

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 20 JANUARY 2021**

**VIRTUAL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Gibson (Joint Chair), Hugh-Jones (Joint Chair), Phillips (Deputy Chair), Williams (Opposition Spokesperson), Mears (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Fowler and Osborne

**PART ONE**

**121 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**(a) Declaration of Substitutes:** None

**(b) Declarations of Interest:** None

**(c) Exclusion of Press and Public:** To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

Item 132 – Part Two. The committee did not call the item for discussion; therefore, the Part Two report was not heard, and the press and public were not excluded from the meeting.

**122 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

122.1 The minutes of the Housing Committee joint meeting held on 21 October and committee meeting held on 18 November 2020 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**123 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS**

**123.1 Introduction**

Welcome to the first housing committee of 2021, held in very difficult circumstances with around per 100,000 cases in Brighton and health services at breaking point we all need to hunker down and follow the guidance to avoid unnecessary contact with others. We continue to prioritise providing a Covid safe service to residents, staff and contractors. The housing repairs service in lockdown will again be limited, though, subject to Covid risk assessment, this time to *essential* repairs rather than the *emergency* repairs of the first lock down.

Following the introduction of our new IT system for the Housing Register (Home Connections) we have been working with the provider to resolve the initial issues for people logging in for the first time. We understand this has now been resolved but in the rare event of a customer having an issue please contact us and we will quickly be able to resolve this. We are still working with the provider to resolve other issues relating to the search function so people can find cases more easily and several other back office functions and we will continue to work closely until all issues are resolved. However, mutual exchanges are being arranged.

### 123.2 Industrial dispute update

Having inherited an industrial dispute with GMB when the Service transferred from Mears, we have worked hard to listen and negotiate a solution that is fair and workable. At the time of writing, we are considering a set of proposals with GMB union with a view to opening up a potential way forward where we will consult with and be in a position to offer harmonised BHCC contracts to the workforce. We anticipate that the majority of staff will be better off under the new harmonised BHCC terms and conditions which includes sick pay for staff currently receiving SSP only and additional holiday pay. Staff will be offered the opportunity to choose to accept BHCC terms and conditions or to remain on existing terms and conditions. Assuming the dispute is resolved we look forward to working closely with unions to improve and expand the service where possible.

### 123.3 Appreciation

I know from day to day contact how tremendously hard officers are working in the pandemic and how much strain they are under, like so many public servants, to keep essential services running and I would hope we as a committee can take an opportunity today to record our great thanks and appreciation of their continuing efforts. Particularly notable has been the team working across housing and commissioning to, in really difficult circumstances achieve acceptances on offers to provide 30 additional council properties for housing first. 6 are already in council ownership enabling us to seize the opportunity to house long term some entrenched rough sleepers who have spent many of the last 20 years on the city's streets. This is a fantastic achievement that can help transform lives. Heartfelt thanks go to Diane, Martin, Emily, Sylvia and Ododo for their impressive work on this.

### 123.4 Homelessness

The pandemic has turned so much upside down, one positive has been the tremendous additional help the council have provided for homeless people. We have sustained an offer of shelter to all rough sleepers and others facing homelessness. We are determined to sustain this approach for as long as possible but as government support is currently limited almost entirely to those housed before October and we have around 700 homeless households in emergency accommodation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. The recommendations in the Next Steps report (agenda item 135) that we maximise both benefit recovery and move on if agreed will help reduce the councils overspend and in turn enabling our resources to go further and help more people.

We have also enabled 300 homeless households to move into private rented accommodation since April which given the Covid restrictions has been a fantastic achievement and enables those households to be settled and get on with their lives rather than being stuck in temporary accommodation.

On the subject of homelessness, I am aware that there has been concern that SWEP provision for rough sleepers has not been fully accessible. SWEP is operating in very different circumstances than before under the everyone in approach to rough sleepers. SWEP numbers have been lower than previous years, but this reflects the reality that most rough sleepers have been housed already. Whether or not SWEP is open (and it has opened for much of the Christmas and early new year period) every day there is an offer of accommodation for verified rough sleepers and this is why there are estimated to be only around 30 rough sleepers most of whom have not accepted accommodation offers. So far 22 people picked up through SWEP have now been housed more permanently which is an important legacy of the way SWEP is now operating. Another homeless goal the adoption of the homeless bill of rights “as a standard against which the council and its partners judge our policies and practices” is reported on in agenda item 130 which covers progress on the workplan. I again urge all to hold Labour and Green parties to account on the goals set out in our joint work programme.

### 123.5 Work programme progress

Despite the pandemic, we have worked really hard to try and keep the momentum going on achieving the goals set out in the joint Green- Labour Housing and Homelessness programme which is the backbone of housing committee’s work. This cooperative approach has contributed to record numbers of additional council homes being achieved for the city. In fact, it is projected that within the first 2 years of working together more additional council units, more at lower rents will be achieved than in the previous 4 years. The programme to achieve the ambitious goal of 800 additional council houses will be advanced by the decisions on Windlesham House (agenda item132) and Frederick St (agenda item133). These two reports taken together have the potential to progress the development of another 21 new council homes. The performance against the workplan and housing management is set out in agenda item 130 and whilst it shows some delays mostly attributable to the pandemic, there has been some notable progress both in the reduction in rough sleeper numbers which the latest count recorded an all-time low of 27 and increased investment planned for next year when it is proposed that around £4.4m is spent on sustainability and carbon reduction towards the ambitious joint programme target of becoming a carbon neutral city by 2030.

