

# **HOUSING COMMITTEE ADDENDUM Amendments to Notices of Motion**

**4.00PM, WEDNESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

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# ADDENDUM

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# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Housing Committee

Date of meeting 28 September 2022

## Agenda Item 24(d)

### LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT

That the relevant changes are made to the recommendations as shown below in strikethrough and ***bold italics***:

#### Notice of Motion – Conservative Group

#### Housing Repairs Task Force

This Committee:

- 1) Notes that since the housing repairs service was insourced in March 2020, a backlog of ~~over 9,608~~ repairs has accumulated ***due to primarily the Covid crisis***;
- 2) Notes that tenant and leaseholder representatives were advised in August that the council is now looking to establish a housing repairs task force and will employ 11 separate contractors to try and address the backlog;
- 3) Requests that a report be presented to this committee that:
  - a. Clarifies the council's current housing repairs policies regarding insourcing and the use of contractors; and
  - b. Outlines how a proposed housing repairs task force will address the current backlog, including how much this will cost and how it will be funded;
  - c. Provides statistics on the progress on addressing the backlog.***

Proposed by: **Cllr Williams**

Seconded by: **Cllr Fowler**

**Motion, as amended:**

This Committee:

- 1) Notes that since the housing repairs service was insourced in March 2020, a backlog of repairs has accumulated due to primarily the Covid crisis;

- 2) Notes that tenant and leaseholder representatives were advised in August that the council is now looking to establish a housing repairs task force and will employ 11 separate contractors to try and address the backlog;
- 3) Requests that a report be presented to this committee that:
  - a. Clarifies the council's current housing repairs policies regarding insourcing and the use of contractors; and
  - b. Outlines how a proposed housing repairs task force will address the current backlog, including how much this will cost and how it will be funded;
  - c. Provides statistics on the progress on addressing the backlog.

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Housing Committee

Date of meeting 28 September 2022

## Agenda Item 24(d)

### LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT

That the relevant changes are made to the recommendations as shown below in strikethrough and ***bold italics***:

#### Notice of Motion – Conservative Group

#### Recognition of Mr Andy Winter

This Committee:

- 1) Records and sends its appreciation to Mr Andy Winter for his work as CEO of Brighton Housing Trust over 20 years, following the announcement of his retirement.
- 2) Recognises the positive impact Mr Winter's work has had on the lives of tenants and clients of Brighton Housing Trust.
- ~~3) Pays attention to Mr Winter's strong message to the council on addiction and begging in the city.~~

Proposed by: **Cllr Williams**

Seconded by: **Cllr Grimshaw**

#### Motion, as amended:

This Committee:

- 1) Records and sends its appreciation to Mr Andy Winter for his work as CEO of Brighton Housing Trust over 20 years, following the announcement of his retirement.
- 2) Recognises the positive impact Mr Winter's work has had on the lives of tenants and clients of Brighton Housing Trust.



# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Housing Committee

Date of meeting 28 September 2022

## Agenda Item 24(d)

### LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT

#### Ethical Landlord's Charter

That the relevant changes are made to the recommendations as shown below in strikethrough and ***bold italics***:

Council ***Committee*** notes that:

- Housing Committee has previously received a deputation on a Minimum Standards Charter from ACORN in 2019 which ~~highlighted~~ ***demanding on behalf of renters in the city a commitment to better*** standards relating to affordability of rents, security of tenancies and evictions, expected quality of repairs and general service, and discrimination;
- Housing Committee has also previously agreed to ***'work with Acorn and other stakeholders to draft an Ethical Landlords' Charter' having approved a joint motion on 23 June 2021*** ~~support the idea of an Ethical Landlords Charter;~~
- Other councils have previously produced their own versions of ethical landlord charters, including Bristol, which had a Bronze, Silver and Gold standard which ***with*** varying asks for each, as well as several London Boroughs, Norwich, and others;

Council ***Committee*** agrees to:

- Support ***and commit to the drafting, production and adoption of an aspirational Ethical Landlords Charter (see example attached table) in consultation with stakeholders, concerned community groups and affected renters, as previously agreed on 23 June 2021;*** ~~in addition to the standards used for procuring privately rented accommodation for households at risk of homelessness, and agrees to publish this on the council's website and promote to landlords and lettings agents in the city~~
- ***Facilitate a cross-party working group to work towards drafting and adopting such a charter***
- ~~Review the Ethical Landlords Charter periodically especially reflecting any new legislation that the government bring forward as part of their 'New Deal for private renters' in their Renter's Reform Bill.~~

Proposed by: **Cllr Williams**

Seconded by: **Cllr Fowler**

**Motion, as amended:**

Committee notes that:

- Housing Committee has previously received a deputation on a Minimum Standards Charter from ACORN in 2019 which demanded on behalf of renters in the city a commitment to better standards relating to affordability of rents, security of tenancies and evictions, expected quality of repairs and general service, and discrimination;
- Housing Committee has also previously agreed to 'work with Acorn and other stakeholders to draft an Ethical Landlords' Charter' having approved a joint motion on 23 June 2021;
- Other councils have previously produced their own versions of ethical landlord charters, including Bristol, which had a Bronze, Silver and Gold standard with varying asks for each, as well as several London Boroughs, Norwich, and others;

