



Minutes of Berneslai Homes Board held 19th February 2026

4.00 p.m.
Gateway Plaza

Present:

Ken Taylor (KT)	-	Chair
Richard Fryer (RF)	-	Board Member
Adam Hutchinson (AH)	-	Board Member (Remote)
David Leech	-	Board Member
Gez Morrall (GM)	-	Board Member
Kevin Osborne (KO)	-	Board Member
Rebecca Mather (RM)	-	Board Member
Jo Sugden (JS)	-	Board Member

In attendance

Amanda Garrard (AGa)	-	CEO
Dave Fullen (DF)	-	Executive Director, Customer & Estate Services
Rachel Taylor (RT)	-	Executive Director, Resources and Company Secretary
Russell Thompson (RTh)	-	Interim Executive Director, Property Services
Paul Clifford (PC)	-	Service Director BMBC

Observing

Steve Feast (SF)	-	BH CEO (from 1/4/2026)
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Ken welcomed SF to the meeting.

	ACTION
<p><u>Item 1 – Apologies</u></p> <p>George Paterson – Board Member Alison Dalton - BMBC</p>	
<p><u>Item 2 – Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>All Board members declared an interest in Item 2 on the confidential agenda with regard to the Remuneration element of the Governance Update report.</p>	

<p><u>Item 3 – VFM Strategy</u></p> <p>RT advised Audit and Risk Committee had considered and discussed the report at its meeting in January. The report highlights the achievements delivered on the year 1 action plan, noting the year 2 action plan will be developed as part of the budget setting process and presented to the Board in March.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>Board noted the progress reported and the current risk position.</p>	
<p><u>Item 4 – Quarterly Risk Update</u></p> <p>RT advised this report had been reviewed and approved by Audit and Risk Committee on the 29/1/2026. Board’s attention was drawn to the key points – the 17 active strategic issues/concerns, the contingent liabilities register, the emergency resilience and business continuity update including approval of the Corporate Emergency Response Plan. An update has also been provided on failure to prevent fraud new legislation. A review of the strategic risks has been undertaken in line with the implementation of the new system. These will be reported to Board in May, following Audit and Risk Committee in April.</p> <p>AH referred to Failure to Prevent Fraud (new Act). He noted that Audit and Risk had reviewed and feels the primary mitigation is effective staff training and clear communication on the relevant policies. He requested that Board receive assurance that this activity has been completed.</p> <p>KO queried the key risks currently facing other ALMOs and housing providers, how sector knowledge is shared, and whether there are lessons to be learned from national challenges. RT referred to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Sector Risk Profile, which outlines the principal risks facing the sector and has previously been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee to assess organisational alignment. AGa emphasised that the organisation operates as a learning organisation and actively promotes networking through established sector groups, including the NFA, NHF, DIN, NHC, and South Yorkshire Housing Partnership, where senior officers regularly engage to share best practice, discuss key issues, and identify opportunities for improvement. We also receive independent assurance through third party accreditations from recognised sector experts, such as DTP and TPAS, who provide specialist expertise within the housing sector.</p> <p>Board welcomed the new strategic risk register which looks better and clearer.</p> <p>RF referred to the sector risk profile summary of key themes set out in Section 4.9 and asked whether there is sufficient confidence between the sector risk profile and the risk register, ensuring the organisation is sighted on the correct risks. RT advised that the new risk register demonstrates an appropriate read across. However, EMT would welcome feedback from the</p>	<p>RT</p>

<p>Board, particularly if members feel any risks have been omitted, confirming that ongoing engagement is encouraged.</p> <p>PC welcomed the sector risk profile assessment, noting that it provides good comparison. He also welcomes the introduction of the new system.</p> <p>KT asked whether the Corporate Emergency Response Plan covers cyber security, particularly in the event of a complete systems failure. RT confirmed that an additional cyber security plan has been developed within the Resources Directorate and is being tested there before rolling out to other directorates. Work has been carried out in close partnership with the Council, and although not referenced in this report, the Audit and Risk Committee is aware. AGa added that cyber security risks are prioritised.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Reviewed and comment on the Risk Management Quarterly Update. II. Reviewed and comment on the Strategic Risks. III. Approved the review of the Corporate Emergency Response Plan 	
<p><u>Item 5 – Update on BH Annual Business Action Plan</u></p> <p>RT introduced the report to the meeting, highlighting the two key elements; one element that is reportable and monitored by BMBC in line with the Services Agreement, and the associated actions for BH’s internal monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>The report provides an update on progress to the end of Quarter 3, noting that good progress has been made. There were no queries/questions or comments raised by the Board.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>Board noted progress against the Annual Business Action Plan 25/26 as at the end of quarter three.</p>	
<p><u>Item 6 – Performance</u></p>	
<p><u>Item 6.1 Q3 Performance Summary 2025/26</u></p> <p>DF presented the report which has already been reviewed by Customer Services Committee. He highlighted the key points.</p> <p>We have maintained strong areas of performance around building safety compliance, rent collection levels, noting 10,000 tenants are now on Universal Credit (UC), complaints responded within target and repairs completed in target. It is also pleasing to report that the Contact Centre has maintained performance.</p>	

Awaab's Law action plan is holding, particularly taking into consideration the time of the year.

