

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm 16 FEBRUARY 2011
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson)

Other Members present: Councillor Mitchell attended for Item 99.

PART ONE

95. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

95(a) Declarations of Interests

95.1 There were none.

95(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

95.2 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).

95.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Items 110 onwards.

96. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

96.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 5 January be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

97. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Report withdrawn from the agenda

- 97.1 The Cabinet Member reported that Item 107 – Permission for Pedestrian Access across the Plot of Land Behind 95 The Ridgway from Kipling Avenue, Brighton, had been withdrawn at the request of the Leader of the Council who wanted to review the proposal.

Flexible Tenancies

- 97.2 The Cabinet Member reported that the Government had announced that there was going to be a review of tenancies with the introduction of flexible tenancies. The Cabinet Member confirmed that flexible tenancies would not be introduced in Brighton & Hove.

Council Housing at Ainsworth House site update

- 97.3 The Cabinet Member reported that an application for this site would be considered at the Planning Committee in April 2011.

Local Delivery Vehicle

- 97.4 The Cabinet Member reported that the council were currently working with tenants on the creation of the LDV to bring in an additional £30m investment to meet the council's housing objectives. The council was currently considering investment offers from two banks. Councillor Simpson declared a personal interest in this matter as she was a Board Member of the Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

Local Housing Letting Agency

- 97.5 The Cabinet Member reported that the council was working with the university to introduce a Social Housing Letting Agency. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development would be submitting a report to a future meeting.
- 97.6 Councillor Simpson mentioned that at the Scrutiny Panel on Letting Agents, it had been reported that the council were considering supporting an initiative of Brighton Housing Trust to set up a social letting agency. Councillor Simpson asked if this proposal was a different letting agency. The Cabinet Member replied that this proposal was specifically to meet the need of university student housing.

98. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 98.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

99. PETITIONS**99((i) Petition – Request to an extension to the car park at Southease, Whitehawk Road**

- 99.1 Councillor Turton had submitted a petition presented at Council on 16 December 2010 and signed by 24 people requesting an extension to the car park at Southease, Whitehawk Road.

- 99.2 Councillor Mitchell presented the petition on behalf of Councillor Turton who was unable to attend the meeting. She stressed that the car park was very small with only 4 to 6 spaces. She requested a feasibility study to see if more spaces could be created.
- 99.3 The Cabinet Member stated that Southease was a purpose built block containing 24 dwellings. The block was constructed around 1970, with car parking provision limited to small lay-bys off Whitehawk Road. The Council recognised that demand for parking had grown since the flats were built, as car ownership levels amongst residents had increased.
- 99.4 The housing asset management team had been to inspect the site and had found that there was not an immediately obvious solution to providing additional parking spaces at Southease. This was because of the physical restrictions of available space, and its close proximity to the busy Whitehawk Road, and an adjacent junction. Any planning application for additional car parking would need to be able to overcome these physical and traffic management issues, to be able to gain planning permission.
- 99.5 The asset management team had therefore recommended that a specialist in this field was commissioned to undertake a feasibility and options study, which would establish what could be achieved for the site, given the location.
- 99.6 It had been suggested to the residents that they apply to the Estate Development Budget (EDB) for funding to commission a specialist feasibility study. It was understood that the Community Participation Officer was supporting the chair of Southease Residents Association and the committee member that initiated the petition (David Hall) with preparing their EDB bid.
- 99.7 In addition this matter had been discussed at the Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel meeting and the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion had suggested a meeting with the tenants and with the Assistant Director, Cityclean and Cityparks, to discuss parking. Local councillors could be involved as well.
- 99.8 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that one of the actions from the Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel was to hold a meeting with appropriate managers and to include the chair of Southease in that meeting.
- 99.9 Councillor Mitchell mentioned that there was a traffic amendment order in relation to Manor Hill. She suggested that officers might wish to look at this matter in relation to the traffic order. Residents were asking if additional parking could be included in their curtilage where bushes were planted at present. This could be carried out under the EDB bid.
- 99.10 **RESOLVED** – That the petition be noted.

93(ii) Petition – To repair lift at Viscaria, Donald Hall Road, Brighton

- 93.4 Mr John Ramage had submitted a petition signed by 22 people urging the council leaders to fix the lift at Viscaria, Donald Hall Road to enable residents independence.

