



Blackpool Coastal
Housing



**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARDS OF
BLACKPOOL HOUSING COMPANY LIMITED AND BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING LIMITED
HELD AT COASTAL HOUSE, ABINGDON STREET, BLACKPOOL
ON TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 4PM**

Present: Councillor N Brookes, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
Mr N Herring, Non-Executive Director
Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director
Councillor D Mitchell, Non-Executive Director
Ms C Stone, Non-Executive Director
Mr A Szatkowski, Non-Executive Director
Mrs M Thompson, Non-Executive Director
Mr K Tupling, Non-Executive Director

In attendance: Mr L Burrell, Chief Operating Officer (Regeneration and Development)
Ms V Piper, Chief Operating Officer (Housing Management)
Mr S Dunstan, BCH Director of Resources
Mr J Weston, BCH Head of Asset Management and Operations
Ms D Williams, BCH Head of Support Services
Mr A Cavill, Blackpool Council Director of Communications and
Regeneration (Shareholder representative)
Mrs S Chadwick, Assistant Company Secretary
Mr M Towers, Governance Advisor

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8.	BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING	
8a.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting held 11 December 2024 and Written Resolution approved 5 December 2024</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 11 December 2024 as a true and correct record. To note the Written Resolution approved on 5 December 2024. 	
8b.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p><u>Minute 7 – Performance Report</u></p> <p>The Chair asked for a timescale for when the report into the investigation as to why an increasing number of properties were being handed back in poor condition at the end of tenancies would be presented to the Board. In response, Ms V Piper, Chief Operating Officer (Housing Management), explained that currently much of the evidence was anecdotal and she had therefore asked the</p>	

<p>8c.</p>	<p>Performance Team to undertake an in-depth investigation to examine any trends that may be emerging. It was proposed that would be picked up as part of the Voids “deep dive” review which would start after the current repairs “deep dive” was complete.</p> <p>Ms Piper advised that consideration would be given to the establishment of a direct labour team once the current, substantial piece of work into repairs and voids had been completed and it was therefore agreed that a report would be brought to the October meeting.</p> <p><u>Minute 9 – Compliance and Consumer Standards</u></p> <p>In response to a question from Ms C Stone, Non-Executive Director, as to whether a date had been set for a mock inspection, Ms Piper suggested bringing the Council’s audit report back to the Board initially, following which the next steps could be discussed and options explored.</p> <p>All other matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting had either been completed or would be covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 January 2025</p> <p>[Mrs M Thompson, Non-Executive Director, joined the meeting part way through consideration of this item.]</p> <p>The Board considered the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 January 2025. The Chair expressed concern that the new contract for inspection of the passenger lifts within the Care and Repair Mechanical Portfolio, that had recently been procured, had included a clause enabling the contractor to recharge BCH for a failed visit. In response it was explained that it was a Council contract and the Board was assured that such circumstances were rare, however Mr J Weston, BCH Head of Asset Management and Operations agreed to follow the matter up with Mr M Midgley, Compliance Manager, and report back to the Audit Committee.</p> <p>In response to a request for an update from Mr A Szatkowski, Non-Executive Director and Audit Committee Chair, as to progress with the outstanding fire risk assessment actions Mr Weston advised that staff were emailed on a weekly basis in regards to any outstanding Priority 1 issues and Ms Piper added that if the actions were not completed a further update report would be presented to the Audit Committee for information.</p> <p>Mr Szatkowski asked for some clarity as to the governance responsibility for health and safety at BCH and the Council. It was confirmed that Paul Jones, Blackpool Council’s Head of Property and Asset Management was the named person accountable to the Regulator for health and safety for the Council / BCH, as that person needed to be separate from the company. A named individual</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>VP</p> <p>VP</p> <p>JW</p>
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<p>8d.</p>	<p>was also required for consumer standards purposes. Ms Piper advised that Mr Jones could be invited to future Audit Committee meetings if that would be considered beneficial for assurance purposes and Mr Szatkowski suggested that it would be useful in future for the Council’s health and safety report to also be presented to the Committee.</p> <p>The Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 was highlighted, with Mr Szatkowski explaining that an additional audit of compliance around consumer standards had been suggested, however as the Council was already in the process of undertaking a similar exercise it wanted to avoid a duplication of work. Ms Piper advised that she had conversed with Mrs T Greenhalgh, Audit Advisor to the Board, and it was agreed that once the Council’s audit had been signed off it would be presented to the Committee for information.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 January 2025.</p> <p>Director of Resources’ update</p> <p>Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, presented his report and invited questions from the Board.</p> <p>The Chair advised that a proposed rent increase of 2.7% for 2025/26 had been recommended by Blackpool Council’s Executive for approval by full Council at its budget setting meeting on 24 February 2025.</p> <p>It was reported that the current external rents accreditation arrangement with HQN was coming to a natural end, however Mr Dunstan advised that accreditation would continue to be undertaken as part of the inspection regime. In order to provide additional reassurance to the Board, the Chair suggested benchmarking could take place against other organisations. Ms Piper added that there were various ways in which to achieve similar to what the HQN accreditation scheme offered.</p> <p>In response to a query as to when the Repairs Review would be ready to be presented to the Board, Ms Piper advised that a draft version would be prepared in time for the next Board meeting in April.</p> <p>Board members considered the 2025/26 budget, with Mrs M Thompson, Non-Executive Director, suggesting that it would be useful to receive a clear summary or slides making it simpler for the Board to understand the proposed budget. Mr Dunstan gave a brief overview of the financial pressures and savings that were reflected in the budget and agreed to include a summary slide into his report next time, adding that a briefing could also be provided if required for Directors on a one-to-one basis if there were any area of the budget that</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>VP</p> <p>VP</p> <p>VP</p> <p>SD</p>
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8e.	<p>required particular explanation. He also agreed to provide a furnished property update to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the report. 2. To approve the BCH budget for 2025/26. 3. To approve the revised Rent Arrears Recovery Policy. <p>Director of Operations' update</p> <p>The Board considered the report from Ms M Cornall, Director of Operations.</p> <p>Councillor J Hobson, Non-Executive Director, drew members' attention to the section of the report that highlighted that the ICT interfaces were not working correctly and queried why there was an additional cost implication for a fix to be designed to address the issue. In response Mr J Weston, Head of Asset Management and Operations, advised that was no longer the case as the provider had accepted the glitch and agreed to fix the issue at no cost.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the Void Management update which outlined the work of the Task and Finish Group which had concluded some time ago and asked where BCH saw the next steps as being. Ms Piper advised that an examination into void management was proposed as the next "deep dive" piece of work, acknowledging that it was a corporate responsibility that needed addressing. The Board noted the aging housing stock and it was suggested that BCH's programme of planned work needing looking at, alongside why properties were being returned in poor condition, which impacted upon the void length. Mr L Burrell, Chief Operating Officer (Regeneration and Development), added that property condition issues were not unique to social housing, with issues also persisting in the private rented sector as BHC also saw homes with significant damage and investment required when tenants left. A challenge therefore existed across the rental sector as a whole in respect of tenant behavioural issues.</p> <p>Board members noted BCH's corporate Safeguarding Policy and Resettlement Safeguarding Policy which had been appended to the report for approval and reminded the management team of the responsibility of external suppliers, such as gas and electrical engineers, to also be aware of safeguarding issues and flag any concerns. Ms D Williams, Head of Support Services reassured the Board that an early warning system was already in place for contractors to raise any concerns into the Housing Services team who would determine any appropriate cause of action or follow up, including any referrals as required.</p> <p>The Board agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the report. 	

