



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE ADDENDUM

4.00PM, WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

ADDENDUM

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(b)	List of public questions: (copy attached).	
(c)	Deputations:	
	(i) Rent Policy – Spokesperson Mr. D. Fitzpatrick (copy attached).	
	(ii) Legal Action against B&CC leaseholders on the Bristol Estate – Spokesperson Mr. D. Croydon (copy attached).	

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by members of the public who either live or work in the area of the authority.

i) The following written question has been received from Mike Bojczuk.

“Will Council agree to provide Wi-Fi access to common area lounges of their senior housing schemes? Volunteering with Digital Brighton & Hove I have found that none of the Council run senior schemes provide this, unlike Housing Association schemes visited. Providing broadband to 25 schemes isn’t greatly expensive and if provided by the Council, it could be used in many ways to add to and improve communication and services to senior residents. City libraries and buses provide free Wi-Fi access so can you also extend this service to help mitigate the digital exclusion faced by many of our older residents?”

ii) The following written question has been received from Barry Hughes.

“I am aware that, in purely legal terms, the normal service of notices *“sent by first class post shall be deemed to have been received by the addressee within 48 hours of posting”*. However I have recently been involved in a Leaseholder dispute where Section 20 notices were sent to my members and not received and I am reminded that, in the commercial world, *“proof of posting is not proof of receipt”*. I would respectfully request that the council, in enacting its value of customer focus, adopts the use of recorded delivery when issuing Section 20 notices in the future?”

iii) The following written question has been received from Martin Cunningham.

“With regards to the proposed Hereford House Hostel what measures will be put in place to protect the residents from the increase in anti-social behaviour this will bring to Kempton?”

iv) The following written question has been received from Daniel Harris.

“The Council have announced that only 605 homelessness applications were received during Quarter 1 and 2 2017, can the council tell me exactly how many temporary accommodation units they plan to stop using and how this process will work?”

v) The following written question has been received from John Hadman.

“The Council undertook to look for empty council property in January 2017 to use as night shelters, for homeless and rough sleepers in Brighton and Hove. When is the night shelter going to open and where? Also for how many people?”

4,111 persons of Brighton and Hove community signed a 38 degrees petition to open night shelters, which the council voted 100% to act on, i.e. the will of the people.”

vi) The following written question has been received from Clare Hudson.

“It was welcome news to hear a positive response to John Hadman’s question at the Housing Committee on 20 September regarding a permanent Night Shelter managed and run by Brighton and Hove City Council

Are Members of the Committee satisfied with progress made? How many people will be accommodated in the Night Shelter and for what period will the shelter be available? Are facilities to be made available on a permanent and long term basis?”

vii) The following written question has been received from Gemma Challenger.

“The ‘Oxford Street Housing Office’ - What progress has been made in converting this building into a permanent Night Shelter or temporary accommodation? For what period has this building been empty and when is it scheduled for use in a manner that benefits our homeless fellow citizens?”

viii) The following written question has been received from Maria Garret-Gotch.

“Could the Committee provide any examples of the way in which it could delay or prevent the “roll-out” of Universal Credit in Brighton and Hove? Could you please provide precise details by post code of the Government proposals for Universal Credit in our City?”

ix) The following written question has been received from Steve Parry on behalf of ETHRAG.

“The recently published response by the Government to the Communities and Local Government & Work and Pensions Committees Joint Report on the future of supported housing, the DWP Supported Housing Task and Finish Groups Final Report, and the DCLG/DWP Policy Statement and Consultation on Funding Supported Housing have major implications for Brighton and Hove particularly in relation to Temporary & Emergency Accommodation including BHSCH.

Will the Committee commission a report from officers to be discussed at its 17.1.18 meeting, and ensure that community representatives are invited to contribute to this report particularly ETHRAG and the Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition?”

x) The following written question has been received from Zuzana Sukova on behalf of Brighton Homeless Action Group.

