



**BERNESLAI HOMES PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING
27TH MARCH 2025
4.00 P.M.**

Agenda

1.0 Apologies - Adam Hutchinson

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Governance Update

For Approval

**4. Minutes and actions from the last Board Meeting
held 27th February 2025**

For Approval

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| Report Title | Governance Update | Confidential | No |
| Report Author | Head of Governance and Strategy | Report Status | For Approval |
| Report To | Board 27th March 2025 | Officer Contact Details | samantharoebuck@berneslaihomes.co.uk clairedenson@berneslaihomes.co.uk |

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| 1. Executive Summary | <p>1.1 This Governance Update Report provides key updates on governance issues for the Board.</p> <p>1.2 This report provides an update on the progress on the preferred candidate for the trainee Councillor Board member, the proposed change of Company Secretary, an update on the DTP review and the staff register of interests for 2024.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Customer Voice/Impact</u></p> <p>1.3 This report is an update around the governance of the Board and therefore customer views have not been sought specifically for this report. Good governance supports tenants by ensuring their needs and concerns are central to decision making. The DTP review will consider this further.</p> |
| 2. Recommendations | <p>Board are recommended to:</p> <p>I. Note the update on the DTP review</p> <p>II. Note the preferred candidate for the trainee Councillor Board member, which will be ratified at Full Council on 27th March 2025.</p> <p>III. Approve the transfer of the Company Secretary role from the Head of Governance and Strategy to the Executive Director of Resources.</p> <p>IV. Note the Staff register of interests for 2024.</p> |

3. Background

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Board on a range of governance issues. This report builds on the previous reports and changes made in governance and provides an update on the DTP Governance review.
- 3.2 To be a successful well-managed company, Berneslai Homes must uphold good governance as a priority.

4. Current Position /Issues for Consideration

DTP Review

- 4.1 The Board Strategic Planning Day on the 6th of March included a discussion on the governance review. Progress has been made on the review, and the Executive Director of Resources and Head of Governance and Strategy are working with DTP to develop new terms of reference for Board, Customer Services Committee and Audit and Risk Committee.
- 4.2 Work is also ongoing as part of the review to develop a composition statement for Board and a new policy framework. These documents will further enhance the governance of the Board and Committees.
- 4.3 A further update on the review and the revised documentation will form part of a separate report to Board at the meeting in May 25.

Councillor Board Member Recruitment

- 4.4 Councillor Sarah Tattersall's 6-year term of Board membership will end on 25 September 2025.
- 4.5 Under the NHF Code of Governance Board is responsible for overseeing a fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment process.
- 4.6 The interview panel consisted of the BH Chair of the Board, the BH Chief Executive and BMBC Head of Strategic Housing, observed by the BH Executive Director of Resources.
- 4.7 Following a successful recruitment process, the preferred candidate to replace Sarah Tattershall, following a 6-month trainee period is Councillor David Leech. This will be ratified at Full Council on 27th March 2025.

Company Secretary position proposed change

- 4.8 In 2021, the role of the Company Secretary was changed from being held as part of the position of the Executive Director of Corporate Services to the position of the Head of Governance and Strategy. However, following a review of Senior Management Team roles and in line with best practice, it is proposed the role be held by the position of the Executive Director of Resources.

- 4.9 The Executive Director of Resources has a wide range of experience in the role of Company Secretary and will support the Board in fulfilling their responsibilities, ensure the company follows the law and company finance rules and maintain the company's corporate governance standards.

Staff Register of Interests

- 4.10 All employees (and Board members) must declare (as soon as an interest arises) any other employment or business or other relationship that conflicts, or might reasonably be predicted could conflict, with the interests of Berneslai Homes. All declared interests are formally recorded in the Register of Interests.
- 4.11 The NHF Code of Governance requires that the Board review the register of interests annually. This ensures that any potential conflicts of interest are identified and managed appropriately, keeping the governance process transparent and trustworthy.
- 4.12 The 2024 register of interests' exercise was initiated in August 2024. All employees were asked to complete the annual Register of Interests Form. The responses are at Appendix A.
- 4.13 The Executive Management Team have received and reviewed the interests declared relevant to their service area.
- 4.14 As of 26 February 2025, 5 employee forms remained outstanding: 2 as a result of sickness and 3 due to maternity/paternity leave. Their managers are aware staff must complete the form upon their return to work.

Governance Handbook

- 4.15 The [Governance Handbook](#) in Decision Time Resources is a great tool for information related to internal and external governance information.

