

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: NORTH AREA**

**7.00pm 25 OCTOBER 2018**

**MOULSECOOMB HUB - MOULSECOOMB HUB**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Meadows (Chair)

**Representatives:** Heather Hayes (Coldean Independent Group), Jennifer Simmonds (Coldean Independent Group), Terence Hall (Bates Estate), Andrew Hunter (EMTRA), Jane Hunter (EMTRA), Denny Comelio (EMTRA), Gary Amerena (EMTRA), Bridget Stewart

**Officers:** Marcus Richardson (Surveyor & Contract Manager), Grant Ritchie (Lead Consultant - Health & Safety), Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement), Sharon Davies (Housing Business Programme Manager), Annie Sparks (Regulatory Services Manager), Hilary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager and Anoushka Clayton-Walsh (Democratic Services Apprentice)

**Guests:**

**31 APOLOGIES**

31.1 Apologies were received from Sarah Rowntree and Mr and Mrs Hawker.

**32 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

32.1 The Chair communicated the following:

*"You may know that Rachel Chasseaud left the post of Head of Tenancy Services to take up the position of Assistant Director of the city's Environmental Services. Justine Harris has been appointed as Rachel's replacement. Justine is currently the Housing Options Manager and will be taking up her new post shortly and is looking forward to attending the next Area Panel.*

*A report is going to November's Housing & New Homes Committee that will share information about the work the residents' Estates Development Panel has been carrying out over the summer to make the EDB bidding process simpler and quicker and to announce increased funding for environmental improvements. This additional money will be spent on work that has been identified through the many different ways we engage with residents. These include the STAR satisfaction survey, the feedback residents recently gave us during consultation on the delivery of repairs and maintenance, the annual customer satisfaction survey, estate inspections, feedback from*

*complaints and councilors' enquiries in addition to information from residents associations. This report will give an outline of what is proposed, with a more detailed report going to committee in January 2019. A briefing on that report will come to the next round of Area Panels and invite your comments and contributions on the proposals it will make on the future of the Estates Development Budget and how the additional funding is spent"*

- 32.2 Residents asked whether there was a gap between the Estate Development Budget (EBD) and the increased funding.
- 32.3 Officers responded that the funding would be quite similar but the proposed amount of money for environmental improvements would increase, not necessarily the EBD.

### **33 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 33.1 Residents stated that on item 21.4 it should be included that Debra May, the Principal Planning Officer, encouraged residents to contact her with suggestions for funding particularly for areas that were not usually included.
- 33.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 6 September 2018 be approved and signed as the correct record.

### **34 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME**

#### **34.1 1) Blocked drains**

- The Chair stated that this described drains on council property and did not refer to land accountable to Highways.

34.2 The Panel agreed that the Round Robin agenda item would commence first as the standing item at all future meetings.

### **35 SEASIDE HOMES - FUTURE ELECTION OF COUNCIL TENANT REPRESENTATIVE**

- 35.1 Hilary Edgar, the Housing Service Operations Manager, stated that there was a vacancy for the Seaside Homes Representative for one of the organisations nine trustees. She added that there would be an article appearing in Homing In explaining the role description and if anyone wanted any more information of the commitments involved residents should contact her.
- 35.2 To be a Trustee of an organisation was an exciting and fulfilling role. The most effective Boards are ones which benefit from individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences and skill sets. The role of Trustee was to ensure that Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes fulfils its duty to its beneficiaries and delivers on our vision, mission and values.
- 35.3 The time commitment for this role was an Induction Meeting with CEO (2 hours), 6 Board Meetings per year (2-3 hours per meeting), 4 Half Day Training Sessions per year and 2 Half Day Away Days per year.

35.4 The essential guide to becoming a trustee can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

## 36 FIELD OFFICER UPDATE

36.1 Annie Sparks, the Regulatory Services Manager, introduced a briefing on the new Field Officer roles. The Field Officer would work cross-service and seek community collaboration by attending Area Housing Panels, Leaseholder Action Groups (LAGs) and report to the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities & Equalities Committee (NICE). These Field Officers were chosen from a variety of backgrounds with a range of experience to operate seven days per week on a flexible working pattern for fast effective enforcement towards service referral. The team was currently live; however would be working in full force from December 2018.

36.2 Residents asked if Field Officers would be given the task of estate inspections and stated that they should work closely with the tenant representatives as they were familiar with particular household situations, the continuing issues of the area and the areas that needed extra attention because they lacked tenant representatives.

