

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm 12 NOVEMBER 2008
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson)

Other Members present: Councillors Fryer, Mears and Randall

PART ONE

50. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

50a Declarations of Interests

50a.1 There were none.

50b Exclusion of Press and Public

50b.1 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

50b.2 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

51. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

51.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 10 September 2008 be approved as a correct record.

52. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

52.1 There were none.

53. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

53.1 All items were reserved for discussion.

54. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

54.1 There were none.

55. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

55.1 There were none.

56. DEPUTATIONS

56.1 The Cabinet Member reported that one Deputation had been received. It concerned the draft housing strategy 2009-13 and the Cabinet Member invited Ms Helen Russell, as spokesperson of Cooperative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH), to address the meeting.

56.2 Ms Russell made the following statement and tabled supporting supplementary information.

56.3 'CHIBAH welcomes the new Housing Strategy, particularly because we share its objectives. CHIBAH's response to the Housing Strategy consultation expanded on the underlying principles of the strategy, making the following points:

56.4 A Healthy city - we have observed that housing co-ops can help their tenants transform their lives through returning to education, getting into work, or holding their families together, all contributing to improved physical and mental health. Co-ops have a direct positive impact on people's quality of life.

56.5 Reducing inequality - CHIBAH's member co-ops consistently receive applications from homeless or inadequately housed people, who are drawn to the principles of co-operative housing, and who have to be turned away due to the scarcity of its provision. Co-ops directly tackle discrimination through their open membership policy, and equal opportunities are embedded in all policy areas.

56.6 Improving neighbourhoods - Housing co-ops experience little or no anti-social behaviour, members support and look out for each other, and children grow up in safe environments. Co-ops impact on their surrounding neighbourhoods and often become the desired place to live. A good example of this is the Burrowes Street Co-op in Walsall. Local examples are Two Piers and Dryad co-ops.

56.7 Accountability to local people - The co-operative way of life builds members' capacity through improving their skills, and equips them to actively participate in the decision making process across all areas of housing management, including tenant welfare. Co-ops therefore offer a deeper level of accountability, as the people making the decisions are the service users themselves, and are therefore accountable not only to wider decision makers, funders and regulators, but to each other. These people will become a valuable resource in a rapidly changing world, which poses serious social challenges.

- 56.8 Value for money - Co-ops consistently deliver Value For Money, through the provision of high quality well maintained housing, and reduced costs through self-management, and produce low rents and low grant levels through partnerships between large RSLs, tenant training organisations, the community and the co-ops.
- 56.9 Partnership working - Brighton & Hove housing co-ops have almost two decades experience of working together, and of involvement with the national movement at officer level. Elsewhere, partnerships between RSLs (both co-operative and housing association) are demonstrating the capacity to deliver Parker Norris standard housing on low level grant rates and yet produce rents for low-carbon 2-bed houses of £68.20 per week.
- 56.10 Partnership at the local strategic level has the capacity to bring together the private, public and voluntary sectors to invest time and resources in the development of tenant managed housing in the city, bringing overarching social benefits to the city.
- 56.11 Since 2004, CHIBAH has been active in the CVSF and has represented the sector at the LSP. During this period, CHIBAH has offered workshops at CVSF events, and ran its own event explaining the Redditch model. The support was overwhelming.
- 56.12 The draft Housing Strategy refers to the subgroups set up by the Strategic Housing Partnership, one of which has been “looking at the role of housing co-ops”. The draft states that the “findings of this group have been used to inform the draft strategy”. CHIBAH, having been involved in this process, made a presentation to the SHP in Jan. 2007 and put forward three concrete proposals. Since then, these proposals for the incorporation of co-operative housing into mainstream affordable provision in Brighton & Hove, were submitted as part of the consultation process but were not included in the draft strategy. Despite CHIBAH receiving positive informal feedback from senior Councillors, we have not received any formal feedback. We wish to know how the Council will put the findings of the subgroup into effect, and what CHIBAH can do to facilitate this.
- 56.13 The proposals are:
1. co-operative management of properties being developed by RSLs;
 2. the development of a Community Land Trust (in February the Council agreed to look at the feasibility of a CLT in the city);
 3. to replicate the Redditch Co-operative Homes model, which delivers high quality housing at very low grant rates with rents of £68 for a two-bed house. Accord Housing Association, which partners Redditch Co-op Homes, has agreed to work with CHIBAH on a similar scheme in Brighton & Hove. Accord is part of the Matrix Housing Partnership responsible for 20,000 dwellings in the Midlands.