5. Risk and Risk Appetite

- 5.1 Strategic Risk Appetite – Risk Adverse: We aim to comply with all relevant legislation and have zero tolerance for regulatory compliance issues. We give high priority to internal audit recommendations and take immediate action to resolve concerns. We have zero tolerance for failure to meet deadlines from regulators.
- 5.2 There is a risk that the Board do not appreciate Berneslai Homes' key vulnerabilities and take appropriate action to manage them. The assurances provided within this report ensures that effective mechanisms are in place for the management of associated risks.

6. Strategic Alignment

6.1 The report aligns to the requirements from BMBC for the effective governance of Berneslai Homes. Good governance links to the successful achievement of all our ambitions:

- Hearing Customers
- Keeping Tenants Safe
- Growth of Homes and Services
- Technology and Innovation
- Employment and Training
- Zero Carbon

7. Data Privacy

7.1 There are no data privacy implications arising from this report. No personal data has been processed and no DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessments) is required.

8. Consumer Regulatory Standards

8.1 This report relates to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, as it reviews performance reporting and decision-making to ensure best practice.

9. Other Statutory/Regulatory Compliance

9.1 To provide Board with assurance around our governance arrangements.

10. Financial

10.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

11. Human Resources and Equality Diversity and Inclusion

11.1 Diversity is being considered within the Councillor Board member recruitment process.

12. Sustainability Implications

12.1 No specific zero carbon implications from this report

13. Associated Background Papers

13.1 [Governance Handbook](#)

14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix A – Staff register of interests

Appendix A - Employee Register of Interests

| Interest | Number Of Staff That Answered Positively 2023 | Number Of Staff That Answered Positively 2024 |
|--|---|---|
| Governor of educational establishment | 0 | 1 |
| Involvement with organisation receiving grant aid from Berneslai Homes | 0 | 0 |
| Involvement in companies (state company and position) including close relatives | 16 | 18 |
| Relationships to an officer graded Senior Officer or above, Councillor or Board Member | 25 | 22 |
| Membership of secret societies as defined by LGMB | 0 | 0 |
| Beneficial interest in land or property | 1 | 0 |
| Intent to bid for land or property owned by Barnsley MBC or Berneslai Homes | 0 | 0 |
| Are you a Berneslai Homes tenant | 23 | 33 |
| Is any member of your family a Berneslai Homes tenant | 114 | 98 |
| Are you on the housing register | 19 | 11 |
| Are you aware of any member of your family on the Housing Register | 18 | 15 |
| Do you have a BH garage/garage plot | 8 | 6 |
| Does a member of your family have a BH garage/garage plot | 3 | 4 |
| Others | 1 | 4 |



Minutes of Berneslai Homes Public Board Meeting held 27th February 2025

4.00 p.m.
Gateway Plaza

Present:

- Ken Taylor (KT) - Chair
- Richard Fryer (RF) - Board Member
- Adam Hutchinson (AH) - Board Member – (joined virtually)
- Kevin Osborne (KO) - Board Member
- Jo Sugden (JS) - Board Member
- Rebecca Mather (RM) - Board Member
- Sarah Tattersall (ST) - Board Member

In attendance

- Amanda Garrard (AGa) - CEO
- Dave Fullen (DF) - Executive Director, Customer & Estate Services
- Arturo Gulla (AGu) - Executive Director, Property Services
- Sam Roebuck (SR) - Head of Governance and Strategy and Company Secretary
- Ed Long (EL) - Head of Finance Berneslai Homes
- Paul Clifford (PC) - Service Director BMBC

The Chair welcomed Paul Clifford to the meeting and introductions took place.

| | ACTION |
|--|---------------|
| <p><u>Item 1 – Apologies</u></p> <p>Mark Johnson (Board Member), Gez Morrall (Board Member) Rachel Taylor (Executive Director Resources BH), Sarah Clyde (Head of Strategic Housing BMBC)</p> | |
| <p><u>Item 2 – Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>There were none declared.</p> | |

Item 3 – Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2024

AH summarised the report presented for Audit and Risk Committee. This outlines how the Audit and Risk Committee have discharged their responsibilities and delegations over the past year. The report was presented to the last Audit and Risk Committee where they focussed on the ongoing actions, areas of activity and plans for 2025 as outlined in Section 7 of the report. They will be looking at implementing the recommendations from the DTP review and assisting EMT in undertaking a thorough review of the strategic risks.

Board commented on the excellent, comprehensive report, accurately reflecting the Committee’s work. The Chair extended thanks to the Committee for all the work undertaken.

Resolved:

- 1. Board received the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report for 2024 (Appendix A) which provides assurance the Committee are fulfilling their remit.**

Item 4 – Governance Update

SR presented the report . The main focus is on the recruitment process and the scope of the DTP Governance Review.