36.3 Officers responded that the new inspection structure was not yet defined but would involve Field Officers and there would be further consultations about the role of residents and partners. Officers added that the model would be based on developing strong relationships to map what areas needed support which would be supported by the flexible working pattern.

36.4 In response to residents, officers stated that the Field Officers were working closely with Housing Officers to understand the communities across the city so when they attended this panel they could effectively contribute. They added that the review may change the frequency of inspections but plans were still in the design stages and details were not yet finalised.

36.5 Officers stated that the new system would be more fluid in its regime, for instance not executing clockwork inspections every six months but using feedback to provide a more bespoke service when requested.

36.6 Residents raised concern for refuse and recycling of missed bin collections and poor information of what, how and when to recycle.

36.7 Officers responded that the Cityclean service has upset some residents across the city and collection solutions needed attention. Officers added that Field Officers could ease the confusion by relaying better information to residents channelled through these meetings.

36.8 In response to residents, the Chair responded that there were two sized of bin which could be requested, however for an additional bin the house of multiple occupancy would have to have a considerable number of tenants.

36.9 Officers stated that if residents wanted more information they should contact them and in the future they intended to collate the names of residents on to a database to contact residents to keep them informed.

### 37 A NEW DEAL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING - GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER AND CONSULTATION

37.1 Hilary Edgar, the Housing Service Operations Manager, gave a briefing on the government green paper stating that it proposed fundamental reforms that ensured social housing provided essential, safe and a well-manged service for all those who needed it. The three main objectives of the paper were to rebalance the relationship with tenants, tackle the stigma associated with social housing and to create a stronger base for social mobility. The paper was based on consultations with tenants across the country and was currently going through parliament and would lead to specific requirements from the council based in the new legislation. She added residents should see page 29 of the report if they wanted more information on the process to get involved.

37.2 The Chair stated that if residents wanted to participate they should contact Officers and there were still further events to attend in the UK.

37.3 **RESOLVED** – the panel agreed to note the report.

### 38 FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

38.1 Grant Richie, the Lead Consultant – Health & Safety, introduced the fire safety update on the proposed installation of residential sprinklers to high rise blocks. There had been a consultation that produced a mixed response and now as a result the nature of the proposal had changed whereby the systems installed would be optional. The package of work would target all blocks over a five year period and ask all residents to take a sprinkler head above their front door to protect common areas. He added that potential damage caused by the sprinkler would not affect premiums of excess on insurance claims.

38.2 In response to residents, officers stated that blocks had to be six floors or more to constitute a high rise. Officers added that when the scheme was originally introduced the blocks were piloted based on their height and the number of residents, which was now seen to be a blunt tool. In future, other factors like age, mobility or even if the residents in a block were fatigued by too many works on their building would be considered.

38.3 In response to residents, officers stated that in regard to the fire door replacement scheme, only temporary door replacements were currently provided. They added that the combustible cladding was a modern issue that arose from building specifications from the mid-90s so not all properties required inspection.

38.4 The Chair stated that the vulnerability of buildings was based on the ease of escape, low-rise houses for instance could simply use a ladder and many

residents have expressed that they felt safe enough. She added that the Grenfell tragedy was not comparable to any block construction in Brighton & Hove. The sprinkler programme was currently being rolled out across the city and once the Grenfell review was completed there may be more mandatory safety requirements to follow.

38.5 **RESOLVED** – That then panel agreed to note the report.

### 39 **FUTURE DELIVERY OF HOUSING REPAIRS, PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL WORKS**

39.1 Sharon Davies, the Housing Business Programme Manager, introduced the update on the delivery of repairs, maintenance and capital works programmes beyond the termination of the Mears contract in 2020. The key decisions from the report that recently went to the Housing & New Homes Committee and the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee were three main areas of repairs: customer services to go in-house, major capital works to function on a multi-contractor framework and for specialist works to continue to operate through the mechanical and electrical teams. Consultation with residents had occurred at the Citywide Conference and would continue at the Area Housing Panels.

39.2 Residents asked for a list of all the major works in all estates across the city and to be more informed on the planning processes. Residents added that the job opportunities that arose from the projects should include recruiting young apprentices and local people.

39.3 The Chair responded that making the council responsible for repair works would mean that there was a commitment to hiring apprentices and promotion of local recruitment.