### 123.6 Towards carbon neutral 2030

As the report entitled “Housing action towards Carbon Neutral 2030” states, carbon emissions from all domestic properties contribute 40% of the city’s total emissions, with approximately 11% of these emissions (from domestic properties) coming from the 11,500 council housing tenants and 2,500 leaseholders. Local authorities are uniquely placed to stimulate the growth of local skills and supply chains, thereby eventually benefiting the wider community as well as council tenants and leaseholders. Of course, this needs to be properly planned and the coming year will be spent doing just that, specifically in the form of the Council Housing Asset Management Strategy.

In anticipation of the huge investment needed to make our housing easier to heat, we are proposing to build up a reserve and are kick-starting this by setting aside around £4m towards future expenditure in the budget report (item 127 on the agenda).

### 123.7 **Budget 21/22**

Other budget highlights include:

- A 1.5% rent increase which helps towards funding
- A 21% increase in planned spending on additional council homes
- A 19% increase in overall capital investment and investment in the existing housing stock
- A 33% increase in investment in sustainability and carbon reduction

In our current time of increasing joblessness and pandemic recession by investing significantly more in housing and greening housing we can play a part in expanding economic activity and through the increasing stress on providing contracts to small and medium enterprises we can boost local incomes, provide jobs in repairs and community wealth more. This is a key focus for our in-house Repairs & Maintenance service and the contractors we engage through this and our planned and major works arrangements.

The budget also sets out continued support for youth services and adult education for tenants funded in proportion to the benefits provided for tenants and subject to consultation.

I hope you find the meeting interesting and can see that we are seeking to advance the housing work programme as much as possible in these extraordinary and difficult times.

### 124 **CALL OVER**

124.1 Items 130 and 132 were not called for discussion and the recommendations contained therein were therefore approved and adopted. The remaining items were called for discussion.

### 125 **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

125.1 **(a) Petitions** – None

125.2 **(b) Written Questions** – SEVEN Questions have been submitted.

125.3 **Barry Hughes:**

In 2019 four blocks on the Sylvan Hall Estate received S20 Notices of major works, including new roofs and rainwater goods. I now find that a number of elements originally specified have not been done or completed as required.

As I am limited to 100 words, I will concentrate on just one aspect. The specification states: 'The sizing of both gutters and downpipes will match the existing original as a minimum.'

The new rainwater goods are a smaller size than the original and consequently cannot cope with moderate rainfall. Can these gutters and downpipes be replaced and who will pay?

125.4 Response: Thank you for your question.

The Housing team are following up on the issues that residents have raised following the roofing works to the Sylvan Estate and have carried out a number of visits to assess how the roofs and rainwater goods are operating and to identify any issues. We are aware of residents' concerns around the sizing of the rainwater goods and are in contact with our contractors on some specific changes that need to be made. The downpipes are slightly smaller than the original rainwater goods on the block. However, they have been specifically designed to be effective on these properties and deal with rainfall appropriately. Deep flow guttering is in place that is able to disperse rainfall from the roof down into the soakaways as quickly as possible. There have been some areas where we have asked contractors to return to address specific issues with the rainwater goods which they have done. Following a site visit in early January the rainwater goods appeared to be performing well, some elements were identified that require contractors to return and address. Our contractors have been responsive and are committed to resolving any issues and the council are closely and regularly inspecting the blocks. We are specifically aware of concerns from residents in respect of the creation of a walkway to the tank area; and the installation of insulation. If further changes are required to any of the rainwater goods, then these will be investigated and followed up with contractors. The Housing team are focused on achieving quality with our planned works and do appreciate the feedback from residents. The service is making some further changes to how it investigates reports of defects raised by residents after major works which should support quicker resolution. Housing officers will continue to monitor the performance of the rainwater goods on the Sylvan Hall Estate on a regular basis, in rainy conditions and will do this jointly with the Tenants and Residents Association as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow.

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.5 Supplementary: The response is noted. Who pays for items to be completed?

125.6 Response: Defects or other works will be completed and paid for by contractors, not tenants.

125.7 **Cathy Archer:**

There are 2 areas of land at Kemptown Gasworks owned by the council. It is suggested that these 2 areas of land be sold to the land developers. If 2 tranches of land of these dimensions were combined in some way, there would be enough land to provide social or genuinely affordable housing in an area that needs more of this.

Does the committee agree?

125.8 Response: Thank you for your question.

One of the Council's key priorities is delivery of affordable housing. As part of the due diligence for land use, the Council is required to consider all options for the best use of Council land. Therefore, where feasible to do so taking into account locality and planning use, feasibility studies are undertaken to consider the viability of housing provision.

In respect of the Council land adjacent the gasworks, all options are being considered. Whereas the sale of the land would produce a capital sum that could be put towards alternative housing provision, and may facilitate a development on the larger site not owned by the council that may deliver affordable homes through the planning process, the Council also needs to consider the potential and viability for it to redevelop the sites it owns in isolation and what provision of housing can be achieved on the sites. This is currently being explored.

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.9 Supplementary: In City Plan 1, sites should include 30% affordable housing. How will this be achieved?