Committee agrees to:

- Support and commit to the drafting, production and adoption of an Ethical Landlords Charter (example attached) in consultation with stakeholders, concerned community groups and affected renters, as previously agreed on 23 June 2021;
- Facilitate a cross-party working group to work towards drafting and adopting such a charter

## **Brighton & Hove Ethical Standards for Landlords Charter**

Example document

### **Background**

Brighton and Hove has a housing crisis. House prices are amongst the highest in the UK, and the council housing waiting list is in its thousands. This shortage of affordable housing has left almost a third of Brighton residents reliant upon private landlords for a place to live. UK housing law currently allows private landlords to charge the highest possible rent they can get and evict tenants without reason. Unfortunately, many Brighton landlords have taken advantage of this and prioritise making money over the safety and security of tenants. This has caused a housing crisis where Brighton rents are now the highest in the UK and evictions are rife. This needs to change.

Landlords have a responsibility to provide safe, affordable homes to tenants. This charter is designed to guide responsible landlords in their duty. This charter is inspired by ACORN Brighton members who have consulted hundreds of renters across the city including at our 'Big Renters Meeting and approved by branch members at our Annual General Meeting on November 2, 2019.

### **Ethical Standards for Landlords in Brighton**

#### **Rent**

Landlords who prioritise maximising their rent returns over affordability for tenants have made Brighton now the most expensive place to rent in the UK (based on a wage to rent ratio.) This has left many working-class single people and families struggling to find a home in the city, and many renters now suffer a reduced quality of life due to paying most of their wages to their landlord. The situation is often worse for low-income tenants who rely upon Local Housing Allowance to help with high rent costs. Most rents in Brighton now exceed the Local Housing Allowance which discriminates against tenants on low incomes, resulting in homelessness, and gentrification and social cleansing of our city.

The Local Housing Allowance is set by the UK government based upon what they view as a fair rent within the local broad rental market area. A landlord who charges rents that are above the Local Housing Allowance does this in the knowledge that they are disregarding the UK government's assessment of what the maximum rent should be for tenants on income support in Brighton, and are therefore wilfully discriminating against low-income tenants.

The widely accepted 'affordability rule' for rents is that they should be no more than 30% of net income. The Brighton Living wage, as endorsed by Brighton and Hove City Council as the minimum wage a worker should receive to have a reasonable standard of living. Landlords should honour the spirit of the Brighton & Hove Living Wage campaign by keeping rents at below the 30% net income.

## **Tenancies and evictions**

Current UK housing law entitles tenants to a minimum tenancy of 6 months. However, once this 6-month period is over, landlords can evict tenants without giving a reason under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988. This insecurity of tenure leaves tenants vulnerable to rent increases, tenants are often scared to ask for repairs for fear of being 'revenge' evicted under Section 21, which is also a leading cause of homelessness across the UK.

Landlord should commit to-

- Offer all tenants a minimum 2 year assured shorthold tenancy with a 6-month break clause for the tenant. This allows the tenant to have increased security in their home, yet also offers a break-clause so they are not legally responsible for the rent for the full two years if they should need to vacate the property.
- Refrain from issuing Section 21 evictions immediately.
- No winter evictions. Landlords should not serve any eviction notices under any circumstances during winter months.

It is recognised that there are occasions where landlords may need to take back possession of the property for valid reasons. If a landlord seeks to evict a tenant through no fault of the tenant, then the landlord should

- Provide a minimum of 3 months' notice
- Assist the tenant in finding suitable alternative accommodation and
- Help with relocating costs.

## **Repairs and service**

A common concern amongst renters across Brighton is problems requesting repairs from landlords. Common complaints from renters include issues with damp and mould, emergency repairs not being treated seriously, cleanliness of properties at the beginning of their tenancy,

and also serious structural issues resulting in dangerous conditions. One of the main concerns from tenants is that there is no accountability or transparency in how repairs are carried out and how complaints are responded to.

Landlords should commit to the following ethical standards:

- Respond to all emergency repairs (any repair issue which threatens to harm persons or property including no hot water) within 24 hours.
- Respond to all non-emergency repair requests within 48 hours to acknowledge receipt of the request and give a timeline of when the repair issue will be dealt with.
- Landlords to keep a log of all repairs for up to 5 years which is accessible to tenants in the interests of transparency.
- All maintenance and repairs to be carried out by certified contractors.
- Tenant to be given name and contact details of any contractor carrying out repair work on their property.
- Mandatory deep clean of properties before the start of a new tenancy at no cost to the former tenants.

Everyone deserves a safe & well-maintained home

Landlords who take their responsibility to ensure their tenants have a safe and comfortable home. Landlords should;

- Ensure properties are safe and secure
- Ensure properties are regularly decorated to a reasonable standard, and respect the rights of their tenant to decorate their own home to their taste.

## **Discrimination**

It is important to emphasize a landlord's responsibility to treat all tenants fairly and in line with the Equalities Act 2019. Landlords and their agent must commit to not discriminating against tenants and prospective tenants based upon their age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status or disability. Landlords should commit to not discriminating against tenants due to their employment status, and should respect a tenant right to a family life and not discriminate against tenants who have children or tenants who have pets.