Voided remain a significant key challenge and a separate report is being considered later.

He highlighted TSM Measure RPO2 (repairs completed within target). This measure has historically been challenging to produce for the regulator and was previously referenced in internal audit management actions. Significant work has now been completed, enabling reliable reporting. The measure has been externally validated by 3C, providing full assurance and demonstrating substantial improvement.

Following EMT's focus on staff sickness the Board noted a reduction in overall absence levels, although there has been an increase in acute medical absences. This is being monitored and the People & Culture Team are working with managers and developing options for consideration by EMT. RF noted that the reduction in sickness absence was encouraging, particularly given that this had been a persistent challenge and it is pleasing that a positive improvement has been achieved.

KO referred to rent collection at 99% and queried how much the outstanding 1% equated to. DF advised that this is around £800K. Board noted however that January's collection was reported at 100%. DF explained that collection challenges typically arise at the point of rent increases, particularly where tenants in receipt of UC must update their own details, which then require verification by BH. It was noted that an AI bot is expected to be introduced this year to support this process, improving efficiency and freeing up staff capacity which will enable faster verification. The write off process was also clarified, confirming that it is subject to a quality assurance programme and requires senior level sign off by BH and the Council. The Board further acknowledged the positive and effective working relationship with DWP.

KT noted that, compared with 2024/25, the 2025/26 summary shows a marked improvement, with fewer red indicators on the dashboard. Progress has been made through a clearer understanding of the issues, and action plans are now in place to address them.

KT asked thanks be extended to the team.

Resolved:

- I. Board considered Quarter 3 performance.**
- II. Where performance targets have not been achieved, Board were satisfied with the explanations provided and that there are adequate controls and actions in place.**

Item 6.2 – Building Safety Compliance Scorecard Q3

RTh presented the report and asked the Board to note that the current format is not optimal. Further work is underway, and an improved format will be presented to the next Board.

The Board noted the increase in asbestos figures, which was attributed to a number of properties having been incorrectly categorised.

An issue relating to stock condition surveys was highlighted; however, positive action has been taken. One of the options currently being considered is to bring this service in-house.

JS commented that she was pleased to see improvement. She referred to the Decent Homes information, which has been rated red for a considerable period, and asked when improvements would be seen and what the percentages represented.

AGa advised that the numbers involved were minimal and confirmed that the target remains 100% and must remain at this from a Regulatory perspective, although the inclusion of certain tolerances could be considered. The year-end figures would provide the true position. In the previous year, 180 properties out of approximately 18,000 were affected. Reasons included access issues and component changes.

RTh advised he would circulate information on the current Decent Homes position and the stock condition survey outturn.

RTh

RF referred to the governance oversight referenced at 3.7 of the report which states the Building Safety performance is a standard item for the Audit and Risk and Customer Services Committees (CSC). He noted that this does not appear to be a standard item in the CSC's new terms of reference and requested that this will be clarified to ensure clear governance oversight.

RT

RF raised concerns regarding the challenges with Pennington Contractors (paragraph 4.17) and queried whether these issues were impacting the pace and delivery of the stock condition surveys. RTh confirmed this is being addressed with some work reallocated to a new contractor taking on elements of the programme. A replacement contractor is being sought. RTh highlighted the ongoing pressures on the stock condition survey programme due to demand and a shortage of qualified surveyors. Options are being explored to bring this function in-house by developing and training an internal team capable of undertaking stock condition surveys alongside EPC, damp and mould surveys etc. This approach would support succession planning and provide greater flexibility. The Interim Head of Asset Management will present a proposal to EMT for consideration in the near future. GM expressed his dissatisfaction with the current contractor model and noted that an in-house team would deliver improved outcomes for tenants.

PC stressed the importance of early intervention with contractors when under-performing.

<p>Resolved:</p> <p>Board reviewed and noted Berneslai Homes’ performance in delivering overall Building Safety Compliance.</p>	
<p><u>Item 7 – Sustainability Strategy 2022 – 2027 Action Plan Progress Review</u></p> <p>RTh advised that good progress has been made and praised the efforts and dedication of the Assets and Sustainability Manager.</p> <p>Delivery of the EPC C programme will be a challenge and we will work collaboratively with BMBC colleagues on the programme and the necessary funding. Positive publicity has been achieved in relation to solar panels/batteries and this agenda will continue to be actively progressed.</p> <p>Resolved:-</p> <p>Board noted the progress reported and the current risk position.</p>	
<p><u>Item 8 – Minutes/Actions Debriefs:</u></p>	
<p><u>Item 8.1 – Minutes and actions from the last meeting held 11th December 2025</u></p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>The minutes and actions were approved.</p>	
<p><u>Item 9 - Date of Next Meeting</u> – 26th March 2026 (Virtual meeting)</p>	