

Bristol City Council meeting with Barton House residents, Tuesday 20 May 2025

Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services attendees:

- Councillor Barry Parsons, Chair of the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee
- Sonia Furzland, Interim Executive Director: Housing
- Fiona Lester, Director Homes and Landlord Services
- Craig Cook, Head of Capital Works and Special Projects
- Paul Sylvester, Head of Housing Options
- Mark Kempt, Interim Head of Housing and Estates Services

Agenda item 1: Re-housing Barton House residents & HomeChoice applications

Summary of discussion:

- The council is looking at prioritising households with unforeseen circumstances
- Any significant changes to HomeChoice policy must be formally consulted on
- A consultation which includes draft proposals is live
- Consultation for will last for six weeks (until midnight, Friday 11th July 2025)
- Residents can request the consultation in an alternative format
- A meeting for officers to present the consultation to Barton House residents will take place near Barton House
- Council acknowledged that the way we prioritise health through HomeChoice isn't as good as it could be and is looking at additional priority for mass evacuation
 - Such as trauma from the Barton House evacuation
- Proposals include adjusting policy to create a band 2 health award (instead of the current band 1 and band 3)
- Any changes to the HomeChoice process must be approved by the Homes & Housing Delivery Committee
- If there are any changes to the policy that affect Barton House residents' applications, the applications will be backdated
 - Only applies to people's applications who were asked to evacuate Barton House in November 2023
- A date has been agreed for housing service to meet with Medact and ACORN Bristol to assess how the council and HomeChoice band people based on health reasons
- Residents who attended the session had the opportunity to speak about their own individual applications to a member of Housing and Landlord Services at the end of the meeting
- [More information about HomeChoice applications](#)

Agenda item 2: Public apology from the council

Summary of discussion:

- Councillor Barry Parsons, Chair of the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee apologies again to residents for the impact of evacuation, what led to the evacuation

needing to happen, the condition of building in the lead-up to evacuation, the judgement from the Regulator of Social Housing

- The council is looking at all its buildings and has brought in a whole programme to improve the standards of our homes across Bristol
- The council have commissioned a project to work with residents who have spare rooms or larger properties than they need to support them to move into homes with fewer bedrooms to enable more larger properties to be available on HomeChoice to reduce issues of overcrowding

Agenda item 3: Compensation for residents who had to evacuate Barton House in November 2023

Summary of discussion:

- The council covered all associated costs including:
 - Food (either at the hotel or for those living with family/friends)
 - Accommodation
 - Transport
 - Activities for children
 - Laundry service for those staying in a hotel
- If any residents have unexpected costs that haven't been considered please contact the council by emailing estates@bristol.gov.uk and claims will be reviewed on an individual case by case basis by our Housing and Estates Service.
- At the time of the evacuation the policy team thoroughly reviewed the implication of the council subsidising or waiving residents' rent charges and there would have been a negative impact on residents' benefits if the council had done this.

Agenda item 4: Maintenance and fire safety

Summary of discussion:

- Significant assessments have been carried out at Barton House and the building is safe to live in.
- There are some areas that have been identified as needing repair.
- There have been reports of individual cases that need attention such as repairs to windows, doors, and ventilation. Surveys of these issues have happened and works are either in progress or completed.
- Residents have highlighted three main areas that need attention:
 1. Damp and mould
 2. Lifts
 3. Fire alarm
- Council empathises with the disruption that the introduction of the fire alarms has had on residents. Weekly testing of the fire alarm system is underway.
- An additional monitoring system has been installed to minimise the potential disruption of a false activation.
- In an emergency of a trapped passenger the lift provider will arrive in one hour to fix the lift should any issues occur.

- There have been 20 cases of damp and mould reported. Some of these are now closed and some are still being monitored
- There is a need for improved ventilation being implemented into the building. This work is being scheduled within the housing investment plan
- Taking all feedback from stock condition surveys and residents, the council understands that investment is required – fire safety measures around cladding to further improve the building, wiring, the lift planned upgrade and windows and that appraisal of the building will influence decisions taken
- The council has worked with Homes England and has secured funds to remove cladding from some of its buildings and Barton House is the priority. Residents will be kept informed of progress with this.

Agenda item 5: Fire safety and engaging with residents

Summary of discussion:

- Prior to the Medact report being published, all residents at Barton House were offered a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment.
- A Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment:
 - We will adopt a person-centred approach to fire safety, taking prompt, appropriate and tailored action to safeguard residents.
 - Depending on the type of accommodation this may be carried out for groups or, in some cases, for individual residents. The risk assessment will consider any particular factors that might lead to an increased risk of fire, any vulnerabilities known to BCC which may prevent a resident responding to fire alarm signals or signs of fire, or to escape in the event of fire. Depending on the outcome of the assessment the residents will be offered advice, mitigations, or potentially a Landlord Agreed Transfer in some cases.
 - In case of an evacuation needing to take place, the fire service has access to details of which flats have been graded as “high” and prioritise.
- Following the meeting Medact and ACORN Bristol organised in April, the council wrote to all residents again offering a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments
- So far, no residents have requested one. If you would like a person-centred fire risk assessment, please email estates@bristol.gov.uk

Agenda item 6: Independent investigation into the Barton House evacuation in November 2023

Summary of discussion:

- Councillor Barry Parsons has committed to an independent review
- The council is currently discussing the independent investigation with two organisations who have a deadline Friday 30th May to come forward with their proposals.
- **There are three phases to the process of the independent investigation:**
 1. Scoping phase – working with Barton House residents and discussing what elements the organisation doing the investigation will review

2. Review any evidence from residents, stakeholders, the council that relates to why the evacuation happened, how the evacuation happened and any relevant documents
 3. Produce a report that the council will share with residents and will include any learning for us as an organisation and a plan in place to demonstrate how we will bring that learning into the way that we work
- We will be in touch with residents after 30th May to advise which organisation will be doing the work and how residents can get in touch to take part in the work
 - Under the Building Safety Act – we need to produce a building safety case for all high-rise buildings and it will look at all the Barton House safety measures. We will review the fire safety measures and will consult with residents and are working with Arup. Residents can discuss concerns with Arup
 - All building safety reports in relation to Barton House have been published on the [council's website](#)
 - Residents received hand delivered letters when the reports were published, emails and text messages were also sent.
 - Another meeting for Barton House residents to discuss the Medact report with the council will be arranged at a location nearer to Barton House.