

**Report of the Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes
and the Executive Director Core Services, BMBC
to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)
on 2nd November 2021**

Berneslai Homes Annual Performance Review 2020/21

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the annual performance of Berneslai Homes for 2020-21.
- 1.2 Item 4b (attached), the Berneslai Homes Together with Tenants Annual Report, provides a more detailed reflection on the achievements and challenges faced during the year and has been developed with their Tenant Voice Panel, a group of nine tenants who meet to share their views on how the service is performing.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Berneslai Homes is the arm's length management organisation (ALMO) managing the Council's 18,500 homes across the borough. This includes:-
- managing the waiting list and letting vacant homes
 - collecting rent
 - repairing, maintaining and developing homes and estates
 - supporting people facing financial difficulties
 - keeping estates clean and tidy and dealing with any issues of anti-social behaviour
 - supporting people to manage their tenancy
 - engaging with and listening to their customers and communities
 - working with Barnsley Council to build and acquire new homes for tenants
- 2.2 At a Cabinet meeting in September 2020, in accordance with renewal arrangements, the contract between Barnsley Council and Berneslai Homes was extended for a further 10 years until 2031.
- 2.3 In October 2020, Berneslai Homes presented their annual performance report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, along with a new ten-year strategic plan, setting out the key objectives for the following 12-18 months with a view to developing longer term priorities during 2021, linked to the new Barnsley 2030 vision.
- 2.4 The key priorities for the period to April 2022 focus on the following areas:-
- **Employment and training** – focusing on getting tenants into employment
 - **Zero Carbon** – moving from gas heating to ground and air sources heat pumps, and developing a zero carbon strategy affecting the operations of the organisation and retrofitting existing council homes
 - **Digital Inclusion** – working with the Council to ensure communities have access to affordable broadband and can access services effectively
 - **Tenant Safety** – ensuring we have effective systems to keep tenants safe and meet the requirements in the Building Safety Bill and the Housing Regulator

- **Growth** – working with the Council on new Council homes and acquiring homes across the Borough
- **Listening to Tenants** – linking to the outcome of the Social Housing White paper (expected Autumn 2020) and the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman, learning from complaints and improving services

3.0 Current Position

3.1 Despite the challenges presented by Covid, Berneslai Homes managed to keep most of their services running during lockdown, including engagement activities with tenants.

3.2 Item 4b (attached) outlines how the service:-

- performed against indicators relating to keeping homes in good repair; customer services; safety; and responsible neighbourhood management
- engaged with tenants to hear their views and acted upon what they were told
- managed finances effectively, ensuring value for money for Berneslai Homes and the Council
- worked with the Council to begin reviewing the lettings policy and enhance the lettings service to rebalance supply and demand; offer realistic advice, information and alternative options; and improve the customer experience
- learned from complaints and feedback received during the year
- developed systems, processes and partnerships to support income management and help tenants access the right benefits and money advice
- carried out repairs; appointed a Building Safety Manager and an Occupational Therapist; developed new technology to complete inspections; begun investing in reducing the carbon footprint; and completed two Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes
- ensured that estates are safe, clean and happy places to live in via the work of the Housing Management Team
- provided a holistic housing and estate management service to support residents and communities across the borough, including help to overcome barriers around education and training; tenancy support; and independent living schemes
- looked at the customer experience when contacting Berneslai Homes and what improvements could be made, ensuring that they are welcoming to all

4.0 Future Plans & Challenges

4.1 The Regulator for Social Housing is working with tenants and landlords across the country to develop a set of national performance and tenant satisfaction measures which all landlords would have to publish. This will provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance and inform how a landlord is complying with the consumer standards.

4.2 Over the coming year there are plans to continue to engage with tenants living in flats to develop awareness of fire safety.

4.3 In summer 2022, tenants will be able to order and track a repair online, book and change appointments and give feedback. This will also improve the contact centre service for those who choose to make contact by phone.

4.4 Despite completing two of the Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes in 2020/21 four others were not completed and there are plans to catch up during 2021/22.

4.5 To support the council to achieve its carbon reduction targets, during 2021/22 Berneslai Homes will be investing in homes by spending:-

- £1m on flood resilience in Lundwood
- £13.5 m for Barnsley Homes Standard works
- £2m for adaptations
- £1.6m for extensive works
- £0.7M for heating upgrades
- £1.9M for zero carbon works such as air source heating, solar panels and insulation

5.0 Invited Witnesses

5.1 The following witnesses have been invited to attend today's meeting to answer questions from the committee:

- Amanda Garrard, Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes
- Arturo Gulla, Executive Director of Property Services, Berneslai Homes
- Dave Fullen, Executive Director of Customer & Estate Services, Berneslai Homes
- Matt Gladstone, Executive Director – Place, BMBC
- Kathy McArdle, Service Director, Regeneration & Culture, Place Directorate, BMBC
- Sarah Cartwright, Head of Strategic Housing, Sustainability & Climate Change, Place Directorate, BMBC
- Cllr Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson – Place – Regeneration & Culture, BMBC

6.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

6.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- What area of work/performance is Berneslai Homes most proud of over the last 12 months and what positive impact has this had for local residents?
- What have been the greatest challenges over the last 12 months and how did you overcome them?
- How is work progressing against the six key priorities up to April 2022? Do you expect to achieve everything you set out to do?
- What are likely to be the priorities beyond April 2022 and when do you expect those to be identified and embedded?
- What is being done to ensure appropriate support is available to the increasing number of households who are vulnerable and have support needs?
- What fire safety measures are in place for tenants living in flats?
- Can you give specific examples of how the Tenant Voice Panel has directly influenced service delivery?
- How effective is partnership working amongst Berneslai Homes and other local agencies in tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and in what ways could this be improved?
- When do you expect to be back on track with the Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes targets?

- What are Berneslai Homes' greatest challenges associated with minimising the carbon footprint and contributing positively to the Council's Zero 40 and Zero 45 targets?
- How will Berneslai Homes continue to contribute to the employment, education and skills agenda over the coming 12 months?
- What do you foresee as the biggest challenges in the coming 12 months for tenants as well as Berneslai Homes as an organisation?
- How has the Charter for Social Housing Residents (the social housing white paper), published in November 2020, impacted upon the work of Berneslai Homes?
- What actions could be taken by Members to support the work of Berneslai Homes and their tenants?

7.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

- Item 4b (attached) – Berneslai Homes Annual Report to Tenants 2020-21
- Berneslai Homes Strategic Plan 2021-2031:-
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71434/Item%204b%20-%20Berneslai%20Homes%20Strategic%20Plan%202021-31.pdf>
- Berneslai Homes Annual Report 2019-20:-
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71435/Item%204c%20-%20Berneslai%20Homes%20Annual%20Report%202019-20.pdf>
- Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – October 2020:-
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=38972>
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

8.0 Glossary

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| ALMO | Arm's Length Management Organisation |
| ASB | Anti-Social Behaviour |
| BMBC | Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council |
| OSC | Overview and Scrutiny Committee |

9.0 Officer Contact

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20 October 2021