- 93.5 Mr Ramage presented the petition and stated that the lift had been out of action for weeks. He asked why the council could not get someone in the UK to manufacture parts. Mr Ramage stated that this situation could not continue when there were elderly and disabled people living in the flats.
- 93.6 Mr Ramage expressed concern that a note of one paragraph had been delivered to tenants in Viscaria from the Housing Manager which had suggested residents should move out of the block until the lift was repaired. This was not the right response.
- 93.7 The Cabinet Member thanked Mr Ramage for his petition. She stressed that a number of blocks were old and lift parts sometimes needed to be manufactured or imported. In this case a new drive unit was required. The Cabinet Member agreed that it was unacceptable that this was happening but stressed that housing officers were looking after elderly and vulnerable residents. A decision had been made to procure a lift replacement programme. A report on the first part of that programme was on the agenda of today's meeting.
- 93.8 The Cabinet Member said she would like to see a copy of the note that was sent to residents. When lifts failed housing officers did try and contact residents to offer help with shopping and helping people get to hospital appointments.
- 93.9 Mr Ramage asked why there had been a breakdown when there had been a lift refurbishment programme 5 years ago. The Cabinet Member replied that the current programme would be a whole replacement programme. The lifts needed to be replaced to meet today's standards. There needed to be consistency in the lifts installed across the city. Hopefully, with the procurement process there would be a warranty.
- 93.10 Councillor Simpson asked if the programme was established already over the 9 year period. She also asked on what basis the prioritisation programme was carried out. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the council had an initial programme for all 99 lifts. This programme was subject to change and there would be a prioritisation process.
- 93.11 Councillor Simpson was pleased to hear that breakdown as well as age would be taken into consideration. It was unsatisfactory for elderly and vulnerable residents to be left isolated for a long period. There seemed to be more instances of breakdowns. The lift replacement programme should be rolled forward.
- 93.12 The Cabinet Member stated that there were more lift breakdowns due to the age of blocks. Blocks that have two lifts would have less of a priority than blocks with one lift. She stressed that when lifts broke down there needed to be a clear line of communication, so that residents could let officers know if they required help.
- 93.13 Mr Ramage stated that residents needed to be kept informed by letter. Residents should be asked if they needed help, and told how long the lift was likely to be out of action.
- 93.14 **RESOLVED** – That the petition be noted.

100. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

100.1 There were none.

101. DEPUTATIONS

101.1 There were none.

102. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

102.1 There were none.

103. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

103.1 There were none.

104. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

104.1 There were none.

105. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

105.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 13 December 2010 and 24 January 2011.

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

106. DCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT ANNUAL EXPENDITURE AND ALLOCATION

106.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Lead Commissioner Housing, which set out the performance outcomes from the 2010/11 grant allocation for services and initiatives as set out in Appendix A. Individual proposed financial settlements for current and future work were detailed in Appendix B of the report (on part 2 of the agenda). In the proposals to maintain funding for current services, no inflation increase had been built into the allocation, which represented one way in which the local authority could aim to deliver further value for money from homelessness services currently working together in the city.

106.2 The Single Homelessness, QA & Risk Manager reported that the DCLG had acknowledged the innovative work of the council and had increased the Homelessness Prevention Grant by 52%. This level of grant was guaranteed for the next two years, and was likely to be set at a similar level for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

106.3 The Cabinet Member asked for her thanks to be passed on to all the staff in the team for the work being carried out. She stated that other local authorities were asking how Brighton & Hove were able to achieve this work, and St Mungo's had highlighted the work of the team. The Cabinet Member was pleased that there had been some indication of funding for the next few years, which would enable long term planning. Although the funding was not a huge pot of money it would make a significant

difference. She was pleased that there would be enough funding available for the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol this year.

- 106.4 Councillor Simpson remarked that some changes to welfare benefits would present challenges. She stated that it was sad that one growth area in funding was preventing homelessness. Councillor Simpson said that the perception among some people was that there were more rough sleepers over the last few months. She asked if there was any particular reason for this.
- 106.5 Councillor Simpson considered the implementation of the prevention approach to homelessness was good and was glad the council was able to share experience elsewhere. She noted that some funding was being used to improve access to the private rented sector and asked for more detail. She referred to the Scrutiny Panel on Letting Agents which met 10 February and asked if the initiative would address issues discussed by the Panel.
- 106.6 The Single Homelessness, QA & Risk Manager reported that the figures from CRI showed no big increase in rough sleeping with the people they were working with. The summer months generated more rough sleepers in the city. Numbers over the last three years had stayed roughly the same. People were now spending less time on the street. The work being carried out by CRI was more effective and faster. With regard to using funding for access to the private rented sector, there were a number of current access schemes. There was work being carried out to prepare people for private rented accommodation. There were a number of projects and it was important to ensure that there was no duplication. The private rented sector strategy would be co-ordinated. The aim was to develop partnerships and improve landlords' understanding of what the council could offer them when people on housing benefit were presented.
- 106.7 The Cabinet Member stressed that an increase of funding would not mean an increase in homelessness. A core group of people in the homelessness sector were in a vicious circle. These people needed more intervention and the increase in funding would help them move on.
- 106.8 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the progress and outcomes of the homelessness strategies and commissioned services through the 2010/11 Homelessness Grant funding as set out in the report and Appendix A, be noted.
 - (2) That the carry over of any identified underspend from the 2010/11 budget to the Homelessness Prevention Grant budget 2011/12 be approved.
 - (3) That the recommended allocation of the confirmed 2011/12 and 2012/13 Homelessness Prevention Grant funds be approved, as set out in Appendix A, and Appendix B which is presented in Part 2 of the meeting.
 - (4) That it be agreed that subject to confirmation of the DCLG grant funding for 2013/14 and 2014/15, the recommended allocation of funds in 2.3 can be extended for a further two years as detailed in Appendix B to the report.