The Councillor advertisement has been placed, the closing date is Monday 3rd March. The successful Councillor will shadow ST for a period of 6 months. KO mentioned that some Councillors have expressed an interest in the role.

The scope of the Governance Review has been agreed by DPT and is included for reference.

Resolved:-

- 1. Board noted the update on the Councillor Board Member recruitment and Board responsibilities under the NHF Code of Governance.**
- 2. Boad noted the scope provided for the DTP Governances support**

Item 5 – Value for Money Strategy

EL presented the refreshed iteration of the Strategy taking it forward to 2027. While there are not many changes from the previous version, it has been updated to reflect the changes in the organisation and environment in which BH operates. He brought Board’s attention to the key elements contained in the Executive Summary of the report, highlighting the

importance of Value for Money (VfM) being embedded in the day to day running of the organisation, and included in other strategies.

PC made an observation that he felt the links were not evident in the report on how the organisational strategies interface with the overarching need to be financially sustainable. EL/PC to discuss.

Discussion followed around the VfM culture and JS queried whether this was embedded within the organisation. AGa advised that the recent 'face to face' leadership sessions have focused on the financial status and the impacts over the next 2 years. AGa stated she was confident that everyone has an understanding of the situation, and that information is disseminated. Heads of Service are currently looking at savings, and there is a plan for this year's requirements.

AH referred to the Strategy presented to the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee felt that the version they received did not fully reflect the changed circumstances and requested this be strengthened to reflect the cashable savings element. AH is pleased that the version presented today has been updated and sets out the purpose of value for money being delivered in the financial capacity. AH appreciates the Committee's suggestions/ observations have been taken on board and actioned.

The Chair expressed concern on the containment of the apprenticeship scheme. AGa clarified that within Property Services this has not changed, it is the future graduates' scheme and office apprenticeships that will be affected, but not those currently in post. However, future restructures may consider if graduates or Apprentices are suitable for some roles. The current office apprentice and graduate scheme are funded from reserves, which BH can no longer afford

DF referred to the Pathways to Work pilot scheme. This is in the final stages of the delivery plan and contract negotiations with the Council. BH will receive £350K of grant funding for this work stream which will enable BH to keep the temporary workers, with new targets, working with tenants and supporting the Council in their key objectives. The terms and conditions and the process for the monitoring funds are being finalised.

Resolved:-

- 1. Board approved the Berneslai Homes Value for Money Strategy 2024 – 2027.**

Item 6 – Resident Insight and Engagement Strategy

DF presented . This was developed and approved by Board in the summer of 2024. Following this approval a small number of engaged tenants did not feel it reflected their views and asks. BH listened to their concerns and worked with BMBC's Head of Strategic Housing and team to redevelop the Strategy. A key action is to meet the requirements of the consumer standards, particularly around transparency and accountability. Following the Grenfell tragedy the government will set out measures to strengthen the tenants voice even further.

Further consultation on the Strategy took place as outlined in Section 5.2 of the report, going out to a wider group of tenants. TPAS were also involved and provided positive feedback, offering some suggestions which have been incorporated.

While the revised Strategy was being developed, the action plan continued to be progressed, in particular around some new areas i.e.. the gypsy traveller community, young care leavers, check and challenges, Voicescape etc.

The Strategy is integral to the Council's compliance with the Consumer Standards and the Board recommends the report to the Council and Cabinet so that it is adopted by both organisations.

RF commented positively on the document and the process, emphasising the importance of committing to a forward plan for tenant engagement activities so that the connection can be seen. Reference was also made to mainstream activities, highlighting that tenant engagement is everyone's business and should be considered by everyone as part of their responsibilities.

DF referred to BMBC's 'Love where your Live' branding, in response to the incidents that occurred last year. BH will be involved in this initiative, including how it is developed etc. A Steering Group has been established, and DF will be attending, representing BH. Regular updates will be provided to the Customer Services Committee.

ST observed that 'Your Community, Your Say' had not been mentioned. DF advised this had been an oversight and would amend the document before submitting it to the Council.

DF

PC referred to the need to be mindful of consultation fatigue. It was agreed BH and BMBC need to collaborate closely on forward planning and enhancing visibility.

