

# BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: WEST HOVE & PORTSLADE AREA

2.00pm 5 JANUARY 2018

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Moonan (Chair), Gilbey, Nemeth and Peltzer Dunn

**Representatives:** Tony Brown, Alison Gray, Muriel Briault, Joe Macrae, Vic Dodd and Roy Crowhurst

**Officers:** Pat Liddell (Resident Involvement Officer), Keely McDonald (Resident Involvement Officer), Alex Fox (Home Energy Efficiency Project Manager), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services) and Cliona May (Democratic Services Officer)

**Guests:** Eddie Wilson (Mears)

#### 24 APOLOGIES

24.1 Apologies were received from Councillors Atkinson, Barnett and O'Quinn.

#### 25 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

25.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, very sadly passed away at the end of November. Becky worked in Housing for six years and before that worked as a Community Development Worker in the Tarner area.

Becky was well respected by her colleagues and those she worked with for her professionalism and knowledge of resident involvement. She was keen to ensure residents were heard at every opportunity and at the heart of Housing services.

Our thoughts are with her partner Greg, and her family.”

25.2 The Chair noted that Ann Ewings, Chair of Tyson Place, and Neil Tideswell, resident of Ingram Crescent had sadly passed away.

#### 26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

26.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 October 2017 be approved and signed as the correct record.

#### 27 ROUND ROBIN

27.1 The Chair explained that this was an opportunity for each association to share a positive experience and a current issue and welcomed any comments.

- 27.2 Roy Crowhurst explained that Wood House had been granted planning permission to remove the toilets and convert the space into a community room with a kitchen area. He explained that this would give the residents an opportunity to have community events.
- 27.3 Councillor Gilbey noted that she had attended the first event meeting of Volunteering Matters in her ward, North Portslade. She explained that various clubs and activities would be organised for the residents in the area. The meeting was well attended and would have a positive impact on the community.
- 27.4 Tony Brown noted that Evelyn Court had recently organised a coffee morning and knitting club for the residents.

## **28 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME**

- 28.1 (Item 1 – Review of the Estate Development Budget) In response to queries raised by the Panel the Officer clarified:
- The Tenant EDB Group would be conducting the review and would consult widely with tenants. Alison Gray and Muriel Briault were the representatives for the West Hove and Portslade area and would feedback concerns raised by residents.
  - The underspend from 2017 would remain in the EDB budget.
- 28.2 The residents raised queries regarding the representation on the Tenant EDB Group and noted that there should be more representatives on the group as the decisions being made were citywide. There was also a lack of consultation between the Tenant EDB Group and the residents before making decisions. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed to feedback the comments raised to the Housing Service Operations Manager and would liaise with the tenants and the Chair. The Panel requested there was a future report presented at the West Hove and Portslade Housing Area Panel regarding the EDB budget.
- 28.3 (Item 2 – Tackling Social Isolation) The Panel raised the following comments and queries:
- Council staff should contact tenants and ask if their details could be provided to the housing associations to encourage community engagement.
  - It needed to be remembered that tenants might prefer to be alone and their privacy should be respected.
  - The Tenancy Checks should be more regular than five years.
- 28.4 In response to queries raised by the Panel the Officers clarified:
- The Tenancy Checks were at least every five years; however, these were tailored according to the tenants needs. If there were concerns raised then the Tenancy Checks would be more regular.
  - The Tenancy Checks focused on who was living in the property, checking their welfare, offering training and development sessions and officers discuss resident associations and community involvement with the residents.
  - Due to data protection the officers could not give residents details to the Housing Associations.

- It was suggested that the associations could produce flyers that could be provided to new residents.
- Concerns regarding the tenant's welfare could be reported to the Housing department by Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, Mears, local GPs and mental health services.
- Tenancy Checks seemed too impersonal and should be renamed "Tenant Checks".
- Community events and resident associations should be promoted.
- It was suggested that the footer of letters sent by the Housing department should say "When did you last see your neighbour?".

28.5 (Item 4 – Affordable Housing) In response to queries raised the Head of Tenancy Services explained that affordable housing was often debated at the Housing & New Homes Committee and it was noted that there was a housing crisis in the city; therefore, the Committee had to ensure they were getting the most housing on one site. Affordable housing was beneficial to families as it was cheaper than private renting. The Chair added that the Committee was considering more cost effective housing that were still of a good quality.

28.6 In response to queries raised regarding the allocations policy the Head of Tenancy Services explained Council Interest comprised of situations where improvements could be made; for instance, adapting a home for a disabled child to prevent them being placed into care. It was explained that allocating resources to transfers insured a flow of transfers which utilised the housing stock. The resources towards home seekers included families who were in need of a council property and were currently in private accommodation. It was added that the majority of homeless people, which the 40% of resources were allocated to, were in temporary accommodation. The Chair added that there would be a review of the allocations policy at the end of 2018.

