

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: WEST HOVE & PORTSLADE AREA

2.00pm 26 JULY 2016

ST RICHARDS CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE, EGMONT ROAD, HOVE, BN3 7FP

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Moonan (Chair), Barnett, Nemeth, O'Quinn.

Representatives: Joe Macrae, Pat Weller, Vic Dodd, Chrissie Hilton, Tracy Angus, Ted Chapman, Roy Crowhurst, Roberta Scottpadgett-Truss, Muriel Briault and Ann Tizzard.

Officers: Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Pat Liddell (Resident Involvement Officer), John Currell (Housing Asset Strategy Manager), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement), Cliona May (Democratic Services Officer).

Guests: Jeff Tormentin (Mears).

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillors Peltzer-Dunn, Janio and Lewry.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 January 2016 as a correct record.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair gave the following communications –

“There has been a very recent vacancy for the Home Service Improvement Group and the Resident Involvement Manager will raise the issue under Any Other Business.”

4 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

4.1 The following points and actions were raised by residents and officers:

4.2 Item 2 – Scaffolding

- Communication needed to be improved between Mears and residents.
- An agreement had been made where the scaffolding companies, used by Mears, would be charged if the scaffolding was not taken down within two weeks of the job being completed. Residents were encouraged to report scaffolding that had been left up for a lengthy time.

4.3 Item 4 – Estate inspections

- Residents and Local Councillors were encouraged to attend estate inspections.
- Communication needed to be improved between the estate inspectors and residents.
- Tenants were required to maintain their gardens and it was a breach of tenancy if this was not being done. It was encouraged that tenants report gardens that were not being maintained.
- It would be helpful to have a leaflet including contact information for charitable organisations that help clear gardens.
- The inspections were advertised online and hard copies of the ward booklets could be sent to residents who did not have access to the internet.

4.4 Item 5 – Grass cutting

- It was difficult to manage pathways being cleared, as different areas of land were covered by Highways, rather than the HRA.
- The weather in 2016 had caused an unexpected growth and City Parks had struggled to handle this.
- The Head of Tenancy Services agreed to speak to City Parks and feedback their expectation of how much grass should be cut per day.

4.5 Item 5 - Pot-holes in Downland Court car-park

- It was an ongoing problem that had been damaging cars in the area.
- The Council and Mears were assessing the conditions of the car parks and it would be completed by October 2016.

4.6 Item 6 - Downland Court: Re-decoration of common-ways

- An internal survey had been completed of the communal areas and the data was to be analysed. This information would be available on the website.
- The communal areas in all Council properties would be redecorated similar to achieve a standard look.

5 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

5.1 The Head of Income Involvement & Improvement introduced the report and explained that it was a brief report due to the despatch times of the agenda. It was agreed that the residents would be informed when the full report was available on the website and hardcopies could be sent to residents who did not have internet access. The following points were highlighted:

- Rent arrears had reduced and it was believed this was due to the welfare reform work that had been completed.
- The phone line issues with the Customer Services & Complaints team had been resolved and the figures had therefore been improved since the last performance report.
- The letting time for properties had been improved; however, there had been problems with senior housing lets. It was explained that current work was being

completed and this had brought down the average turnaround time for senior housing.

- A high number of repairs had been completed and there had been an improvement with appointments being kept with Mears and tenants.
- There had been two cases of antisocial behaviour where legal action had been sought.
- Work was being done to prevent tenancy fraud and two properties had been re-let in the last quarter. Residents were encouraged to report suspected fraudulent cases and these would be investigated. The Head of Tenancy Services added that 37 properties had been returned to the Council in the last year.

5.2 In response to queries from the Panel the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement clarified:

- Tenancy fraud was publicised in Homing In and it was being discussed whether more information should be given to residents in the area. If the case was to go to court, there would be a press release and the names and address would be printed in Homing In.
- When an individual tenant complaint had been received, it was agreed that a range of views needed to be gathered by all neighbours.

5.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

6 DRAFT CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1 The Resident Involvement Manager introduced the report and stated the following:

- The Code of Conduct was developed as part of the Everyone Counts report that was agreed by the Housing Committee in December 2012.
- The Code of Conduct had not been rewritten; however, a shorter set of ground rules for meetings had been developed, which was similar, to make them more user friendly.
- The residents should decide whether a section in the constitution should be added to include the protocol for when a resident behaves poorly at a number of meetings.
- Residents had added a section called “Length of Withdrawal from Resident Involvement” after a previous breach.

6.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

7 CITY WIDE REPORTS

7.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the reports.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 The following points and actions were raised by residents:

- Tracey Angus was elected as the Deputy Chair of the Home Service Improvement Group.

- A spreadsheet of upcoming repairs had been circulated and an update would be published online.
- It was agreed that the Head of Tenancy Services would feedback to the Highways Manager regarding the green barriers around the estates.

The meeting concluded at 3.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of