Resolved:-

- 1. Board recommended the Resident Insight and Engagement Strategy 2025-2028 for approval by BMBC Cabinet.**
- 2. Board endorsed the updated action plan to support the Insight and Engagement Strategy 2025-2028.**
- 3. Board noted the soft approach to launching the Strategy with the focus being on continued publication of outcomes for tenants.**
- 4. Board supports the continued presentation of a summary of Insight and Engagement outcomes at each committee with an annual progress report on actions and impact being presented to Board and BMBC Cabinet.**

Item 7 – Void Plan

The void plan was presented to Board for approval by AGu as a direct result of a request from Board. The plan has set a target to reduce voids by 50% in 2026. A Task and Finish Group has been established, and progress will be monitored by the Board and BMBC.

Key elements to achieve this reduction include financial resources of £5.1M, recommendations from the PRIP Review to streamline processes etc. and ensuring adequate contractor resources are in place, including sub-contractors.

Board’s attention was drawn to the graph in the Executive Summary demonstrating voids tapering month by month across 2025/26. The run rate at the end of this financial year is 150, which should reduce to 100 from 26/27, which is below sector average.

This is a company wide priority issue which is being tackled together to achieve the target. DF referred to the significant role for his teams in Lettings and Neighbourhoods who are focussed on supporting the plan. Everyone involved is totally committed and with this commitment AGu feels confident the target will be achieved.

Additionally, BH have also been working with ARCUS to ensure there are good quality surveys in place to achieve correct costings.

KO emphasised the importance of communication, so that people understand issues, like ageing stock and refurbishments not taking place due to tenant refusal, resulting in more detailed/costly works being required when they become vacant.

All Member seminars are taking place, and this is an issue that will be covered.

Resolved:-

The Board:

- 1. Considered the Berneslai Voids Plan (Appendix A) to commence in April 2025**
- 2. Noted the intention to reduce voids by 50% by 31.3.26 within the agreed budget**
- 3. Approved the draft void plan.**

AGa/AGu

Item 8 – 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Results and Actions

DF presented the report which includes the outcomes of the 2nd wave of the TSM survey and the combined results of Wave 1 and 2, which will be submitted to the regulator. It is critical for regulatory compliance to do this

correctly as Council's are being awarded a 3C if these have not been carried out properly.

An outside agency is used to ensure full compliance with statutory requirements. The outcomes were presented to Board/BMBC/staff at a recent joint session. Last week's Customer Panel also considered the findings and discussed realistic TSM targets for 2025/26. R. Vella (BMBC) was in attendance to inform the decision process. The action plan is in draft, requiring further work and SMT are finalising this over the next few weeks.

Board noted some areas with lower scores and DF advised of the difficulty in make significant improvements on these because of the decisions that have had to be taken, for example, ceasing the environmental improvement schemes, with the funding being redirected to clearing the backlog. Joining forces with the Council on the 'love where you live' initiative is beneficial due to these limitations.

Discussion followed on the satisfaction measure regarding people feeling safe in their homes. DF advised that it is felt it relates more to community safety, anti-social behaviour, defensible space etc rather than factors inside their home (e.g. gas, electricity). Other surveys by the Barnsley Partnership has shown that half those surveyed do not feel safe on the community elements. It was suggested that a focus group with tenants may be beneficial. DF advised Board of the significant amount of communication, done in partnership with the Council, as the lead on community safety.

AH referred to the Corporate Assurance report produced on TSM's last year, some were around perception surveys, with management taking responsibility, and not relying on the external research company to do. It was confirmed that all management actions have been completed.

The Chair inquired about strategies for targeting the under 50 age group, which has the highest complaints, low satisfaction levels. DF explained that historically older people have always scored higher in satisfaction surveys compared to younger people. The main driver for tenant satisfaction overall is their most recent repair experience, so addressing the backlog is crucial as this will have the biggest impact, especially for younger people. At the recent Customer Panel it was suggested trialling an online event to try and attract a younger age group. DF also mentioned opportunities with the Pathways to Work initiative in increasing engagement. RM made some additional suggestions, and it was agreed DF/RM explore these further.

DF/RM

Resolved:

