



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE ADDENDUM

4.00PM, WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2018

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD,
HOVE, BN3 3BQ**

ADDENDUM

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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.

1) The following written question has been received from Charles Harrison.

"TRANSITION PLAN - POST MEARS

The Committee's decision on 26 Sept 2018 seems to strike a sensible balance between a single contract and direct works and should create great opportunities for using local resources.

However, changes will be needed to transition from the Council's current "light touch" construction management approach to manage this strategy efficiently, consistently and transparently.

What are the Council's priorities and plans for developing:

- Organisation chart(s), job specifications, and divisions of responsibility
- Recruitment and training policies and processes
- Procurement and contract strategies for each work category
- Processes for scoping, instructing, authorisation, monitoring and payment
- Systems for managing and communicating asset information"

2) The following written question has been received from Jane Thorp

"Leaseholders in Hove are being billed for major works to their block of over £100,000 per leaseholder. Leaseholders all over the city are being ruined by these huge bills. By definition, owner-occupiers of council flats are on low incomes. The council has failed to repoint external brickwork or to do concrete repairs for decades, which they are legally required to do. How can they now expect the working poor and pensioners to pay for this neglect?"

3) The following question has been received from David Pearce

"Some leaseholders in Hanover are facing bills of £44,000 each. The sale of a flat collapsed because this figure was supplied by the council for a conveyancing search. None of the leaseholders had been told about this cost or what works were planned. The non-resident leaseholders still have not been told. Why are leaseholders treated so contemptuously by this council?"

4) The following written question has been received from Dave Spafford.

“Independent surveyors employed by leaseholders on different estates consistently report that the works costs are hugely overpriced and that many works can be better met by repairs. They consistently say that the measurements used to cost a job are not precise or adequate because a proper “measured survey” has not been carried out. Their recommendations are never considered by the council during the consultation period. Why not?”

5) The following written question has been received from Izabela Rogalska.

“The Housing Revenue Account draws its funds from rents and service charges. What is the amount and percentage of the Housing Revenue Account used in this financial year to date to fund legal cases taken by the council against their leaseholders, such as the recent case against Bristol Estate?”

6) The following written question has been received from Tony Worsfold.

“Repayment options for major works include a charge put on the property against its eventual sale. This is delightfully called the **Non-Repayment** Equity Loan. The charge rises proportionately with the market value of the property. This could very well be seen as the council clawing their property back. How can the council demonstrate that this is not its intention?”

7) The following written question has been received from Amanda Lane

“BHCC has consistently blocked the Leaseholders Action Group from reaching other leaseholders by refusing to pass on information via their email database. The council claims that their IT system is not up to the task. How can such a large organisation lack the skills to overcome this, or is it simply that the council does not want leaseholders to have a voice?”

8) The following written question has been received from Julia Greenslade

“Can this council ensure that Kendal Court will have, in a timely manner, a working facility by provision of a launderette for the use of residents or that it be allowed for individuals to have a washing machine plumbed into their accommodation?”

9) The following written question has been received from Stephanie Crechriou

Hyde/BHCC Contract

“As a result of the Budget announcement regarding the HRA cap and the response by Councillor Meadows to Councillor Mears at the last meeting of full

Council could the Chairperson confirm the withdrawal of the Council from this contract?”

10) The following written question has been received from Amanda Bishop

Selective Licensing Scheme

Could the Committee also report at what regularity the Council is checking the database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents since the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (Banning Order Offences) Regulations 2018 came into force on 6 April 2018 and has the Council made, or considered, use of this legislation?”

11) The following written question has been received from Miriam Binder

Council Properties and Social Rents

“Could the Committee confirm that the sale of 499 council properties (previously accommodation at Social Rent levels) since 2011 to Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes was on the basis that rents were doubled? Have properties other than those sold to Seaside Homes since 2011 also been sold to Housing Associations or other organisations on the same basis? If yes, how many and to which landlords?”

12) The following written question has been received from Daniel Harris

Deaths in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation

Given the lack of information and detail in the report (Agenda item 41) will the Chairperson give a commitment that a future report includes;

- Life expectancy data covering residents, the wider homeless population & the population as a whole
- Information on all deaths over the last 2 years in Emergency and Temporary accommodation including details of the properties and those banned or evicted from Emergency and Temporary Accommodation
- Results of an independent survey of, and consultation with, residents in the properties involved
- Proposed changes in procedures and protocols to prevent unnecessary deaths in the future

13) The following written question has been received from Maria Garrett-Gotch

Buckley Close

“Is it a true representation of Council priorities relating to the environment and the needs of residents with disabilities that this development includes 11 parking bays for 12 properties with one flat that is wheelchair accessible? Could the Chairperson also explain the absence of any properties at Social Rent?”

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Committee for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the Council, nominated by the Mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of one Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

(1) Deputation from the Living Rent Campaign**Spokesperson Adrian Hart**

Supported by:

Diane Montgomery
Ian Needham
John Hadman
Carrie Hynds
Sheila Rimmer

Ward affected: All

(1) Deputation to the Housing & New Homes Committee from the Living Rent Campaign on HRA Living Rent and Social Rent

“We are here today to urge the housing and new homes committee to support the notice of motion to provide a ring fenced reserve that enables the council to provide some new council homes at more truly affordable social and living rents for households on the lowest incomes.

The Living Rent Campaign argues for rents to be set in relation to household incomes not the market. We want to see rent setting practice 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.

Looking at actual household incomes, previous reports indicate 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.

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. We estimate that a "living rent" (or 27.5% Living wage rent) which is calculated to be 60% more than social rents is affordable for most of the lowest 40% of household incomes (once energy cost savings on new council homes are allowed for) Under current financial modelling social or living rents do not achieve a surplus and so rents affordable for the bottom third of household incomes in the city are unlikely to be agreed by committee

Each year at least 50 socially rented council houses are sold under the right to buy. To date the council has replaced these with new homes whose rents have been more than double social rents and are not affordable for low income households. Over 5 years the council also transferred 499 socially rented council homes to Seaside Homes and the rents have doubled to Local Housing Allowance rates. So it can be estimated that at least 750 social rent properties have been lost to the city over the last 6 years. The council needs to replace this huge loss of truly affordable social rents.

There are no other housing providers (other than co-ops who are currently small scale) offering rents at less than Living wage rents. So far the council has only agreed 1 new council home at truly affordable rents (A living rent or 27.5% Living wage rent) This is wholly inadequate. The truth is that with the current financial modelling assumptions on new council homes, it is extremely difficult to achieve living rents and impossible to achieve social rents without a notional subsidy from the HRA, which an HRA ring fenced reserve could provide.

We therefore urge that the committee supports the Notice of Motion to create an HRA reserve which will open up the prospect of future rents on some new council homes that are truly affordable for the 40% of households on the lowest incomes in the city."