125.10

Response: The gasworks Planning application will need to achieve affordable housing targets. Development on land owned by the council will have all options looked at.

125.11 **David Thomas:**

SWEP and flexibility: After a public campaign, in February 2018 the council agreed that in addition to the triggers for opening SWEP there would be a flexible approach, based on common sense and empathy for the homeless. Last winter it was accordingly open on a number of occasions when the triggers were not met.

This winter the promise of flexibility is gone from the website, from all official utterances so far, and from the description of SWEP opening on pages 178-79 of your reports pack. When was the decision made to drop this, who by, and for what reason?

125.12 Response: Thank you for your question.

The trigger for SWEP is a 'feels like' temperature or an Amber weather warning, however as an authority we continue to have a pragmatic approach to opening, as evidenced by the service being open consistently over Christmas. Apologies that this is not explicit. There has been no change to the practice in previous years. The service has been open on 30 separate nights this winter. SWEP is operating differently in response to the pandemic and follows government guidelines.

We are continuing to operate everyone in and are offering accommodation to rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping. Hundreds of rough sleepers have been accommodated since March, and there has been a significant decline in the number of people rough sleeping. There are currently estimated to be around 10 people sleeping on the streets in Brighton & Hove, some of whom are currently refusing all offers of accommodation.

We are working hard to ensure that nobody returns to rough sleeping when SWEP closes and over half of the people who have used SWEP this year have been placed in longer term accommodation.

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.13

Supplementary: I am of course very happy to hear that the council is still operating a policy of flexible opening based on common sense and empathy over and above the triggers. The need for flexibility is greater here because as a coastal city we get a lot of severe storms that don't come within the triggers. Combined heavy wind and rain present a danger to life.

The first paragraph on SWEP on the website used to read (according to a snapshot on the way back machine internet archive dated 20/10/20) "We open a severe weather shelter in extreme weather conditions. The shelter can be opened if needed at any time of the year to respond to the impact of severe rain, snow, storms, heat and wind chill."; now it only says "We open a severe weather shelter when the temperature is predicted to drop below 0 degrees Celsius or when there is an amber weather warning." That was what led me to believe there had been a change. I don't think you can claim opening over Christmas and New Year as an example of credibility. I keep a close eye on the weather, and it seemed to me that the trigger was met for the whole of that period.

So, my supplementary is obvious: how many times so far this winter has SWEP been open when the triggers have not been met? And – is it open tonight?

125.14

Response: SWEP has been open more times this winter than when the trigger point has been reached as circumstances have changed. There is no information at this time regarding whether SWEP is open tonight. Housing officers will notify the Chair of Housing committee when SWEP is open.

125.15 **Daniel Harris**

In a recent report into Youth Homelessness the Albert Kennedy Trust reports that: 'LGBT young people are more likely to find themselves homeless than their non LGBT peers, comprising up to 24% of the youth homeless population. Whilst homeless, they are significantly more likely to experience targeted violence, sexual exploitation, substance misuse, and physical & mental health problems than other homeless youth.'

I have over the years struggled to get Vulnerable LGBT Clients housed by this council with many being fobbed off. The LGBT liaison role was scrapped. They are often placed into disgusting living conditions and many revert to taking drugs and participating in escorting and other dangerous activities due to loneliness and the lack of tailored support, sadly some have died. We are a city of sanctuary!

When will the council commit to a feasibility study / report into purchasing / providing a specific Homelessness Accommodation exclusively for our younger LGBT Community?

125.16

Response: Thank you for your question.

The Homelessness legislation and related caselaw sets out which households a local authority housing department has a duty to provide accommodation for. In terms of vulnerability there is a lot of caselaw around this and the test in relation to vulnerability is whether a person would suffer more harm when homeless than the average person.

The council often has to make difficult decisions when assessing what accommodation duty is owed but there is a statutory right to a review and then recourse to challenge in the county court where a person thinks the council has got the decision wrong. We are not aware of any evidence that the council has fobbed anyone off, and in fact this council's decision making is considered exemplary as evidenced by other councils contracting with us to undertake statutory reviews on their behalf. Nevertheless, we don't want to be complacent. We understand that some groups are more at risk of becoming homeless, and as part of our Equality Impact Assessment aim to ensure these are identified and mitigations put in place. We will keep under review all minority groups to try and would like to engage with them to ensure no-one is disproportionately disadvantaged.

Regarding the specific issue raised in relation to the condition of accommodation that people are placed in when we do have an accommodation duty, we aim to ensure that that our contracted accommodation is of a good standard and will deal with any specific issues raised about this. Notwithstanding that, the pandemic has overwhelmed housing services nationally, and Brighton is no exception. The impacts of Covid are such that we have around 800 households in emergency accommodation. Most are in accommodation that we have had to find quickly to meet demand. It is accepted that this has an impact in some instances, on the standard of accommodation provided and has meant that more temporary accommodation has had to be sourced outside the city.

We are reviewing our temporary and emergency accommodation provision needs and are increasing the number of units owned by the council as part of a longer-term plan to improve management and quality. We will ensure that wherever possible temporary accommodation will be self-contained and suitable and safe for diverse minority groups.

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.17

Supplementary: Safeguarding is important as the city is a magnet for LGBT community. It is noted that other cities like London and Manchester have LGBT specific accommodation. Are the LGBT community safe in Brighton and Hove? The city should be a safe sanctuary.