- **Board noted the TSM survey results and draft action plan.**
- **Board offered comment on the emerging issues and associated actions, and noted the increased risks of delivering service improvements due to budget and resource availability.**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board noted further consultation with tenants on actions arising at the February Customer Panel • Board note that once fully verified the results will be presented to BMBC and submitted to the RSH ahead of the June deadline. • Board noted whilst we can influence TSM targets for 2025/26, they are for BMBC to set. | |
| <p><u>Item 9 Q3 Performance Summary</u></p> <p>DF Presented the report which was also considered in detail by the Customer Services Committee at their last meeting. In addition, the Head of Service responsible for the contact centre Rachel Ruston also attended Committee to understand the approach and outline the long term improvements for the Contract Centre.</p> <p>The key strengths in performance were highlighted such as building safety, rent collection and the Contact Centre. The main concerns are rent loss and sickness rates. JS expressed particular concern around sickness, questioning the current efforts and their effectiveness. Audit and Risk Committee also shared this concern. AGa suggested bringing into Board a sickness reduction plan for a better understanding of the issues. Despite various efforts, including looking at the Council's best practice, the issue persists. The Chair suggested obtaining external support and AGa was tasked with discussing with RT, Exec Director, Resources</p> <p>Included in this report at Appendix B is also a summary of in-house and Wates' performance in relation to the PRIP contract.</p> <p>Board were asked to note the positive impact seen of technology on income collection. The additional £2000 per week being collected on Former Tenant Arrears was highlighted and there is also positive activity on Current Tenant Arrears. A year-end cost appraisal of the difference the technology had made will be carried out and presented to Customer Services Committee. Additionally, PC expressed an interest in learning from VoiceScape and DF agreed to share a report and arrange to meet to discuss further.</p> <p>The number of red rag ratings were observed by the Board. However, despite the ambitious targets, performance is very favourable, for example achieving 99.99% against a target of 100%. Performance is also favourable when compared to the Housemark peer benchmarking group.</p> <p>Clarification was requested on the Housemark benchmarking group BH measure against and the process. DF explained that BH are in a group of 23 like for like organisations across the country (excluding London). The group are selected by BH and Housemark and agreed with the Council.</p> <p>The Decent Homes improving position was discussed and the question raised on the prognosis for year end with regard to addressing the 127 non-decent properties. AGu provide an updated. These are properties</p> | <p>AGa/RT</p> <p>DF/PC</p> |

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| <p>identified by Penningtons and may not all be non-decent. They need to be validated. Any properties that are non-decent are all in works programmes.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board is asked to consider quarter three performance for both Company and PRIP performance. 2. Where performance targets have not been achieved, Board should ensure they are satisfied with the explanations provided and there are adequate controls and actions in place. 3. Board should identify any areas where they feel more detailed consideration is required by Customer Services Committee. | |
| <p><u>Item 10 – PRIP Review Update</u></p> <p>AGu presented an updated on the review of the PRIP Contract by Savills, commissioned by the Council. Savills are collaborating with the Council and its partners to examine processes, finances, capital work streams etc. They are currently conducting interviews with BH and Council staff. Although the timetable is set for April, AGu feels it may extend beyond this date. The Chair emphasised the importance of adhering to the timetable and asked PC to support on this matter.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board considered the contents of the report. 2. Board continues to receive timely updates on the progress of the Savills review and specific progress of Berneslai Homes | |
| <p><u>Item 11 – Quarterly Risk Update</u></p> <p>SR presented the report highlighting key information. There are 15 active strategic issues and concern, outlined in Appendix A. Attention was also drawn to the Annual Self-Assessment against the Sector Risk Profile at Appendix B.</p> <p>The report has been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee, where some changes were requested and implemented.</p> <p>Board was pleased that the report provided positive assurance, confirming risk is being managed in line with regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Resolved;-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board reviewed and Commented on the Risk Management Quarterly Update | |

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| <p>2. Board review and commented on the Strategic Risks.</p> <p>3. Board reviewed and agreed the contents of the self-assessment against the Sector Risk Profile.</p> <p>4. Board reviewed and comment on the action plans being monitored as part of this report.</p> | |
| <p><u>Item 12 – Minutes/Actions and Debriefs</u></p> | |
| <p><u>Item 12.1 Board Mins and Actions from meeting held 5/12/2025</u></p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record and the actions were noted.</p> | |

Board Meeting 27th February 2025

Public Actions

| PUBLIC AGENDA | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Item | Action | By Whom | Comments |
| Item 6 – Resident Insight and Engagement Strategy | 'Your Community Your Say' to be included. | DF | Actioned |
| Item 7 Void Plan | Voids to be a subject at one of the All Member Seminars taking place. | AGu/AGa | This will be covered at the next All Member Briefing on the 24 th March |
| Item 8 – 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Results | Ways of increasing engagement to be explored | DF/RM | Meeting arranged for 17/4/2025: |
| Item 9 – Q3 Performance Summary | <p>Sickness:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness Reduction Plan be presented at future Board meeting • Obtaining external support to be considered <p>Voicescape – Appraisal report to be shared with PC</p> | <p>RT</p> <p>RT</p> <p>DF</p> | <p>Report to be presented to Board in May 2025</p> <p>On-going, update to be reported to Board as part of Sickness Reduction Plan report</p> <p>Report will be presented to Customer Services Committee in May and will then be shared with PC.</p> |