

# Assurance Framework

## **Council/ALMO Clienting Arrangement**

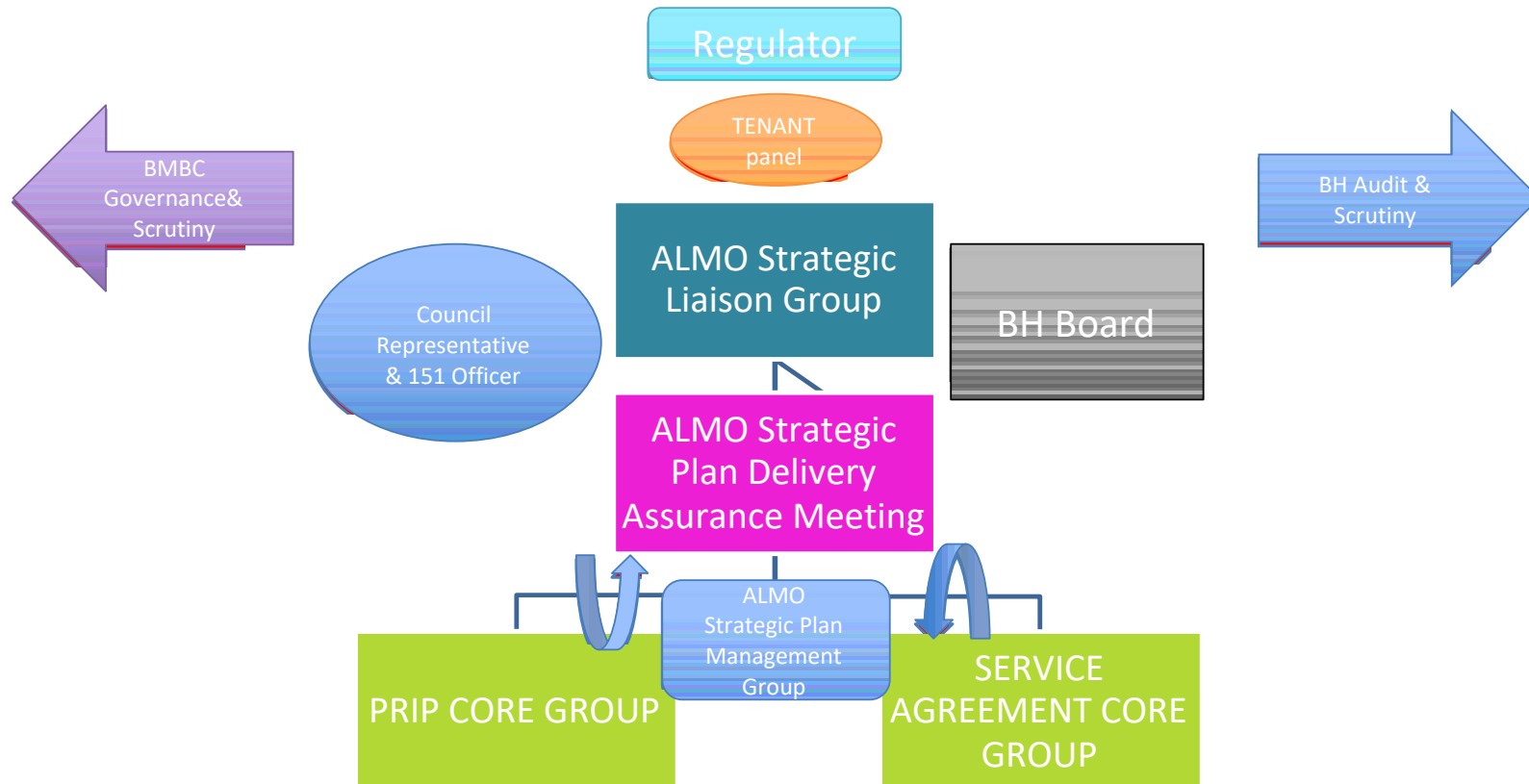
This Assurance Framework has been developed to ensure that the Council has an appropriate level of assurance around the delivery of the required services and outcomes as set out in the 'Services Agreement' and PRIP contract with Berneslai Homes. The framework was developed following a review of the Council's client and contract management arrangements in relation to the Services Agreement by ARUM in spring 2021. The review advised on areas for improvement in relation to client governance, identified areas where strategic intent/alignment with the Council's priorities could be strengthened and prompted the development of an assurance mapping exercise to ensure that the Council can meet its requirements under the regulatory changes being implemented by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as part of 'The Charter for Social Housing'. This document (agreed May 2022) summarises the clienting communication structure/touchpoints, new governance and meeting structures and summarises the methods via which the Council can ensure that both its responsibilities to the Regulator of Social Housing and its wider responsibilities to the Council and the residents of our borough (in relation to the delivery of a quality, value for money service offer) can be met.