- 56.14 To sum up, housing co-ops deliver affordable housing in a way that strengthens and empowers communities, is popular and does not have any stigma, where people look after their community. Pride of place and pride in one's home are essential to well being. Replacing dependency with self help is a key factor in healthy communities. Brighton & Hove has an opportunity to develop a pioneering model of community creation. In a city where variety, enterprise and vision are highly valued, co-operative housing has a place in the city's Housing Strategy.
- 56.15 The Cabinet Member invited Councillor Randall to speak in support of the deputation.
- 56.16 Councillor Randall echoed the sentiments expressed and supported the deputation. He felt that there was an unmet demand in the city and supported the approach taken in Redditch. He recognised the difficulties in terms of funding and noted that a meeting was due to be held between the Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation and the Prime Minister about this subject.
- 56.17 The Opposition Spokesperson noted the long history of co-operatives in the city and supported the stance taken by CHIBAH. She appreciated the positive opportunities that housing co-ops offered local communities and suggested further investigation of the Redditch model.
- 56.18 The Cabinet Member thanked everyone for their contributions. She noted that consultation in regard to the draft Housing Strategy was ongoing and requested that a separate report was brought to a future meeting considering the issues raised by the deputation.
- 56.19 **RESOLVED** – That a report be brought to a future Housing Cabinet Member meeting considering the issues raised by the CHIBAH deputation.

57. PETITIONS

- 57.1 There were none.

58. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 58.1 There were none.

59. NOTICES OF MOTIONS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

- 59.1 There were none.

60. MATTERS REFERRED FOR RECONSIDERATION

- 60.1 There were none.

61. REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

- 61.1 There were none.

62. REPORT OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE - 23RD SEPTEMBER 2008

62.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the proceedings of the Housing Management Consultative Committee, 23rd September 2008 (for copy see minute book).

62.2 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

63. LEARNING DISABILITY COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

63.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report and of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that presented the Learning Disability Commissioning strategy for Brighton and Hove 2009 - 2012 and explained how the council would commission social care services for people with learning disabilities over the next 3 years (for copy see minute book).

63.2 The Cabinet member considered a supplementary paper, tabled at the meeting that explained the reasons for the report and an evaluation of alternative options (copy available online).

63.3 The Opposition Spokesperson welcomed the strategy noting the housing options, increased health care, increased independence and 'extra choice' afforded recipients of care. She was concerned however that improvements in some areas should not be at the expense of other services.

63.4 **RESOLVED** – That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

(1) That the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy for Brighton and Hove 2009-2012 be agreed.

(2) That, in support of the Valuing People Now policy, the amount estimated by the council for the transfer of learning disability social care funding and commissioning from Brighton & Hove City Teaching Primary Care Trust to Brighton & Hove City Council of £6,150,498 in 2007/8 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report) be noted.

64. REVIEW OF LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SERVICES

64.1 The Cabinet Member made an opening statement to the effect that she was aware of erroneous information circulating about the purpose of the report. The Cabinet Member was aware that persons unknown had been issuing statements in her name giving incorrect information about Day Centres.

64.2 The Cabinet Member stated that suggestions that three Day Centres were to close were untrue. She noted that approaches had been made in this respect to users of those centres and to their families and staff, the Cabinet Member felt this was inappropriate and unhelpful.

64.3 The Cabinet Member was minded to defer the report to afford time for those with genuine queries to make them known. The Cabinet Member offered anyone present at the meeting to ask questions in relation to the report.