125.18

Response: It is noted that the LGBT community have disproportionate issues and it would be good to know what other cities do. Please send information.

125.19 **Jim Deans:**



Councillors, Sussex Homeless Support and virtually every other charity in England including Shelter & Crisis are calling for immediate homeless support, First Night! support.

We have been asking for years for a community support shelter which would also act as triage. Councillors 100% supported this after Councillor Druitt raise this to you all. It will save lives and finance why have you and the community been ignored.

125.20 Response: Thank you for your question.

At the present time Brighton & Hove City Council is continuing to operate everyone in and is offering self-contained accommodation to people who are or at risk of rough sleeping.

Since Council voted for a night shelter two key factors have influenced possible night shelter provision:

- Research from national homelessness organisations has shown that rapid rehousing into mainstream housing with support has better outcomes than night shelters or even large hostel accommodation.
- During the pandemic government health advice has been to seek to house all homeless people in self-contained accommodation and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government no longer supports the provision of congregate night shelters. The night shelter set up by the council is no longer operating

Brighton & Hove City Council has worked hard during the Covid-19 pandemic to meet the government target to bring 'Everyone In' and has been successful in an initial bid for transition funding to enable both those housed during the lockdown and those found rough sleeping subsequently to move into sustainable forms of suitable accommodation receiving the largest single award outside the combined London authorities. We are continuing to work with the MHCLG on longer term projects to meet the accommodation and support needs of this group and were successful in a revenue and capital award to deliver sustainable long-term accommodation in self-contained units of housing.

In line with MHCLG and Public Health England guidance none of this accommodation will include the provision of shelters. We know, thanks to research completed by Crisis and other organisations that put homeless people at the centre of their work, that shelters have poor outcomes and that, particularly due to the pandemic but also more generally, they do not offer a safe environment for people to address the often complex needs that led to them becoming homeless.

As a city we are working with the MHCLG, partners and stakeholders on improving our offer to people who are at risk of or have been rough sleeping by offering 7 day a week street outreach who have access to self-contained accommodation in short stay assessment hubs offering rapid move on to long term accommodation options including Housing First. We believe that this will enable us to best meet the needs of people who become homeless in Brighton & Hove.'

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.21

Supplementary: It is noted that women who suffer domestic violence in the home can end up on the street and this is not acceptable. A triage centre is needed.

125.22

Response: Women are able to ring the out-of-hours service and get accommodation immediately.

125.23 **Dave Croydon:** Charles Harrison speaking on behalf of Dave Croydon

Following the meeting between the Interim Executive Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities and members of the B&H Housing Coalition on Wed 15 July 2020, would the Council please report on the status of the actions we agreed at the meeting?

125.24 Response: Thank you for your question.

I understand this list is taken from your notes of an informal introductory meeting that took place 6 months ago and that as you will be aware, the Interim Executive Director did not agree this list of actions. There has been further correspondence on some of these issues in the intervening months but if you require more information on any particular point you should contact Interim Executive Director direct. Item c is on hold until such time as it is feasible to organise such an event. In the meantime, I'd encourage members of the coalition to comment on the regular "Next Steps" reports that come to Housing Committee or contact me about them directly. Item d will be covered in the response to Charles Harrison's question. Item e falls within a larger piece of work the council is currently doing to review its temporary accommodation.

As part of this, officers will be contacting other local authorities, such as Cambridge, where similar pilot projects are being implemented, so we can learn from their experience.

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.25

Supplementary: When has the interim executive director time has been extended too?

125.26

Response: Recruitment for the post is currently underway with interviews being arranged for February. Once the appointment has been made an announcement will be made.

125.27 **Charles Harrison:**

This relates to agenda item 129 - Update on Sustainability Measures for New Homes. I note that the report section 5 states 'The community has not been engaged in this process'. Meetings on Sustainability Measures were hosted by the Council with a group of independent and experienced construction professionals on 8 Jan, 10 June and 1 July, following a request from the 13 Nov 2019 Housing Committee. Unfortunately, BHCC do not appear to have encouraged any further engagement on this important topic since July last year.

Why is the Council not supporting the Councillors' commitment to engage with experts from the Community who offer to provide pro-bono independent advice and support in the Council's objectives?

125.28 Response: Thank you for your question.

Council officers met with the Housing Coalition three times over the past year to discuss sustainability measures for housing development. This has led to improvements to current projects.

The council established a Zero Carbon New Builds Member Working Group in 2020 which has addressed the improvement and implementation of sustainable construction methods. The Working Group is committed to monitoring our progress and providing updates on progress, including reporting to today's Housing Committee. Officers have engaged a range of outside experts and organisations to support this work, including the Housing Coalition. Officers' need to ensure their focus is on delivering the housing supply programme and capacity has been restricted over the COVID-19 period, not least as a result of officers being deployed to other responsibilities. Our focus has been to prioritise the work of the Working Group and therefore it has not been possible to service another group looking at this issue. That said, we will continue to engage with a wide range of experts and organisations and welcome the Housing Coalition's continued involvement in this.

As we emerge from lockdown, we anticipate being able to reinstate regular meetings with the Housing Coalition and others, to take place at least twice a year. In the meantime, we would be happy to share the papers that have come to that Working Group with the members of the Coalition and invite comments from them.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who have provided input to date.