107. PERMISSION FOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FOR THE PLOT OF LAND BEHIND 95 THE RIDGEWAY FROM KIPLING AVENUE, BRIGHTON

107.1 The Cabinet Member reported that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

108. SOCIAL INCLUSION PILOT - EVALUATION/FINAL REPORT

- 108.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which explained that the draft Social Exclusion Strategy – “Turning the Tide” outlined the aims and objectives to address anti-social behaviour, intergenerational social exclusion and quality of life experience for residents in social housing living in areas of multiple deprivation in Brighton & Hove. The strategy was a work in progress, currently at the second draft stage. Comments/feedback from key stakeholders, partners and council tenants and leaseholders would be sought before presenting a final draft to Cabinet for approval/agreement in June 2011.
- 108.2 A detailed report on achievements, performance and outcomes was attached as appendix 1 of the report. The report had been discussed at the Housing Management Consultative Committee held on 24 January 2011 and members had recommended that the citywide roll out of the strategy be approved by the Cabinet Member.
- 108.3 The Cabinet Member reported that there had been a good debate at the Housing Management Consultative Committee. Most tenants at the Selsfield Drive Housing Office had seen a massive difference as a result of the pilot strategy, and she understood officers preferred this model of working.
- 108.4 Councillor Simpson agreed it was a very successful pilot. The challenge would be rolling it out across the city without diluting it too much. Councillor Simpson was concerned about financial inclusion and the possible lack of opportunity of working with other services and organisations and making referrals. Debt counselling for example was being reduced in the city. She asked if anything was being done to address these issues. Councillor Simpson also raised the issue of noise nuisance. She asked if there could be a report on this issue. Noise in high rise blocks could be due to structural problems as much as anti-social behaviour.
- 108.5 The Cabinet Member agreed that a report on noise problems could be brought to the Housing Management Consultative Committee. An officer from Environmental Health could be invited to attend. The Cabinet Member stated that some noise problems could be caused by having students living next door to tenants, or due to structural problems.
- 108.6 The Social Inclusion Manager reported that figures on every aspect of anti-social behaviour were tracked on a monthly basis. Officers could analyse the figures on noise nuisance as anti-social behaviour. Meanwhile, work was being carried out to ensure early intervention to deal with the matter of financial inclusion. Staff were being trained to advise people on what help they could receive. There was a need to be proactive with regard to early intervention, and a need to ensure that there was no increase in loan sharking.
- 108.7 The Lead Commissioner, Housing stressed the importance of people claiming the benefits to which they were entitled. There were large numbers of people who should

be claiming Disability Living Allowance. The biggest challenge was reaching the most vulnerable clients.

- 108.8 The Social Inclusion Manager stated that officers could use advanced tenancy checks as an opportunity of ensuring tenants were maximising benefit take-up.
- 108.9 The Cabinet Member stated that there would be some areas of the city where the roll out of the strategy would not replicate what had been carried out in the pilot. There was a need to target the strategy in a way that was appropriate to the particular area.
- 108.10 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the achievements, outcomes and performance of the Social Inclusion Pilot be noted
 - (2) That the citywide rollout of the Strategy be approved.

109. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF LIFTS AT ESSEX PLACE, TYSON PLACE & ST JOHN'S MOUNT

- 109.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which sought the approval to award and enter into a contract with a single contractor to supply and install 6 passenger lifts, within 3 separate tenanted high rise blocks. The report detailed the process undertaken, the outcome of the procurement process and sought authority to enter into this contract.
- 109.2 The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of proceeding with this contract as there was an urgent need to replace the lifts in the three blocks. However, the Cabinet Member was concerned about the cost to leaseholders, especially those who were retired or on low incomes. The costs would range from £4,000 for Essex Place to £7000 for St Johns Mount and Tyson Place. She had asked for a report to be submitted to the Housing Management Consultative Committee to look at options to help leaseholders finance some of these costs.
- 109.3 Councillor Simpson commented that the sums required would be alarming for leaseholders.
- 109.4 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the selection of Liftec Lift Ltd to supply and install six passenger lifts within 3 separate tenanted high rise blocks be approved.
 - (2) That the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the award and completion of the contract with Liftec Lift Ltd and so enable the supply and installation of the lifts.

Part 2 Summary

110. APPENDIX B - DCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT ANNUAL EXPENDITURE AND ALLOCATION - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

110.1 The Cabinet Member considered Appendix B to item 106. The report detailed the individual proposed financial settlements for current and future work.

110.2 **RESOLVED** – That Appendix B to item 106 be noted.

111. PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

111.1 The Cabinet Member noted the Part Two minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2011.

111.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Part Two minutes be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member.

The meeting concluded at 5.20pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of