

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

2.00pm 5 DECEMBER 2018

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Gibson (Chair)

Representatives: Eileen Stewart (Somerset Point), Tony Prince (Pankhurst RA - Chair), Theresa Mackey (Highcroft Lodge), Jane Thorp (Hanover RA - Chair), David Spafford (Ardingly Court), Martin Cunningham (Hampshire Court), Barry Hughes (Chair Sylvan Hall RA), Tony McCoy (Sloan Court), Jason Williams (Hereford Court - Chair), Roger Small (Leach Court), Tony Worsfold (LAG), Tomm Nyhuus (Somerset Point), Carl Boardman (Warwick Mount) and Rita Devitt (Somerset Point)

Officers: Hilary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager), Geof Gage (Major Projects Manager), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement) and Anoushka Clayton-Walsh (Democratic Services Apprentice)

Guests: Delia Hills (Mears)

47 APOLOGIES

47.1 Apologies were received from Margaret Reynolds and Rebecca Mann.

48 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

48.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“At the recent citywide conference, residents expressed an interest in learning more about recycling. In response to this, we would like to offer residents the opportunity to visit the material recovery facility at Hollingdean. Please let Hilary Edgar know if you are interested. There are lots of steps in the building, so please bear that in mind when deciding whether this is something you would like to do”

49 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

49.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

50 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

50.1 1) Tenant scrutiny of repairs and maintenance service

- In response to residents, Hilary Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager, stated that the Terms of Reference for the Home Service Improvement Group would be circulated.

- Residents stated that the Home Service Improvement Group already had a large agenda for each meeting and any additional items would require additional support or allocated a separate meeting.
- Officers responded that they would invite Sharon Davies, Housing Business Programme Manager, to attend the February panel and ask if she would start a new group to accommodate the additional discussion and circulate an email prior to the minutes of this meeting being published to update on the progress made.

2) Estate Development Budget (EDB) underspend

- Residents stated that EDB funds should build cumulatively when underspent on previous years.
- Hilary Edgar stated that each area in the city receives a proportionate budget to the number of properties. There were concerns that areas that continuously failed to spend their annual budget would perpetuate an imbalance in funding if the underspend as ring fenced to individual areas. Underspends were therefore re-allocated across the city so the maximum number of bids could be delivered. She added that the central area had never underspent their EDB.
- Residents raised concern that the system should be discussed in terms of need rather than household distribution. They added that areas that spend more should be able to justify additional funding and areas that fail to do not need the funding.

51 ROUND ROBIN

- 51.1 Residents stated that there were plans for tree planting on Pankhurst Avenue that coincided with International Woman's day in the New Year.
- 51.2 Residents from Pankhurst Avenue asked if they could change the use of their clean-up day budget to invest in trees and planters for the estate which would complement the environmental improvement initiative. This was agreed.
- 51.3 The Chair stated that residents should pick sites carefully, discuss ideas with community groups and encourage volunteer involvement.
- 51.4 A resident raised concern over the lack of resident engagement at Highcroft Lodge and asked the panel for ideas on invigorating the community, better options to encourage representation and how to recruit a more diverse group of tenants. She stated that difficulties in resident engagement arose in her building due to the high resident turnover, a lack of communal areas and that the demographics tended to be younger families where often English was not their first language.
- 51.5 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, suggested residents set up social groups framed in a positive light that could appeal more to tenants. She added that in terms of communal areas, other Residents Associations (RAs) may be willing to lend spaces.
- 51.6 In response to residents, Delia Hills, the Mears representative, stated that Mears' contract was managed by the council and that Mears was responsible for service

delivery. EBD enquires should be directed to RAs and the Resident Involvement Officers (RIOs) or any problems with the process should be directed to the council.

51.7 Residents stated that they would create a report about community communication with police on a local level in central Brighton which they would share with the area housing panel upon completion.