Do you have a supplementary question?

125.29

Supplementary: Comments: Meetings are productive and open to ideas. The report shows good initiatives and the six months extension is a positive way of continuing dialogue.

**(c) Deputations** – One deputation from 17 December 2020 Full Council.

125.30 **Deputation concerning SWEP**

Spokesperson: David Thomas. Supported by Barry Hughes, David Croydon, Jim Deans, Daniel Harris, Charles Harrison.

Summary

This deputation concerns two groups of homeless people in Brighton & Hove. In this cold winter in the middle of the pandemic, this council has decided that although it has helped these two groups in the past it is now no longer prepared to do so. SWEP: The

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, or SWEP, is what every local authority has to do to provide shelter to rough sleepers, anyone at all, when the weather is bad. In this city we have generous criteria for opening SWEP. Last year, when it was open, it was announced on the council's website and emails were sent to community groups, and everyone knew that you could go down to the shelter at Brighton Town Hall between 7 and 10pm and get shelter and something to eat, and people could tell the rough sleepers they knew that it was open.

This year there is the pandemic, and so arrangements have to be different to be Covid safe. Despite the "everyone in" programme, there are still many rough sleepers, and more every day – the council estimates 30. But also – and this has nothing to do with any pandemic – it is secret. This year we have Secret SWEP. It is not announced on the website when it is open, we don't know where it is, and the community groups are not being told anything. St Mungo's outreach workers, we are told, will contact the people they know about and tell them. We know this is not reaching everybody. On Monday morning 7th December, when the triggers were met and it was miserably cold, Jim Deans had two men waiting for him at his office in the morning who had used SWEP last year and would have used it this year, but who had no idea it was open.

The only reason given for this is that if people knew it was open, they might arrive from outside Brighton. That is not good enough, it is a disgrace. NRPF: In March this year in the first wave of the pandemic the government asked local authorities to "bring everyone in", to offer accommodation to everyone who was homeless. There are some people living here who have "no recourse to public funds", NRPF; they are people with limited leave to remain, or none, who are not normally entitled to help unless they have children or serious care needs. The government said these should be accommodated too, but they wouldn't change the NRPF rules, despite many people including this Council asking them to, so the council had to pay the full cost for this group under their emergency public health powers. Nevertheless, the city has looked after this group through the pandemic so far, and that was the position when the administration changed from Labour to the Green party. However, in the last few weeks, this council has decided that they will not be helped any more. Here are two groups of homeless people who need help this cold and wet winter; rough sleepers who St Mungo's can't reach, and people with NRPF who have no other resource. We call on the council to reverse its policies, to let the community know when and where SWEP is open so that we can help people who need it to get shelter, and to make "everyone in" so that it includes absolutely everyone in this City of Sanctuary.

125.31 Response: Thank you for your deputation.

SWEP: Our street outreach partners St Mungo's SOS are currently working in the city seven days a week to engage with everyone rough sleeping to help support them into safe accommodation. This offer is available every day and not just when the weather meets the threshold for SWEP, and we would encourage everyone to log people who are street homeless with Streetlink regardless of the weather. Streetlink asks for where people are bedded down but this can also be where they are located during the day.

Alternatively, services can support people to contact the Housing Options duty line and arrange placement via this route. Additionally, during the week in the mornings people can be directed to First Base (BHT) who work closely with SOS to ensure people are

offered accommodation. This information (including telephone numbers) is on our website and has been shared in the local press, social media and by direct email to all services working with homeless people in the city including Sussex Homeless Support.

Some people with complex needs can find it difficult to move from the streets, and we are aware there are around 10 people currently sleeping rough in the city. When SWEP is triggered this information is provided to services who are able to direct people to accommodation including St Mungo's, Housing Options, Fire Services, the Police, and Health and H&ASC partners. St Mungo's Street Outreach Service will contact people by telephone and go out seeking the people we know to be rough sleeping during the day to find them self-contained warm accommodation. Anyone not accommodated during the day will be referred into self-contained accommodation in our newly-commissioned council-run SWEP venue by the street outreach service. In order to safely manage access in line with infection prevention standards we are taking referrals from SOS and are not publicising the address. NRPF: As outlined in at November Housing Committee, in line with MHCLG guidance dated 22 September 2020 local authorities must ensure that any support offered to non-UK nationals who are not eligible for homelessness assistance complies with legal restrictions. Housing Committee agreed that officers work with the local community and voluntary sector organisations to provide clear information for rough sleepers with NRPF who the Council cannot accommodate including sources of support and assistance. Housing Committee also noted that the Co-Chair of Housing has written to the Home Secretary asking that all necessary measures are taken to avoid pushing migrants into homelessness for the duration of the pandemic. This includes asylum seekers and others with no recourse to public funds as well as recently recognised refugees whose asylum support is being withdrawn. We propose a further update at a future Housing Committee.

Homelessness is not a crime, and Siroil and I resist any attempt to treat it as such. The council's priority is to support those sleeping rough into safe, secure accommodation and help them make a permanent move off the streets. The pandemic and the resulting economic crisis make this ongoing support more vital than ever.

The Government has changed the immigration rules to make rough sleeping a legal ground for deportation from the UK. We believe this is discriminatory, wrong and likely to play into the hands of exploitative landlords, employers and criminals.

