**Meeting:** **BwD Community Network – Housing Group Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday 26th March 2025

**Venue:** Community Hub, Room D

**Attendance:** Neil Otley – BwD BC, Firoza Mohamed - Humraaz, Gill Fourie -Blackburn Foodbank Nancy Kinyanjui - Kairos Housing, Anna Leicester – Wish Centre, Kim Fleetwood – Shelter, Sandra Skellern – Phoenix Hub, Lisa Norcross – Kairos Housing, Dave Motley – Together Housing,

**Apologies:** Cllr Damian Talbot- BwD BC, Clare Rigby – BwD BC, Holly Morgan – ARC, Dan Seargent – Suez, Scott Johnson – Suez, Michelle Doney – James Street Project, Subhan Ali – BwD BC

**Officers in attendance:** Garth Hodgkinson, Donna Talbot

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| **1.** | **Welcome & Introductions**  |  |
| **2.**  | **BwD BC Update on The Housing Strategy** * Subhan Ali is leading on the housing strategy – he has looked at the timetable and decided to put the date back – due to the pressures on the council staff with the CQC and Ofsted inspections.
* Martin Kelly has commissioned a stock condition survey for Blackburn and Darwen
* New Homeless Housing Strategy Forum – Everyone should have received their invitations it’s on Wednesday 9th April.

**Action** – NO to forward Terms of Reference for the homeless strategy forum  |  |
| **3.**  | **Round Robin Discussion** **Conclusions*** Clients being housed in HMOS – not safe -not good for their mental health.
* Not enough housing single males: in low bands with no real prospect of being housed.
* Applying for housing is exceedingly difficult to navigate.
* Staying longer in Temp Housing – over 1,000 nights not easy to plan life – no foundations
* Impacts on other services Hospital, mental health etc.
* 12 months stays are realistically 18 months or more.
* Positive – that supporting individual for longer enables to build confidence etc so in better place and able to cope when housing available – better tenants.
* Wider issues – Government policies, benefits etc
* Documentation is a massive barrier.
* Language can be a barrier.
* Clients not being property ready.
* Lack of accommodation for women – HMO/Salvation Army not suitable and not safe
* Not enough emergency refuge places
* No recourse to public funds – no legal aid
* Spaces full no capacity to anyone needing the service.
* Government relaxing immigration rules now more asylum claims for housing.
* Private Rented Housing
	+ - * availability
			* Price
			* Hesitant Landlords
			* Unprecedented demand
			* Cost of living Crisis
			* Tenancy set up cost – increased average cost now is £1300.00.
			* Deposit is now 4 months’ rent.
			* Turnover of stock
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| **3.** | * Housing needs/ Social Landlords are now doing the job that historically social workers would have dealt with.
* Joint tenancy in DV cases are problematic for the victim.
* Customer service – interpretation devices
* Guarantors – no one wants to step up to the mark.
* Cost of Rent – many cannot afford food after paying rent.
* New welfare changes
* Time - Frame from being offered a property to actually being able to accept it.
* Social Housing: not enough Stock
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| **4.** | **Neil Otley - BwD BC** * We are in the middle of a housing crisis – simply do not have enough supply to fulfil demand.
* BwD BC working with private landlords to increase stock and encourage private landlords to take more tenants.
* BwD can help with set up costs and deposit.
* The Housing strategy will highlight the need for 1-bedroom properties and family homes at affordable prices.
* We are doing well with keeping the number of rough sleepers down.
* We aren’t using the hotels currently.
* We have invested in a new interpreter service – works really well.
* BwD BC will not be guarantors as the risk is too high.
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|  | Lisa Kairos – grants available from Vickers relief fund to help up to £500. | <https://www.smitfc.org/the-vicars-relief-fund/> |
| **5.**  | **Dave Motley – Together Housing** * We are the biggest manager of housing in Lancashire.
* Demand is greater than supply – currently 7500 homes in BwD.
* We are aware those in Band 1 or 2 are not getting anywhere and anyone in the other bands are looking at lengthy waits.
* Stock turnover is slow – once empty we need to bring up to standard – takes time.
* Only 400 voids in a 12-month period
* We are building in Blackburn.
	+ - * Fishmoor – family homes
			* Holden – Darwen – family homes
			* Crosby Road – single flats
			* Crosby Road – bungalows
* Deposits – we will always work with the tenant.
* Rent – we will always work with the tenant.
* Documentation – we will always work with the tenant.
* BwD individuals can apply for housing in other areas.
* We currently have 100 homes empty, and we are working as fast as possible to get them up to standard.
* With regards to Joint tenancy, I will get back to you (see attached)
* We do offer payment plans for those struggling.
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The date of the next meeting

**Wednesday 28th May 1.30pm – 2.30pm**

The Community Hub Room D

35 Railway Road, Blackburn BB1 1EZ

For more info, please email Donna Talbot

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