39.4 In response to Residents, Officers stated that the frequency of repair inspections had increased however as there was in excess of 30,000 calls per year it was not possible to respond to every one.

39.5 Residents raised concerns whether the council would still provide window replacements before the end of the Mears contract and whether the council would be able to get external funding beyond then. They added that there was frustration among some residents that some estates had priority over other for repairs.

39.6 Officers responded that they sourced externally and they could bid when opportunities arose, this was not necessarily specifically for window but on energy programmes with ranging criteria. They added if any residents knew more about additional funding opportunities they should contact them.

39.7 In response to Residents, Officers stated that employees would be protected in the contract transition and this process was not intended to cut jobs.

39.8 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the report.

### 40 **2019 / 20 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

40.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the budget discussion to inform the panel that there had been various forums for residents to consult with officers to highlight areas in which the council needed to improve the environment of the estates, which was the lowest performing area on the STAR satisfaction survey. She added the main suggestions of improvements that had arisen were to increase the decent homes standard, to tackle isolation, to increase energy efficiency, to increase the number of social housing properties, to distribute planters and to tackle fly tipping. The focus was to improve the neighbourhood as a place to live by implementing quick and effective projects that were funded separately to projects that used the Estate Development Budget (EBD).

40.2 Residents raised the following areas for improvement:

- grass cutting
- weeding
- gardening support and guidance for residents
- pruning of trees and hedges
- control of noise pollution

40.3 The Chair stated that lots of these improvements could be supported by the new Field Officers.

40.4 In response to Residents, officers stated that initially when works would be brought in-house there would be start-up costs and that there was no surplus Mears budget funnelling into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to fund the EBD, which had already been lowered over the years. They added that residents had previously asked for their EBD underspends to be used to partially top up their reduced budget instead of new projects until it had been expended. Currently the EBD was the equivalent to its budget before the cuts due to this functionality; however there would be reviews into more effective methods of budgeting.

40.5 In response to residents, officers stated that anyone could request road signs to discourage people from parking on grass verges. Officers added that other improvements that could be requested included different coloured bins to indicate the type of disposal and security lighting.

40.6 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the report.

## 41 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

41.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, stated to the panel that officers had consulted with the other Area Housing Panels on the North Panel's concerns regarding the format of the Housing Management Performance Reports that it was too detailed and should only be reviewed by residents annually. It was raised by officers that the report was intended to keep the landlord accountable and provide residents with informative and transparent information on the performance of management. She added that residents could decide how they would like to receive this information pack in future, whether summarised or presented as an infographic.

- 41.2 Residents stated that the information was important but would be best absorbed through a less detailed edition to the current standard, which could get confusing and time consuming to scrutinise, however more than a brief summary. They added that it would be more helpful to receive information primarily in areas that had not performed well.
- 41.3 Officers responded that the other panels wanted to remain with the current delivery.
- 41.4 The Chair stated that the report could be discussed annually at the panel with a less detailed discussion and other quarterly reports could instead just be viewed privately by residents.
- 41.5 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the report.

## 42 CITY WIDE REPORTS

- 42.1 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the reports.

## 43 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 43.1 Residents raised that the Coldean estate felt neglected and major works were focussed in other areas of the city.
- 43.2 The Chair asked where Coldean was on the improvement programmes and what plans were coming forward.
- 43.3 Officers responded that they can discuss this with residents after the meeting.
- 43.4 Residents enquired where the borders of Housing land were in relation to Highways. They added that when floods occurred in pathways it was unclear who to contact.
- 43.5 Officers responded that there was no easy map to demonstrate this and that residents should contact them to resolve a specific incident.
- 43.6 In response to residents, officers stated that in arrangements of mutual property exchange that tenants were not supposed to leave belongings in their original house through a swap, however in some cases there was a mutual arrangement between the swapping residents of collecting their possessions beyond the swap date.
- 43.7 Residents raised concerns that many fascia boards, soffit boards and bargeboards in the estates had been reduced to bare wood and could not be replaced until the roofs were affected. They added that they had been left for years and questioned when they would be replaced.
- 43.8 Officers responded that these repairs were grouped to gain value for money in terms of the scaffolding and that there was a set budget for these types of repairs so emergency cases had to be prioritised.

43.9 In response to residents, officers stated that tiled roofs should last 25 – 30 years and in order to get a report on energy efficiency from the council it would depend on the style of the property.

**44 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

44.1 The date of the next meeting would be 29 November 2018.

The meeting concluded at 21:00

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of