## Assurance Framework - Clienting/Communication Structure (internal)

| BMBC  | ALMO  | Liaison/Communication outside of Partnership Meetings   | Clienting Partnership Meeting Attendance   | BMBC Corporate Representation  |
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| CEO   | CEO   | As Required   | N/A  | Barnsley 2030 Board  |
| Exec Director Core Services<br>Executive Director Growth & Sustainability   | CEO<br>CEO & SMT  | CEO Monthly informal 'Catch Up' Meeting<br><br>EMT 'catch up' Meetings implemented during 2022/23   | N/A<br><br>N/A   | N/A<br><br>N/A   |
| Service Director – Finance<br><br>Service Director – Regeneration & Culture | CEO<br>BH/EMT   | CEO Monthly formal update Meetings (with SD & S151 Officer) & BH EMT as required.<br><br>Quarterly Workshop Sessions on agreed strategic agendas, as required.<br><br>Attendance at DMT/SMT/Cabinet, as required. | ALMO Strategic Liaison<br><br>Delivery Plan Assurance Meeting  | Health and Wellbeing Board (CEO/SD Regeneration and Culture)<br><br>BMBC Housing Board   |
| Head of Housing Group Leader<br>Housing Growth (Clienting Officers)         | Exec Director Customers & Estate Services<br>Executive Director Property Service (PRIP) | As required on an operational basis.  | ALMO Strategic Liaison<br><br>Delivery Plan Assurance Meeting<br><br>Service Agreement Core Group<br>PRIP Core Group | Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership (ED Customer & Estate Services)<br>Safer Barnsley Partnership<br>Homeless Alliance (ED Customer & Estate Services) |
| Service Director – Reg & Culture<br>Finance                                 | Berneslai Homes Board   | Attendance at Berneslai Homes Board.<br>Councillor Liaison – Board Members  | ALMO Strategic Liaison   |  |

# Assurance Framework

## Governance & Meetings Structure



| Assurance Area  | Lead Officers  | Mechanism  | Assurance Review Position April 2023  | ACTION   |
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| <p>RSH Consumer Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home</li> <li>• Tenant Engagement &amp; Empowerment</li> <li>• Neighbourhoods &amp; communities</li> <li>• Tenancy</li> </ul> | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture &amp; HOS Housing, S &amp; CC</p> <p>BH: Exec Director Customer &amp; Estate Services</p> | <p><b>Landlord:</b> Quarterly Report for Landlord – KPI dashboard (Compliance, Strategic Plan &amp; PRIP PI's) to PRIP Core and Services Agreement Core Group</p> <p><b>Tenant:</b> Customer Services Committee, Strategic ALMO meetings</p> <p><b>ALL:</b> Annual Report developed with tenants to Customer Services Committee &amp; Board</p> <p>Annual STAR survey</p> <p>2022/23 – Lettings Policy Review</p> <p>EXTERNAL: TPAS, IIP</p> | <p><b>PERFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE</b></p> <p><b>A monthly Compliance Dashboard is provided to BMBC at Core Group Meetings. The info provided has recently been updated to include recording damp and mould cases, disrepair, and tracking progress in relation to condition and EPC surveys. Going forward, the Compliance dashboard will move to the new C365 software system, which will allow Client real-time access.</b></p> <p><b>A complaint and ASB tracker have also been added to the monthly Dashboards provided to Core Group from April 2023 in line with TSM tracking.</b></p> <p><b>There is an additional requirement for a tracker to be provided to Client re: outstanding building safety works (including planned works identified as part of FRA's) as there have been issues in the delivery of larger planned building and fire safety works over 2022/23 in line with set budgets and planned delivery timeframes.</b></p> <p><b>The Quarterly Report and KPI's has been updated to include both TSM's and updated Service Agreement PI's for Berneslai Homes.</b></p> | <p><b>Implement C365 and Repairs First– providing sufficient training to Client to enable direct/real-time access as required.</b></p> <p><b>Building Safety Tracker to be produced for Service Agreement Core Group monthly.</b></p> <p><b>A quarterly report will be provided to Building Safety</b></p> |

