

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm 5 JANUARY 2011
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson) and Randall (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

76. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

76(a) Declarations of Interests

76.1 Councillors Simpson and Randall declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they were Board Members of the Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

76(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

76.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

76.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 93.

77. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

77.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 20 October 2010 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

78. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

78.1 There were none.

79. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

79.1 **RESOLVED** – That item numbers 88, 90, 91, 92, and 93 be reserved for debate and determination. Item 89 is agreed without discussion.

80. PETITIONS

80.1 There were none.

81. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

81.1 There were none.

82. DEPUTATIONS

82.1 There were none.

83. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

83.1 There were none.

84. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

84.1 There were none.

85. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

85.1 There were none.

86. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

86.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 9 September 2010 and 4 November 2010.

86.2 The Cabinet Member referred to the discussion on the Supporting People Grant at Item 22 of the minutes of 9 September 2010. Since that meeting she was pleased to note that the reduction in the Supporting People Grant was less than expected (12% in 4 years). The Secretary of State had said that he was pleased with how the Supporting People money had been used. Meanwhile, the Homelessness Grant would be protected.

86.3 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

87. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

87.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 1 September, 27 September and 8 November 2010.

87.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

88. SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2011-15

- 88.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which presented the new Supporting People Commissioning Strategy which was attached to the report. The key priorities of the new strategy had been developed in partnership with providers and commissioners. Consultation during 2010 involved capturing feedback from providers, stakeholders and service users on needs across all client groups. The strategy sets out the main priorities and the strategic actions to deliver against them.
- 88.2 The Cabinet Member stated that the Council's Supporting People Strategy had gained national renown. She was pleased to note that the reduction in grant from central government was to be less than expected. Meanwhile, it was important to ring fence the Supporting People money. The council was committed to keeping the money designated to commission supporting people service in to deliver the Supporting People Strategy.
- 88.3 Councillor Simpson remarked that she was relieved to hear that the Supporting People money would be ring fenced. The 12% reduction in grant over four years was unfortunate as Supporting People brought enormous benefit to the City. Every £1 spent on Supporting People saved the City £3.24. Councillor Simpson asked if the 12% reduction would be frontloaded at the beginning of the 4 year period, or gradually tapered over the four years.
- 88.4 The Cabinet Member replied that she understood that there would be a 3% reduction each year.
- 88.5 The Lead Commissioner Housing explained that a great deal of work had been carried out with providers regarding this issue. The council had projected 3% a year. This had been well managed and he thanked the Commissioning Manager, Supporting People. The Council had looked at the option to frontload, but all the conversations with providers revealed that they preferred to know their grant allocation year on year. Officers would continue to work with providers.
- 88.6 Councillor Randall was pleased to hear that the Supporting People money would be ring fenced, but considered that 12% over 4 years was still a significant cut. This was a concern with providers who had had to cope with significant cuts in recent years. A key issue in the report was move on accommodation, of which there was currently a shortage.
- 88.7 The Chairman stressed that in previous years the reduction was carried out on a yearly basis. It was now carried out on a four yearly basis which gave providers the leeway to plan their services. She acknowledged the point that ideally there would be no reduction at all.
- 88.8 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the key priorities outlined in Supporting People Commissioning Strategy 2011-15 be approved.

89. TENANCY FRAUD POLICY

89.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which set out how Housing Management prevented, detected and resolved tenancy fraud, and included the response to a recent Internal Audit review of how the council dealt with tenancy fraud.

89.2 The council had received a government grant of £30k to use to improve the prevention and detection of tenancy fraud. The report proposed that part of this grant was used to introduce photographic tenant identification.

89.3 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

(1) That the action points arising from the Internal Audit report be agreed.

(2) That it is agreed that the government grant is used to fund equipment to introduce photographic records of tenant identity for new tenants.

90. HOUSING ACT 2004 - HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION LICENSING FEES AND ADDITIONAL LICENSING

90.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, Place which reviewed HMO Licensing fees and considered additional HMO licensing, seeking approval for the introduction of a re-licensing fee and an increase to initial application fees to reflect increased costs since 2005/6 and consultation on whether additional licensing might be appropriate in Brighton & Hove.

90.2 The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing reported that if the recommendations were agreed, there would be a twelve week consultation on additional licensing designation.

90.3 The Cabinet Member mentioned that in her ward many family houses had become buy to let properties. This had had a significant impact. The aim was to mitigate this problem and track the number of family houses that were being lost to student accommodation.

90.4 Councillor Simpson referred to the wards identified to be included in the consultation on additional HMO licensing. She stated that her ward of Hollingdean and Stanmer contained university buildings and she was surprised that it had been left out. Hollindean, Coldean and the Bates Estate had a significant number of student households. She was concerned that if left out of the proposal, landlords might move to that ward causing more pressure. Councillor Simpson suggested that all wards along the academic corridor should be included, and urged that Hollindean and Stanmer and Queen's Park should be included as a minimum. Councillor Simpson also asked if any consideration had been given to having additional HMO licensing across the city.

90.5 The Cabinet Member replied that consideration had been given to city wide HMO licensing. However, the council valued the role of landlords and the private rented sector and did not want to discourage them. The wards had been chosen after considering the recommendations of the University of Brighton survey. However, the

Cabinet Member was happy to change the recommendation to include Hollindean and Stanmer and Queen's Park. However, there would be a need to consult the Queen's Park councillors.

