**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 |  |
| **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 |  |
| **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. |  |
|  | 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. |  |

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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