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|  |  |  | <p>The STAR survey format has been amended further to ensure that all TSM requirements are fully up to date in terms of questionnaire flow and definition.</p> <p>Quarterly reports are provided on PRIP contract performance. However, Client still has concerns re: the robustness of the information provided, presentation and level of information from the contractors.</p> <p><b>TENANT ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <p>The TVP are involved and engaged in the customer services committee, the PRIP Core Group and a number of new TFG's around compliance related matters. The TVP remains engaged and active although some members are keen to explore more independent models. BH facilitated a workshop in April to understand how the TVP can respond and adapt to regulatory changes in representing tenant and supporting/challenging BH and the Council as landlord.</p> | <p>Board updating on all aspects of compliance, fire and building safety works.</p> <p>Develop an updated PRIP reporting framework which is reflective of the contract size/value.</p> <p>Deliver against the Tenant Engagement Action Plan.</p> |
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|  |  |  | <p><b>Whilst the new governance framework has embedded well in terms of strengthening assurance and escalation processes amongst officers, the Strategic ALMO meetings with the Tenant Voice Panel need additional focus to ensure that meetings are interactive and provide our engaged tenants with the level of assurance from their landlord that their voices are heard and that we are managing the services agreement with the ALMO effectively to achieve this.</b></p> <p><b>TENANCIES</b></p> <p><b>The Council has adopted a new lettings policy which seeks to make the best use of our stock and provides tenants and prospective tenant with a clear and transparent policy which enables choice but which also provides applicants with realistic expectations. To ensure effective implementation, a review panel of officers, client and Members remains in place up to the launch of the new policy from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and a full comms and IT implementation plan will be produced.</b></p> | <p><b>Develop a co-produced meeting structure and updated terms of reference for the Strategic ALMO group which provides a better balance of attendees across BMBC and TVP reps.</b></p> <p><b>Comms Strategy to be developed for the existing applicants on the register to ensure that there is sufficient support provided during the transition to the new policy. IT implementation plan to be produced.</b></p> |
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| <p>RSH Economic Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rent</li> </ul> | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture &amp; SD Finance</p> <p>BH: Implemented by BH – Exec Director of Customer and Estate Services.</p>                                    | <p><b>Landlord:</b> Annual Rent setting agreed within HRA Budget by Council (in line with rent regime)</p> <p><b>ALL:</b> Quarterly PI reporting (via ALMO Governance suite)</p>                        | <p><b>The Annual Rent setting process is well established – linking with the HRA Budget Setting reports which are taken through Cabinet annually in January/February and aligning with requirements within the rent formula, or Government.</b></p> <p><b>Rent Collection and Void Rent Loss are also reported to the Council as part of the quarterly PI suite.</b></p> <p><b>To provide additional assurance to the Council/BH an audit of rents takesplace as part of the annual internal audit programme, and HQN have been commissioned to undertake a review of rent setting and service charges to inform a new Rent Policy for the council and Income Policy for Berneslai Homes.</b></p> | <p><b>Work with HQN on the review of rents and service charges to develop an overarching Rent Policy and Income Strategy.</b></p> |
| <p>Complaints &amp; Tenant Feedback</p>  | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture &amp; HOS Housing, S &amp; CC</p> <p>BH: Exec Director Customer &amp; Estate Services</p> <p>BH: Exec Director Corporate Services</p> | <p><b>ALL:</b> Annual Report developed with tenants to BH Board</p> <p>BH Self-assessment on Complaints Handling Code (Developed with Tenants)</p> <p>Complaints/Compliments in Quarterly KPI suite</p> | <p><b>New Complaints Dashboard provided to the Council from April 2023. This is provided to the Core Group monthly, with an infographic produced alongside the quarterly performance information (this also goes to the BH Customer Service Committee).</b></p> <p><b>BH completed a review of its self-assessment on the Complaints Handling Code 2020 in February 2022.</b></p> <p><b>The Council currently records all Housing Ombudsman cases within the Customer</b></p>   | <p><b>Agree and implement new</b></p>   |