The work we do to help rough sleepers is based on trust. The success of that work depends on our ability to gain and maintain the trust of the rough sleepers we work with, some of whom are extremely vulnerable and traumatised. Trust is vital in order for people to feel able to tell us about issues like exploitation, modern slavery, abuse and other vulnerable people at risk.

We do not support the sharing of data with the Home Office that could lead to the deportation of rough sleepers. Where rough sleepers have an immigration status which prohibits the use of public funds, we support an approach which will assess their cases and, where they could be eligible, we will work with partners to assist them to achieve settled status. We refuse to support discriminatory rules that could exacerbate the risks to which some of the most vulnerable people are exposed.

David Thomas thanked the Chair and reiterated that SWEP should not be secret, as this was against government advice.

## 126 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

### 127 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2021/22 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

127.1 Craig Garoghan presented the report to the committee.

127.2 Councillor Atkinson was informed that the provision of £3m has been set aside in the capital programme for the general acquisition of properties in the HRA. This can be used for purchases of homes to be used for general needs or temporary accommodation but will be dependent on the business case needs. The budget proposes the continuation of the funding of up to £40,000 for adult learning services to support ongoing work across council housing estates. The 30 year forecast will include increased provision for bad debts.

127.3 Councillor Mears was informed that the £40,000 for adult learning will contribute to schemes at Whitehawk and Hangleton & Knoll. It was confirmed that a breakdown of costs in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget will be sent to the committee members. With regard to the fleet transfer it was noted that some procurement will be required to replace some of the old vehicles. A stock condition survey will form part of the asset management survey which will come back to the Housing committee. It was noted that the Fire Service's report relating to the Pankhurst Avenue flats fire was still awaited, however, actions have been taken and the report is currently under review. The ventilation system at the Housing Centre is the responsibility of the tenant, Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC). It was noted that as the service costs increase the hedge rate will also need to increase to keep inline. The councillor noted that tenants had agreed to funds from the HRA but no more.

#### Debate

127.4 Councillor Williams considered that a full report from the Fire Service on the fire at Pankhurst Avenue would be very important, as would be a complete breakdown of financial situation regarding in house services. The councillor considered the post of an early intervention officer was much needed. It was noted that there had been excellent reports of the adult learning at Whitehawk and considered this money well spent.

127.5 Councillor Hugh-Jones considered the retro fitting items to increase carbon efficiency into council homes produced massive benefits. The increase in housing stock via home purchases was considered good as was the stock condition survey. The investment in homes was good all round. The adult learning at Whitehawk was considered good and noted that courses will be increased. The provision of £4m towards sustainability was also considered good.

127.6 Councillor Gibson considered the report to be positive with a strong budget. It was considered that the building of new homes increased community wealth. Efforts to install photovoltaic panels need to double as it was considered that expectations need to be exceeded.

127.7 The Chair put the recommendations to a vote, and they were agreed by 8 votes with 2 abstentions.

**RESOLVED: That the Housing Committee:**

2.1 Approves a rent increase of up to 1.5% in line with government legislation as detailed in paragraph 4.15 of the report.

2.2 Approves the service charges and fees as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.

2.3 Notes the proposal to set up a capital reserve of £4.010m for use in 2021/22 and beyond as discussed in paragraph 4.13.

2.4 Notes the proposal to use £1.200m of the Direct Revenue Funding to fund Housing First purchases as discussed in paragraph 4.11.

2.5 Notes the proposal to use £0.680m of the Direct Revenue Funding to fund general acquisition purchases as discussed in paragraph 4.12.

2.6 Notes the current HRA forecast outturn for 2020/21 in Appendix 1 to the report of a £0.860m underspend.

2.7 Notes the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and 30-year financial projections shown in Appendix 5 to the report.

2.8 Notes the requirement that further work on identifying resources will have to be considered to meet Carbon neutral aims 2030.

**That Housing Committee approves and recommends to Policy & Resources Committee:**

2.9 That the updated HRA revenue budget for 2021/22 as shown in Appendix 2 be agreed and recommended to full Council for approval.

2.10 Notes the 3-year programme as set out in Appendix 4 and that the Capital Programme Budget of £38.395m for 2021/22 be agreed and recommended to full Council for approval.

**That Full Council:**

2.11 Approves the HRA revenue budget for 2021/22 as shown in Appendix 2.

2.12 Notes the 3-year programme as set out in Appendix 4 and approves the Capital Programme Budget of £38.395m for 2021/22.

**128 HOUSING ACTION TOWARDS CARBON NEUTRAL 2030**

128.1 Miles Davidson introduced the report to the committee.

- 128.2 Councillor Fowler was informed that the solar panel pilot schemes are still ongoing, even after Brexit. They cover three sites on communal roofs, the benefits are being explored. The Shine project will finish at the end of February 2021. An Energy Advice officer has been recruited. The schemes will be ongoing; however, these are stalled at the moment due to the pandemic. The anecdotal evidence for air source heat pump house installations is good and it is hoped to roll this out to more homes. It was noted that air source heat pumps can have different results from house to house.
- 128.3 Councillor Atkinson was informed that residents can register on the Solar Together Sussex website to be considered for solar panels. Partner organisations and a mail-out have also informed residents of the scheme. Brighton and Hove have the highest number of registrations with 1,183, with some 221 accepting the given quotes. Following surveys, 18.5% have accepted, which relates to a 3% above average pick-up.
- 128.4 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that gas boilers will be replaced with air source heat pumps eventually. The improvements will be difficult to see as the results will differ from property to property.