“Taking into account all of the deaths of homeless human beings on our streets, when will the local authority start to apply the 'Extended Winter Provision' for those living on our streets by opening shelters every night

throughout the winter from November to March, as advised by the Homeless Link Guidance to prevent the loss of even more lives on our streets. Although, severe weather can arise outside of these months so shelter is needed all year round as a long-term solution.”

xi) The following written question has been received from Ree Melody on behalf of Love Activists.

“When will the local authority adhere to the change in law made by the supreme court of law in May 2015 with regard to the vulnerability assessment of those who are homeless?”

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

Deputations received:

(i) Rent Policy

Spokesperson Mr. D. Fitzpatrick

Supported by:
John Hadman
Diane Montgomery
Ian Needham
Joanna Evans

(ii) Legal Action against B&HCC leaseholders on the Bristol Estate

Spokesperson Mr. D. Croydon

Supported by:
David Rumelle
Keith Marston
Barbara Roberts
Monica De Olmo
Michael Bushby

(i) Deputation from the Living Rent Campaign on Rent Policy

We are here today to urge the housing and new homes committee to agree a rent policy for new council houses that is affordable for those households on low incomes. The Living Rent Campaign argues for rents to be set in relation to household incomes not the market. We want to see a rent policy that enables the council to provide a range of rents, in particular rents that are affordable for the lowest income households who suffer most economic stress in the current housing market and for whom the council is the only hope of affordability.

Each year at least 50 socially rented council houses are sold. When the council replaces these with welcome new homes the rents have been more than double social rents and are not affordable for low income households. There are no other housing providers (other than co-ops who are currently small scale) offering rents at less than Living wage rents. The living wage rent concept is laudible in that it links rents to incomes, however the assumptions made about incomes are flawed since they do not look at actual household incomes (and end up producing “living wage rents” just less than local housing allowance that are not affordable for the lowest actual incomes)

Looking at actual household incomes, the committee report suggests that a third of households in the city have incomes of less than £20,000. According to Shelter rent should swallow up no more than 35% of household income to be affordable.

Therefore it follows that an affordable rent for the lowest income households (the bottom third- who are the very households that most need low rent housing), should be less than £7,000 a year or less than £135 a week. Rent options offered in the report are all higher than this ranging from £148 to £339)

Only social rents provide for this and yet the committee report is proposing the exclusion of social rents being charged for new council housing. So none of the options recommended are affordable for the bottom third of household incomes in the city

We therefore propose that the committee include in their rent policy a “living rent option” (which is set at 60% more than social rents. These rents would range from £110 a week for a 1 bed flat to £168 a week for a 4 bed house. These rents would be much more affordable for many of the low income households that the proposed rent policy seeks to provide with truly affordable homes, but would still be high enough to reflect the enhanced energy efficiency of the new homes and would not place anything like as great a demand on existing HRA funds for support as would the social rent option

According to the councils own “Assessment of affordable housing need” report (2012) there are 15,000 households who can only afford to pay social rents, so we urge the committee to also include social rents as an option for new council homes for the lowest income households along with a “living rent” which is calculated to be 60% more than social rents as an option that we estimate would be affordable for most of lowest 40% of household incomes (once energy cost savings are allowed for) We also ask that the committee consider, in line with the legal advice in the report, the option of providing a mix of rent levels in any one scheme, so that rents can be better aligned to peoples’ ability to pay.

(ii) Deputation concerning Legal action against B&HCC leaseholders on the Bristol Estate

Irwin Mitchell LLP, on behalf of Brighton and Hove City Council, in a letter dated 25 September 2017 to all B&HCC leaseholders in Allamanda, Sorrel, Jasmine, Hazel, and Meadowsweet blocks on the Bristol Estate have stated they are to take all leaseholders to the First - Tier Tribunal. This proposed action is despite a number of leaseholders being in the process of following B&HCC complaint and dispute procedures that are not yet completed.

This action is unprecedented, potentially involves large sums of money for tenants (through the HRA) and leaseholders individually, is causing a great deal of stress for many individuals including vulnerable residents, and appears to involve an absence of Duty of Candour.

We request that the Committee discusses this issue before any further action is taken and ask that every effort is taken to avoid an application to the Tribunal including discussions between this Committee, the Leaseholder Action Group, Justice for Tenants and the Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition.