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|   |   | <p>HOS copied into all Ombudsman Cases and Outcomes</p> <p><b>Tenant:</b> Tenants Voice Panel, EMT &amp; Customer Services Committee, Strategic ALMO meeting</p>  | <p><b>Services team, adding the SD and HOS as Task Managers. Outcomes are also sent via the Council's Team. This recording process is also duplicated within the ALMO – often resulting in several people across both organisations chasing updates/confirming deadlines. Officers have recently met to discuss streamlining the recording process and developing an escalation process and including an ombudsman tracker as part of the complaint's dashboard.</b></p>   | <p><b>Ombudsman complaints handling (and escalation) process between the council and Berneslai Homes.</b></p> |
| <p>Social Housing White Paper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenants Charter</li> </ul> | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture &amp; HOS Housing, S &amp; CC</p> <p>BH: Exec Directors of Customer &amp; Estate Services &amp; Property</p> <p>BH : Exec Director of Corporate Services</p> | <p><b>Landlord:</b> NEW Clienting arrangements and Governance Structures</p> <p><b>ALL:</b> Refresh of Strategic Plan and Annual Business Plan</p> <p>PI dashboard 2022/23 amended to reflect emerging TSM's &amp; STAR survey 2022/23</p> <p>Tenant Voice Panel and BH Board</p> <p>EXTERNAL: TPAS, NHF Code of Governance</p> | <p><b>The Council implemented a new governance structure during 2021/22, introducing a new Delivery Assurance Meeting with an escalation process from both the PRIP and Core Group. The Council also introduced a Strategic Plan Management Group Meeting, which allows Council officers to provide 'one voice' when dealing with touchpoints into the ALMO across directorates, allows strategic thinking and tracks issues/requests via a log reviewed at each meeting. The new structure work well (except for the Strategic ALMO group referenced above) and is administered directly by the Council. The Clienting/Communication structure is much improved. There has also been a requirement to agree emergency escalation processes and out-of-hour arrangements – now in place.</b></p> <p><b>The PI dashboard has been revised for 2023/24 to build in all TSM requirements and the STAR survey updated. Work is on-going with the</b></p> |   |



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|  |  |  | <p><b>tenant voice panel and tenant board members to maximise their involvement and engagement in all aspects of service provision and in responding to the requirements of the regulator in delivering against the Tenant's Charter.</b></p> <p><b>A refresh of the Strategic Plan process was undertaken in 2021/22 and a new requirement for BH to provide an annual business plan was implemented. The Strategic Plan and Annual Business Plan are updated annually and agreed at Cabinet in Jan/Feb to align with the HRA Budget/Rent setting process. A review of progress against the Annual Business Plan is to be provided to the Council at the end of each financial year; alongside the year-end performance report (6 weeks post the end of April).</b></p> <p><b>TPAS completed a SMART review of the engagement framework in February 2022. The SMART review consisted of the following processes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. A self-assessment against the TPAS National Engagement Standards</b></li><li><b>2. Reality checking with key staff and tenants through virtual platforms and telephone interviews</b></li><li><b>3. A headline report with recommendations for improvements; good practice and learning from the sector.</b></li></ol> |  |
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|   |   |  | <p>An action plan was developed following the review. This included working more closely with other local groups, targeting those with 'lived experience' to shape new policies and services, training for a wider cohort of staff on complaint handling and to reconnect and build trust with local TARA's.</p>   |   |
| <p>Building Safety (Inc Compliance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building safety bill</li> <li>• New building safety regulator</li> </ul> | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture (Accountable Person)</p> <p>BH: Exec Director of Property (plus Building Safety Manager)</p> | <p><b>ALL:</b> Measured via PI's, annual outcome report, building safety certs, annual H &amp; S report and assurance assessment.</p> <p>Performance Monitored at Delivery Plan Assurance Meetings &amp; via report from Building Safety Manager (Quarterly).</p> <p>BH Board &amp; Audit &amp; Risk Committee</p> <p>EXTERNAL: 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Assurance via Pennington's, Morgan Lambert &amp; BLU, Gas Safe/CHAS</p> | <p>The Compliance Dashboard has been provided at Core Group meetings over the last financial year. The Council has requested additions to the dashboard to include damp and mould cases, disrepair, progress on stock condition and EPCs surveys and a breakdown of outstanding FRA actions and planned works.</p> <p>The Council is to agree the Principal Accountable Person and Accountable Persons as part of the Building Safety Governance Framework which includes the development of a Building Safety Board attended by the Council's Accountable Person/s.</p> <p>Pennington's Choice have been commissioned to work with BH and the Council to ensure that we can fully comply with new requirements to register our high-rise buildings, prepare safety cases and fully comply with all landlord requirements under the Building Safety and Fire Safety Acts – as well as requirements of the Regulator of social housing linked to tenant involvement and engagement.</p> | <p>Complete Gap Analysis work with Pennington's and develop a building safety action plan to enable the full collation of all required data</p> |