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8f.	<p>2. To approve BCH’s corporate Safeguarding Policy and Resettlement Safeguarding Policy.</p> <p>Complaints update</p> <p>The Board noted the progress that had been made in respect of complaints figures and praised the team and Mr Szatkowski, the Member Responsible for Complaints, for the improvement.</p> <p>In response to a query in regards to call recording, Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources advised that there was a considerable cost implication for such a facility. Some funding was available for investment in IT and telephony improvements and Mr Dunstan agreed to explore the best use for that funding with any considerations to be included in his next report to the Board. Mr N Herring, Non-Executive Director suggested Microsoft Teams could be used for external calls and recording, with Mr A Cavill, Shareholder Representative, adding that the Council already used that system. Mr Dunstan therefore agreed to liaise with Andy Bond, Blackpool Council’s Telephony Lead, as to the best way forward.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the report.</p>	SD
8g.	<p>Performance Scorecard</p> <p>Consideration was given to BCH’s Performance Scorecard with concerns expressed by Board members at the number of benchmark targets not being achieved. Mr K Tupling, Non-Executive Director, suggested that it would be useful to have a session with officers outside of the Board meeting to specifically look at performance and increase understanding of any issues so that Directors were more informed for future meetings.</p> <p>The Board considered the individual benchmark figures, which Ms Piper advised had been set against target figures for similar organisations. It was noted that the void benchmark was a 90 day turnover which, although the target was being met, was deemed to be too long and it was suggested that the void benchmarking figure should be looked at as part of the wider void review.</p> <p>Ms Piper acknowledged that a general review of the Performance Scorecard benchmarking figures would be useful but suggested that work was completed first on repairs, noting that the complaints review had resulted in positive improvement, before starting a new review.</p> <p>Board members requested that further narrative was provided in future reports as to why there had been a deterioration in some trends and what actions were being taken to drive improvement. Mr L Burrell, Chief Operating Officer</p>	

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8h.	<p>(Regeneration and Development) advised that BHC already provided such a narrative and it was therefore suggested that BCH followed a similar format.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To note the Performance Scorecard.</p> <p>BCH Risk Appetite</p> <p>The Board considered the company’s risk appetite which had been developed following a workshop held on 17 December 2024.</p> <p>The Board agreed: To approve the company’s risk appetite.</p> <p>[Mr S Dunstan, Director of Resources, Mr J Weston, Head of Asset Management and Operations and Ms D Williams, Head of Support Services, left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.]</p>	

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Councillor N Brookes
Chair