



HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

FOR BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL (BCC)

Annual Report April 2023- March 2024

Foreword by the chair of the Panel, Peter Edwards

There have been a few changes in the Housing Scrutiny Panel (HSP), and we have gained a new member, but it is still very difficult to find new members.

We are a tenant-led HSP, and we are moving, I hope, towards more face-to-face meetings.

We have had some very good presentations given to the Panel and we have been able to help in that way by putting recommendations forward.

We are now getting some results back from contributors – long may it continue.

Peter Edwards, Chair HSP.

Scope

This report summaries the main activities the Panel has undertaken from the Financial Year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Meetings

The Panel meets regularly on the second Tuesday of every month and during the year we agreed to meet at least three times face-to-face. 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 one training event
- Held an open meeting of the Panel for all tenants and leaseholders on the Regulator for Social Housing's proposed new Consumer Standards
- Organised one networking event with Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel.
- Held a successful recruitment interview
- Attended national TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scrutiny Club meetings
- Supported Housing Forums and Service User Groups
- Attended Housing Management Board
- Considered how to improve the way we work in terms of scrutiny.
- Met with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Landlord Services
- Taken on a new duty of scrutinising performance data once a quarter

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. These activities have included:

- **Taking on a new role of scrutinising quarterly Resident Satisfaction data.** The Panel agreed what information they would like to receive from BCC and in what format. They have used the quarterly reports to raise issues with senior managers and to decide future agenda topics that they

want to look at in more detail.

- **Responded to the consultation by Regulator for Social Housing on the draft new Consumer Standards for Social Housing.** A detailed response was sent to the Regulator making several recommendations and raising several concerns, including whether money would be made available to fund the implementation of the standards.
- **Focusing on key national topics** - We have had sessions looking at BCC's response on issues of building and fire Safety and damp and mould.
- **Focusing on local performance issues** – (a) The issue of the visibility of Housing Officers and communication with them and of the system for the condition grading of the estates has been a significant issue this year and in March 2024 the Panel were given details of plans to improve the service now renamed Tenancy Management. (b) Rapid Repairs Service – the Panel welcomed the outcome of this new service which deals quickly with certain repairs and issues in communal areas and blocks, and hoped that the service would continue (c) Complaints – In the light of the poor figures in the Resident Satisfaction reports, the Panel received a briefing on the new processes and the expectation that learning from complaints help the service to improve.
- **Taking part in a training day for the Panel.** This looked at the best and most unsatisfactory things the Panel does. Another session developed a new set of model questions for the Panel to use when questioning people invited to appear before the Panel.
- **Monitoring the implementation of the new bathroom programme** – following our work to advise on engaging with residents we received an update on the programme.
- **Worked with Housing and Landlord Services Policy and Practice Team** on revising the Environment Improvement Budget process and looking at new policies on safe escapes and supporting vulnerable tenants.
- **An update from the Support to Older People Team (STOP) -**

We received a detailed performance update from the STOP Team and have been in dialogue with them about several ongoing issues.

- **Other short presentations and discussions on:** allocations; the expanded service for leaseholders and shared ownership residents, and voids.
- **Revising the Panel's Terms of Reference** – these now better reflect what the Panel currently does. Not all elements could be completed due to continuing delays regarding the future of the Housing Management Board.
- **Annual Report to Tenants:** We were unable to review the report this year prior to publication due to production delays.

Training

- In addition to the session looking at how the Panel functions, its 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.
- As part of beginning work on performance monitoring, the Panel received a briefing on understanding Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Recruitment

The Panel was supported by the Tenant Participation Team to promote membership of the Panel to tenants and leaseholders. However there have been fewer opportunities to do this due to the absence of BCC Housing News and the dedicated BCC Housing Facebook page. Interested residents were invited to meet the Panel and observe meetings before applying. As a result, one new member has been formally welcomed onto the Panel during the year.

Plans for 2024/2025

Creating a rolling work plan to include:

- As we will be in the first year of the new regulatory framework to align part of our work programme to cover six key themes.
- Expecting that we will look in more detail at issues raised by the performance data.
- Exploration of 'scrutiny bootcamps' as a way of 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
- Improve engagement with other formal Involvement bodies especially the Housing Management Board and Housing Forums.