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|                                    |  |   | <p><b>BH Board and Audit &amp; Risk Committee receive regular reports on H&amp;S matters and any incidents which need reporting/updating.</b></p> <p><b>A full stock condition survey has been commissioned for all stock with an accelerated completion date of March 2024. Progress against planned completions is tracked monthly as part of the compliance dashboard.</b></p> | <p><b>ensuring compliancy with all regulatory requirements.</b></p>                  |
| Annual Report and Accounts         | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture</p> <p>BH: CEX, Exec Director of Corporate Services and Board</p> | <p><b>Landlord:</b> Annual Report &amp; AGM (reports received by SD Regeneration and Culture)</p>   | <p><b>Existing processes maintained for the Council to receive the annual report and accounts.</b></p>  | <p><b>Review the process for the handover of the Annual Report and Accounts.</b></p> |
| Data Protection                    | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture</p> <p>BH: Exec Director of Corporate Services</p>                | <p>Audit &amp; Risk Committee Annual Report of DPO</p>  | <p><b>An internal audit was completed on Berneslai Homes in relation to information governance during February/March 2023.</b></p>  |  |
| Council Governance & Joint Reports | <p>BMBC: SD Regeneration and Culture/HOS Housing</p> <p>BH: CEX/EMT as appropriate.</p>                | <p>Decisions requiring Full Council or Cabinet approval follow the Council's Governance Procedures &amp; Decision-Making arrangements (including financial thresholds).</p> | <p><b>The decision-making process for Council or Cabinet decisions is embedded and aligns with the Council's governance procedures and decision-making arrangements. The HOS Housing provides support to BH in preparing reports and is the conduit to progress reports via the governance process. A forward plan is</b></p>   |  |

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|   |   |  | <p><b>produced monthly and monitored at the Service Agreement Core Group.</b></p> <p><b>Further work to clarify roles on approval of policies and strategies between BMBC and BH is required.</b></p>  | <p><b>To develop a governance protocol for the escalation of reports via BH and BMBC.</b></p>  |
| <p>Financial Monitoring of delegated budgets (PRIP, Management Fee etc) in line with the Council's strategic priorities</p> | <p>BMBC: SD Finance and 151 Officer &amp; SD Regeneration and Culture</p> <p>BH: CEX &amp; Executive Director of Corporate Services</p> | <p>Via Delivery Assurance Meetings – quarterly reports to be prepared.</p> <p>Integration into Council's HRA accounting (PRIP)</p> | <p><b>Financial updates are provided to the delivery assurance meeting on a quarterly basis to track progress against budgets during the year.</b></p> <p><b>Further to the overspend situation on PRIP in the 21 – 22 FY 21/22 an action plan was produced by the Client Augmentation Team which provided a robust framework of checks and challenges to ensure that the situation would not re-occur. This included a robust process around budget setting and alignment of the development of the HRA budget with the production of the update of the Strategic Plan and development of the Annual Business plan and commitments from BH to generate annual efficiencies within the management fee in line with the Council's efficiency planning processes.</b></p> <p><b>A budget/programme tracker will be produced for 2023/24 to track both spend and programme delivery on a quarterly basis.</b></p> | <p><b>Implement HRA Budget Tracker to include in-year efficiencies as identified via the budget setting process – to include a report on efficiencies in the annual review of the Business Plan.</b></p> |