#### Debate

- 128.5 Councillor Hugh-Jones considered the Shine project to be positive and noted that in Eastbourne a refit of a 1950s block of flats with air heat source heat pump system had been successful. The councillor welcomed the budget and noted that the Solar Together Sussex had nudged homeowners into change.
- 128.6 Councillor Osborne considered the report to be good and acknowledged the position in the city. The councillor considered the stimulation of the supply chain to be good with Brighton and Hove City Council acting as catalyst for the private sector where Green growth was needed. It was noted that the removal of gas boilers would be a challenge, which would require a lot of community engagement.
- 128.7 The Chair put the recommendations to a vote, and they were agreed by unanimously.

#### **RESOLVED: That Housing Committee:**

2.1 Notes the content of the report

2.2 Approves the draft Housing Revenue Account Carbon Neutral Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 in Appendix 1

2.3 Agrees that a detailed costed retrofit plan, that includes revising Energy Performance Certificate targets for Council homes in line with the commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2030, be brought to Housing Committee in October / November 2021, in time for this to inform the budget setting process for 2022/23.

2.4 Commits to identifying resources from the Housing Revenue Account needed for reduction in carbon emissions from council homes to assist in achieving a carbon neutral city by 2030 and notes that Housing Revenue Account reserves towards this are being built up as part of the budget-setting process, subject to approval by Policy & Resources Committee.



**129 UPDATE ON SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES FOR NEW HOMES AND HOUSING SUPPLY SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**

129.1 Nicholas Fishlock introduced the report to the committee.

129.2 Councillor Fowler was informed that Councillors Hugh-Jones, Hill and Mears along with officers from Housing, Property, Planning, Building Control and Regeneration were members of the working group. The working group formed following the 'Sustainability Measures for New Homes' report in November 2019, when it was agreed a Working Group would be set up to review these actions and monitor the implementation progress.

Debate

129.3 Councillor Hugh-Jones welcomed the report which was considered a fantastic example of cross-departmental working. The councillor considered the joining of Good Homes alliance would be positive idea which would allow the council to draw on other authorities' experience.

129.4 Councillor Osborne consider the report to be a good across department working which would stimulate the private sector. The councillor considered Design South East to offer expert advice and to be useful. The working group is working well and supported the 6 months extension. It was noted that the prevention of fuel poverty would also reduce the knock-on effects. The councillor supported the report.

129.5 Councillor Gibson noted that the working group were looking at Good Homes Alliance.

129.6 The Chair put the recommendations to a vote, and they were agreed by unanimously.

**RESOVLED:**

2.1 That the Committee notes the progress made to date to reduce carbon emissions and include sustainable measures in its new council housing development programmes.

2.2 That the Committee endorse the draft New Build Housing Sustainability Policy as a means by which the construction of new council homes supports the commitment to achieving a carbon neutral city by 2030.

**130 HOUSING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN PROGRESS UPDATE AND HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2020/21**

130.1 This item was not called for discussion and the recommendations contained therein are therefore approved and adopted.

**RESOLVED:**

2.1 That Housing Committee notes the report.

**131 HOUSING ADAPTATIONS FRAMEWORK RE-LET**

- 131.1 The report was presented to the committee by Alex Dickie (Project Manager – Adaptations).
- 131.2 Councillor Williams was informed that local businesses are used to carry out works.
- 131.3 Councillor Mears was informed that the procurement process would be for external producers.
- 131.4 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote, which were unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED: That Housing Committee:**

2.1 Approves the procurement of a framework agreement for the provision of housing adaptations for a term of three (3) years, with the option to extend that framework agreement for a period of up to one (1) year subject to satisfactory performance.

2.2 Authorise the Interim Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing:

2.2.1 to carry out the procurement of the framework agreement referred to in 2.1 above including the award and letting of that framework agreement:

2.2.2 to approve the extension to the framework agreement referred to in 2.1 above, if required, dependent on satisfactory performance:

2.2.3 to award any call-off contracts under the framework agreement referred to in 2.1 above should they consider it appropriate at the relevant time.

**132 LEASE SURRENDER: WINDLESHAM HOUSE, 123, WINDLESHAM COURT, OLD SHOREHAM ROAD, PORTSLADE**

- 132.1 This item and the Part Two report attached to the agenda were not called for discussion and the recommendations contained therein are therefore approved and adopted.

**RESOLVED:**

2.1 That Housing Committee agrees the Council accepts the early lease surrender of Windlesham House.

2.2 That Housing Committee agree that the Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing will use their powers under Part 6.3 Part B VII(4A) of the Council's Scheme of Delegations to accept the early surrender of the lease for a consideration detailed in the Part 2 paper accompanying this report, and which is up to the prescribed £250,000 limit.

**133 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS FREDERICK STREET - PROCUREMENT OF CONTRACTOR**

- 133.1 The report was introduced to the committee by Laura Webster (Estate Regeneration Project Manager).
- 133.2 Councillor Williams was informed that the procurement would be balanced with local businesses on the register being contacted.
- 133.3 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that a number of local contractors did bid in the procurement process and the council were working with other businesses, encouraging them to sign up to the register.
- 133.4 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote, which were unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

2.1 That the Committee agrees to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities and Head of Legal Services to procure and award a contract through an open procurement process.

