra expense for heating to residents that have had cladding removed during winter.</p> <p>MK: Advised that this is coming up in committee and is the most appropriate platform.</p>	MK
3	<p>Future 'hot topic' ideas.</p> <p>MK: Suggested that ASB is part of winter forum and an update to the consumer standards.</p> <p>NV: Asked for more detail with environmental improvement programme and how residents can get involved.</p>	
6	<p>MK: Thanked RJ for presentation of complex subject. Thanked everyone for attending.</p> <p>Next winter Housing Forums to take place on 18/11/2024 and 20/11/2024</p>	