28.7 (Item 6 – Rubbish in tenants gardens) The Panel raised the following comments and queries:

- The increase of rubbish in gardens was concerning for health and safety reasons but also unpleasant for the residents.
- Leaving Christmas trees by the communal bin was fly-tipping.
- The communal bins were overflowing due to fly-tipping and the food waste was attracting rats.
- Residents should try to get photos of fly-tipping and the vehicles and report it to the Enforcement Team and CityClean. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed and added that number plates of the vehicles was useful. The Enforcement Team had recently prosecuted someone and they were given a suspended sentence for fly-tipping.
- Fly-tipping hotspots had CCTV that were moved to areas that were experiencing problems.
- The dump in Shoreham no longer charged unless it was building waste.
- Bins should be located where they could be seen to prevent fly-tipping.

28.8 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the responses.

## **29 HRA ENERGY STRATEGY**

29.1 The Home Energy Efficiency Project Manager introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- The summary of the full strategy would be released with the Housing & New Homes Committee agenda on 9 January 2018 and be discussed at the Committee on 17 January 2018.
- The Asset Management Strategy would endeavour to secure the best value for money and be energy efficient. There would be further research into lower tariff costs and energy efficient products to support tenants.
- There had been ongoing consultation with residents and the Home Energy Efficiency Project Manager had attended Service Improvement Groups and had held focus groups. The Area Housing Panels were part of the consultation too.
- All of the Councillors had seen an early draft version of the report.

29.2 In response to queries raised by the Board the Officers present clarified the following:

- The contract between Brighton & Hove City Council and Mears would end in 2020 and the planning of the re-procurement had started. Plans regarding this would be released by the end of January 2018.
- Solar panels would be an option that would be looked at.
- A specific report for the Area Housing Panels should have been written; however, due to time constraints a draft version of the Housing & New Homes Committee report had to be presented. It was explained that the appendices could not be published before 9 January 2018; however, the residents would be sent a link to the full report once published.
- Leaseholders would not be charged for improvements made on the building but would be charged for any maintenance fees. Leaseholders would be consulted and it was recommended that any queries should be raised at the Leaseholders Action Group (LAG).
- Residents could raise concerns regarding the strategy directly to the report author or the Chair of the Area Housing Panel and these will be raised at the Housing & New Homes Committee.

29.3 The Chair recommended a full report regarding fuel poverty should be presented at the West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Panel due to the concerns raised by the residents during the discussion of the report.

29.4 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed for a future report regarding fuel poverty.

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

## **A TENANT HANDBOOK**

29.6 The Chair noted that an additional item regarding the Tenant Handbook had been added after the agenda had been despatched and published.

29.7 The Head of Tenancy Services introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- The Tenant Handbook had been amended to reflect the Council Tenancy Agreement.
- The Neighbourhood Improvement Group and Tenant Improvement Group had updated the document and attempted to resolve all queries the residents had submitted.
- The residents were encouraged to submit comments and queries by 19 January 2018 to Janet Dowdell, Tenancy Services Operational Manager.
- All residents would receive a copy of the Tenant Handbook, either a hard copy or via email.

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

### **30 CITY WIDE REPORTS**

30.1 In relation to Appendix 1 of the minutes from the Senior Housing Action Group Councillor Peltzer Dunn explained that it would be useful for notes to be added to the table stating the reasons why the works had been delayed.

30.2 It was noted that the Update on Service Improvement Groups & City Wide Groups stated that the Home Service Improvement Group had discussed the Estate Development Budget review; however, this was not the case.

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

### **31 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS UPDATE**

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

### **32 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

32.1 The Panel highlighted the following:

- CCTV should be installed in parks and communal gardens as an attempt to prevent littering.
- Residents were having problems contacting CityClean and it was costly to call from a mobile phone. Councillor Gilbey suggested that residents contact Councillor Mitchell, Chair of Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee, and it could be discussed at a future Committee.
- The trade buttons had been removed from the intercom system at Clarendon House and Ellen House. It was noted that elderly residents had milk and newspapers delivered; however, the Council only had the responsibility for the Royal Mail to have access to the buildings. The residents suggested that the trade buttons were active during certain hours to ensure these deliveries could be made. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed to feedback the suggestion to the relevant officer.
- The East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service advised that mobility scooters were not charged overnight due to the fire hazard and it would be helpful for this advice to be promoted.
- A future report regarding fuel poverty would be useful.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of