**134 UPDATE ON REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK**

- 134.1 The report was introduced to the committee by Edward Wilson (General Manager - R&M).
- 134.2 Councillor Mears was informed that the majority of issues relating to the dispute with housing maintenance workers have been resolved and the remaining matters would hopefully be resolved in the couple of weeks. It was noted that repairs, including roofing, had required return visits when the diagnosis of issues had been a challenge. The re-letting of properties is being looked at in order to reduce waste. The councillor was informed that the housing team were working hard to move forward, and the team were grateful for Members feedback. With regard to a particular property, the councillor would receive a briefing note from Edward Wilson on the reasons for a re-fit before being re-let.

Debate

- 134.3 Councillor Hugh-Jones expressed concerns with regard to waste on re-lets and if this happened it was not good.
- 134.4 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote, which were unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

2.1 That the Committee notes the update on the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Service.

**135 NEXT STEPS - ROUGH SLEEPING AND ACCOMMODATION DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND RECOVERY**

- 135.1 Sylvia Peckham (Head of Housing Needs) introduced the report to the committee.
- 135.2 Councillor Atkinson was informed that the figures in the report were split into two sections, Covid-1 and Covid-2. Covid-1 covered the pandemic up till 30 September 2020, when government funding ended and Covid-2 after that date. By end of September 2020, 369 rough sleepers have been accommodated. In Covid-1, 186 have moved out of emergency accommodation, whilst 23 have moved in. In the Covid-2 group, 155 have moved in. By the end of March 2021 approximately 400 will have moved on.
- 135.3 Councillor Williams expressed concerns relating to what has been termed 'Secret SWEP' and was informed that it had been agreed that more communications were required to inform rough sleepers when Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) accommodation was open. It was noted that cold weather units will remain open until March 2021 and 8 out of 10 persons moving forward with resolutions. The last two are resisting help.
- 135.4 Councillor Phillips was informed that the rough sleepers are not limited to the amount of time they spend in emergency accommodation, they would not be thrown-out at any time. It was noted that during the pandemic there had been a move away from congregate housing. Credit control staff have been helping the Housing benefit team, increasing the number of staff by two. Early intervention by analysing the origins of those moving into the city is ongoing. The restriction on evictions by landlords will continue until 21 Feb 2021, it was noted. In light of this landlords are being asked if they have any issues. Emergency is the only accommodation used outside of the city. Hotels are still working with the authority and are being used as emergency accommodation. The Housing team do contact rough sleepers whenever possible to understand how they have moved on when they leave emergency accommodation by themselves. Support is being given, including deposit guarantee, rent deposit and intensive personal support for the first three months. Tenant drop-in sessions are continuing online, where intensive support can be given. It was noted that protocols with neighbouring authorities regarding reconnections are being written. It is hoped that these protocols would speed up responses whilst a strategy is being developed for the corridor of authorities between London and Brighton. Members will be sent the protocol as soon as it is agreed. It was also noted that tenants with rent arrears were being helped. Anti-social behaviour was considered a major problem with the council often stepping in the help resolve issues with landlords.
- 135.5 Councillor Barnett expressed concerns regarding aggressive beggars on the street and was informed that it was difficult to estimate the number of beggars and the council were working with partner organisations, such as Sussex Police to resolve the issue. It was noted that there was a donation scheme, Make Change Count, where people could donate money.

Debate

- 135.6 Councillor Mears expressed concerns regarding the amount of detail and that the Homeless Reduction Board would be a ‘talking shop’ only. The councillor also stated that they felt addiction needed to be dealt with in order to stop on street begging.
- 135.7 Councillor Gibson thanked council staff for the progress achieved. The councillor noted that the Homeless Reduction Board will look at many issues including the Covid-2 group figures and where did people go when they left accommodation of their own accord. The minutes of the board meetings will be sent out to committee members.
- 135.8 Councillor Williams noted that the Homeless Reduction Board has dealt with many issues, including some raised at committee today and board members will report back to councillors via political groups.
- 135.9 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote, which were unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the progress to date.
- 2.2 That Housing Committee note the continued role of the Homeless Reduction Board in monitoring progress on meeting the conditions of NSAP funding and next steps.
- 2.3 That Housing Committee agrees that for the Covid 2 “risk of rough sleeping group” that the Homeless Reduction Board should monitor the maximisation of prevention by all means; identifying resources needed to achieve faster move on; and maximising recovery of Housing Benefit (as outlined in para 7.3).

**136 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL****137 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS****138 HOUSING COMMITTEE - WINDLESHAM HOUSE LEASE SURRENDER**

- 138.1** This Part Two item and the report attached to the agenda were not called for discussion and the recommendations contained therein are therefore approved and adopted.

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee agrees the Council accepts the early lease surrender of Windlesham House.
- 2.2 That Housing Committee agree that the Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing will use their powers under Part 6.3 Part B VII(4A) of the Council’s Scheme of Delegations to accept the early surrender of the lease for a consideration detailed in the Part 2 paper accompanying this report, and which is up to the prescribed £250,000 limit.

The meeting concluded at 8.09pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of