64.4 The Opposition Spokesperson asked if any day centres were to be closed.

- 64.5 The Cabinet Member explained that new services were being developed in recognition of the requests of service users. The deployment of these new services might mean that some services no longer needed to be provided at day centres. This did not mean that those centres would necessarily close. The future use of buildings might be reconsidered once it was clear what the consequences of the delivery of the new services were.
- 64.6 The Cabinet Member invited Councillor Fryer to speak.
- 64.7 Councillor Fryer supported the principles of the report but was concerned about funding; in particular that budgets for individuals were spent in their best interests and that support was offered to those who required it in managing their budget. She also asked if persons living in residential care would be able to attend day services.
- 64.8 The Cabinet Member explained that the move to personal budgets would be supported by the transition to 'Day Options'. The move away from services delivered from buildings to personalised services demanded sophisticated support for persons trying to manage their own budget.
- 64.9 The Opposition Spokesperson asked about the long-term future of 80 Buckingham Road.
- 64.10 The Cabinet Member explained that the building was not suitable for all of its users. The future of the building and the services provided therein would be managed much like the situation with Pioneer House. This building had been deemed unfit for purpose; better and more appropriate services had been re-provided at the Westbourne Centre.
- 64.11 The Opposition Spokesperson requested that trade unions be made aware of the report.
- 64.12 The Cabinet Member explained that the trade unions had been consulted in the compilation of the report and were fully aware of its implications.
- 64.13 The Cabinet Member deferred the report until a future meeting in order to allow additional time for any other representations to be made direct to her.
- 64.14 **RESOLVED** – That the report be deferred.

65. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2007 / 08 FINAL OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN FOR 2008 / 09

- 65.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that provided information about the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2007/08 final outturn and the forecast outturn for 2008/09 as at Month 4 (for copy see minute book).
- 63.5 **RESOLVED** – That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) To note that the final outturn for the HRA for 2007/08 was an underspend of £1.310 million compared to the budgeted position of a small surplus of £0.129 million. This represents a variance of 2.99% of the gross revenue budget of £43.463 million. General

HRA revenue reserves have increased by £1.439 million to £5.615 million as at 31 March 2008.

(2) To note that the earmarked revenue reserves for the Estate Development Budget (EDB) were £34,000 at 31st March 2008

(3) To note the forecast breakeven position for 2008/09 as at Month 4 which included an additional contribution from HRA reserves to fund additional energy costs.

66. VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES

66.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that provided an overview of the findings of the Value for Money review of Housing Services (for copy see minute book).

66.2 **RESOLVED** – That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation:

That the findings of the Value for Money Review of Housing Services be considered and the value for money action plan be approved.

67. DRAFT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2009-2012

67.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that gave information regarding the consultation draft of the Service Improvement Plan (for copy see minute book).

67.2 The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that tenants would be made aware of the plan via the Citywide Assembly and Housing Management Consultative Committee.

67.3 **RESOLVED** – That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation:

That the consultation draft of the Service Improvement Plan for the Housing Revenue Account 2009-2012 be approved.

68. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

68.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that gave information on current performance within Housing Management services and on general policy initiatives underway to improve performance. The appendices to the report summarised the key performance results for the first financial quarter of 2008 (for copy see minute book)

68.2 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

69. DELIVERY OF SUPPORT SERVICES FOR COUNCIL SHELTERED HOUSING TENANTS

- 69.1 The Cabinet Member noted that the report had been taken to the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 4th November and deferred to allow for more time to consult with sheltered housing residents and their representative groups.
- 69.2 The Cabinet Member had considered convening an additional Housing Management Consultative Committee prior to the Christmas break to reconsider the issue, but there was not enough time to facilitate this adequately.
- 69.3 The Opposition Spokesperson accepted that there would not be time to hold an additional meeting and was pleased to note that the final decision was being deferred until satisfactory consultation had been achieved.
- 69.4 **RESOLVED** – That the report be deferred.

70. ESTATE SERVICES REVIEW: CLEANING SERVICE FOR GENERAL NEEDS COUNCIL HOUSING

- 70.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that proposed changes to the cleaning service in the communal areas of council flats (excluding sheltered accommodation), following recommendations made by the Estates Service Focus Group to the Housing Management Sub Committee on 15 January 2008. The report also included a review of the service charges that residents who live in flats paid for this service (for copy see minute book).
- 70.2 The Cabinet Member and Opposition Spokesperson noted the warm reception that the report had received at the Area Housing Management Panels and congratulated officers on their achievements.
- 70.3 **RESOLVED** – That having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the proposed changes to the cleaning service be noted.
 - (2) That the proposed service charges for communal cleaning, as shown in Table 1 in paragraph 5.4.3 of the report be approved with effect from 6 April 2009.
 - (3) That the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing be authorised to implement the new charges, with authority to make minor amendments which may appear to be appropriate in particular cases.
 - (4) That the proposal to carry out benchmarking of the cleaning service in 2009/10 so that a value for money assessment can be made of the restructured service be noted.

The meeting concluded at 5.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of