51.8 In response to residents, officers apologised for the poor accessibility measures around Sloan Court regarding steep angles on curves and insufficient wheelchair ramps. These problems had caused accidents and they said they would take the issue directly to Highways.

51.9 In response to residents, officers stated that residents should direct their gas related problems to the utilities company, Scotia Gas Networks (SGN), as they held the statutory responsibility. They added that they had asked SGN for a programme of works and once they had received an answer they would report back to the panel.

52 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET

52.1 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the briefing paper on the proposed environmental improvement budget that was set to go to the Housing & New Home Committee in January. She stated that they would ensure that funds would be distributed fairly across the city and they would update residents on the projects.

52.2 Residents raised concern for the budget approach and stated that they had been calling for a review of service charges for grounds maintenance. They added that residents wanted value for money and transparency in their service delivery.

52.3 Officers responded that the grounds maintenance contract was under review.

52.4 In response to a query on lease holder charges, officers stated that if there was an issue that needed addressing then there would need to be consultation to design a contract.

52.5 In response to residents, officers stated that they were hoping for approximately £500,000 for the Housing & New Homes Committee to approve for the environmental budget. They added that in terms of budget allocation, the team wanted to demonstrate a project happening in each area of the city in year one of the programme although there would be a practical, pragmatic and realistic needs based allocation approach that would work on a case-by-case basis.

52.6 The Chair raised concern that projects may be executed too quickly that could result in a lack of information via resident involvement and consultation.

53 HRA BUDGET 2019/20

53.1 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, stated that officers had previously met tenants, lease holders and councillors at task and finish groups to consult on desirable works in future years. There had been unforeseen events that had stalled particular works, the Grenfell tragedy, and total clarity would be difficult

until the government had produced updated legislation and the change of the Mears contract.

- 53.2 Residents stated that in the past it had been useful for the area housing panels to host a special meeting to discuss the draft budget. They added that they only saw the detail in projects in live capital works which was problematic because following an initial resident consultation they could see that proposals could change significantly.
- 53.3 The Chair stated that in the previous year the three consultations had been too close together, although useful feedback was collated but issues remained. He added that there should be more information available to explain the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, the main changes and should include the reasons prior to the publication of the budget.
- 53.4 In response to residents, the Chair stated that there would be issues with information being release to residents before it was a public document and the proposals should be taken to committee and reviewed by councillors. He added that information could be released simultaneously to papers being published and then issues, thoughts and feedback should be gathered from residents.
- 53.5 Officers suggested the Chair could attend the Resident Only Meeting on the 10 January 2019 and incorporate the HRA in to the discussion.

54 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 54.1 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the July to September council housing performance report. Performance overall had marginally lowered however the Housing team had the best performing customer service excluding Mears in the entire council.
- 54.2 Residents raised concern that there were many types of disputes that may not be truly represented in the customer complaints indicators and it did not mention the resolution figures. They asked why there was a lack of continuity in presenting leaseholder costs across the report whereby more detailed information was provided in some areas more than others.
- 54.3 Officers responded that they look in to including estimates when consultation begun. For certain works the council would foot the bill and for others the cost in some circumstances may not be divided equally across the flats.
- 54.4 In response to residents, officers stated that performance indicator data was collected from a variety of sources such as the Housing's IT systems, service managers and government data such as the STAR survey results. Consultation occurred between the Tenants, councillors and officers between area housing panels and the Housing & New Homes Committee following the STAR survey.
- 54.5 The Chair stated that in future the Housing management Performance Report item should be towards the start of the meeting to ensure there was more time for residents to challenge the council's accountability.
- 54.6 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to note the report.

55 CITYWIDE REPORTS

55.1 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to note the reports.

56 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

56.1 Hilary Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager, asked the panel on behalf of Theobald House RA to use a successful EDB bid for a specific project to re-allocate the funding to instead finance other environmental improvement projects.

56.2 Residents unanimously agreed to the re-allocation of funding.

57 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be the 20 February 2019.

The meeting concluded at 16:00

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of