- 90.6 Councillor Randall welcomed the proposals, which had been requested by organisations like Shelter. He asked how the council would decide when to withdraw a licence.
- 90.7 The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing replied that the council set standards for HMO licensing. He suggested that the council should consider publishing the standards and make them clear as part of the consultation. The benefit of additional licences was to enforce those standards.
- 90.8 Councillor Randall suggested that it would be useful in his ward to have these proposals available to the Local Action Team to monitor and discuss. Councillor Simpson agreed it would be useful for the Local Action Teams to have this matter on their agendas. It would also be useful to draw peoples' attention to prospective tenants. The better control of refuse was a significant issue.
- 90.9 The Chairman confirmed that a report would be submitted to the Housing CMM after the consultation.
- 90.10 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the revised fees for initial HMO licence applications, be approved, as outlined in the report and that new fees be introduced to apply to applications to renew a licence that has expired.
 - (2) That a landlord making more than one initial or renewal application in any financial year should receive a reduction of £24 for each application other than the first one.
 - (3) That approval be given for the initiation of a 12 week consultation on additional HMO licensing of HMOs of two or more storeys and three or more occupiers in the wards of Hanover and Elm Grove, Moulsecomb and Bevendean, St Peters and North Laine, Hollingdean and Stanmer and Queen's Park, the wards with the highest concentrations of smaller HMOs, including student HMOs, as identified in the Student Housing Strategy action plan.

91. MOBILITY SCOOTER STORAGE

- 91.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which reported that officers and tenant representatives had explored a number of storage options for residents to ensure residents had access to mobility aids whilst ensuring that neighbouring residents are safe in a fire. A report on Mobility Scooter Storage was taken to the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 27 September and was attached as appendix 1 to the report. This was broadly agreed but there remained some outstanding questions about the service charge of £4.50 per week. The current report proposed a pilot scheme to ensure that the city wide roll out of the scheme was successful. There had been a mobility scooter presentation at the City Assembly on 15 May and 20 November 2010.

- 91.2 Councillor Randall asked the council to consider the possibility of a shared mobility scooter scheme, as there was already a successful car share scheme in the city. The number of people using mobility scooters was growing and a shared scheme could make scooters assessable to people who could not afford to buy them and who might want to use them once or twice a week.
- 91.3 The Cabinet Member mentioned that Jubilee Court had a successful shared scheme. Councillor Simpson agreed a shared scooter scheme would be a good idea but she recognised that many people needed individual scooters. She knew of individuals who were housebound for a very long time because of not being able to store a scooter where they lived.
- 91.4 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That a pilot project to build external stores and convert internal storage space for the storage of mobility scooters at Leach Court and Clarke Court be authorised.
 - (2) That the pilot be used to determine the actual service charges required to cover costs.

92. INTERIM AMENDMENT TO WORKING HOUSEHOLDS LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN

- 92.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which reported that, the Working Households Local Letting Plan was agreed on a pilot basis in July 2009 and amended in November 2009. It was now under review, as was the Allocations policy. The evaluation of the Local Lettings Plan Pilot had been completed and had been considered by the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 13 December. The findings had already been fed into the review of the Allocations Policy which was currently being consulted upon. It was proposed that the Local Lettings Plans would be integrated into the Allocations Policy. This report recommended that the pilot was extended pending ratification and implementation of the policy.
- 92.2 Councillor Simpson expressed concern about the proposals. If the proposals were introduced, she considered that there should be an income cap. She was pleased that the consultation would be extended and asked how long this would be. Councillor Simpson asked if legal advice had been sought regarding the 50% policy, and whether there were other councils adopting similar policies.
- 92.3 The Cabinet Member replied that working families who received priority would have to have a housing need. The pilot was based on the Manchester scheme. Tenants had looked at a range of local authorities and they chose the Manchester scheme as the one they wanted to pursue. The council had looked at all the legal aspects and the consultation would be extended to look at the pilot.
- 92.4 Councillor Simpson considered the council's proposals to be quite different from the Manchester scheme. Manchester proposed priority but not absolute priority and only parts of Manchester were included.
- 92.5 The Cabinet Member stressed that people who could not work but contributed to the community would be included in the proposals along with people who worked. Most people supported the proposals. A major concern was the increase in the right to buy

and the loss of council houses as a result. The council needed to introduce measures to address that issue. Officers were investigating that issue and addressing concerns expressed during the consultation.

- 92.6 Councillor Randall welcomed the proposals, but thought that the percentage was too high. He would not support anything higher than 20%.
- 92.7 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the pilot period of the Working Households Local Lettings Plan be extended until the recommendations of the Allocations Policy Review are implemented.
 - (2) That an interim cap of £35000 total household income be agreed in order to be eligible for the Working Households Local Lettings Plan.

PART TWO SUMMARY

93. SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMISSIONING PLAN 2011-15 - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

- 93.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Lead Commissioner Housing which set out the Supporting People Commissioning Plan for 2011-2015 attached as appendix 1 to the report.
- 93.2 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the draft commissioning proposals for Supporting People funded services be approved as outlined in the commissioning plan for 2011-2015 attached as appendix one to the report (circulated to members only).

94. PART TWO ITEMS

- 94.1 The Cabinet Member considered whether or not any of the above items should remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.
- 94.2 **RESOLVED** – That item 93 contained in Part Two of the agenda, remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.08pm

Signed

Cabinet Member

Dated this

day of