

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

1.30pm 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

HAMPSHIRE LODGE - HAMPSHIRE LODGE

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Gibson (Chair)

Voting Representatives: Eileen Stewart (Somerset Point), Tony McCoy (Rep Sloane Court), Tony Worsfold (LAG), Barry Hughes (Sylvan Hall RA), Martin Cunningham (Hampshire Court), Barry Kingston (Hampshire Court), Carl Boardman (Warwick Rep), David Spafford (Ardingly Court), Margaret Reynolds (Leach Court), Linda Shaw(Sylvian Hall)

Officers: Rebecca Mann (Resident Involvement Officer), Marcus Richardson (Surveyor & Contract Manager), Grant Ritchie (Lead Consultant - Health & Safety), Glynn Huelin (Business & Performance Manager), Delia Hills(Mears), James Crane (Service Improvement Manger – Housing Options), Mel Fraser (Performance & Improvement Officer, Tom Matthews(Housing Performance Analyst)

17 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

18 APOLOGIES

18.1 Apologies were received from Tony Price, John Evans, Ododo Dafe and Eddie Wilson.

19 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

19.1 There were none.

20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

20.1 Barry Hughes noted that 12.1 should refer to the Tenancy Improvement Group.

20.2 Carl Boardman stated that 7.1 trailed should read trialled.

20.3 The Chair stated that at the last meeting the head of Income, Involvement & Improvement confirmed the Estate Development Budget could be used for projects not on housing land and this was not recorded in the minutes.

20.4 In response to the Chair, officers confirmed that Estate Development Budget could be used on non-housing projects.

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

21 RESIDENTS' QUESTION TIME**21.1 1) Recycling problems**

- Residents said that they had agreed at the last meeting that Cityclean would send out informative leaflets and that there were still problems of not knowing what to recycle. Residents added further issues of bins failing to be emptied and the inability to contact Cityclean with concerns.
- The Chair noted that he had previously suggested that Cityclean should be invited as a guest to the Central Housing Panel. The Chair added that issues with Cityclean fill his inbox and that there is a general feeling that residents want Cityclean to attend the meeting in order to aid communication.
- An Officer responded that Cityclean would be attending the next Citywide Conference where environment was the theme.

21.2 2) Visitors' car parking

- Residents stated the ongoing problems regarding car parking spaces especially in Lavender Street in the area being used and added that there needed to be ethical car parking to improve matters. Residents indicated that it was very frustrating for paying people being unable to park.
- The Chair raised the question of whether this was due to insufficient enforcement.
- Officers responded by reminding residents that there is a resident task group at the end of September.
- Residents stated that a review had only past a few months ago.
- Officers responded that they knew what the problems were and will pick them up in the group.
- The Chair proposed to make a note of when the resident task group started and finished to then develop at a later date what could be improved.

21.3 3) Drug use in the St James' Street area (1)

- Residents raised concern of drug issues moving to residential areas that followed improvements in the prime problem areas. This was subsequent to the Police and Crime Commissioner attending the Local Action group Meeting. There was a great response to the report from the police and from having a discussion covering resources and deployment, there was an agreement to do a body of work together.
- A resident raised concern that they had recently found three needles in the South East corner of the estate. There has been collaboration with Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) where they had agreed to do more on the estate and encouraged other estates to do the same. He furtherly noted that PCSOs were overworked and involved in drug use simply moved on to

somewhere else when a particular area was focused on. This resident encouraged other residents to report all incidences to the PCSO.

- The Chair proposed the panel to possibility to work with PCSOs and whether it was worth inviting the police to the Central Area Housing Panel in the future.
- A resident responded that it was better to finish work with the police and crime commissioner to formulate a closer explanation and strategy in addition to the report previous report.
- The Chair agreed that it was best to wait for the results from further collaboration and revisit in the next meeting for residents liaise on findings.

21.4 4) Drug use in the St James' Street area (2)

- One resident raised problems of being unable to contact Annabel Tate, the Housing Manager, and was still waiting for a reply. She added the frustration that residents needed to speak to officers regarding anti-social behaviour and being told that it was not the housing officers remit and redirected to a different department.
- Officers directed residents to contact the housing contact enquiries who would direct residents to the correct place and officers apologised for the previous negative experience. Officers raised that instead of directing queries at particular officers that residents should call the duty line to get a quicker response as it was monitored throughout the day unless a resident was assigned to a particular caseworker for a specific case.

21.5 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the responses.

22 FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

- 22.1 Grant Ritchie, Lead Consultant - Health and Safety, introduced the report stating that Brighton & Hove City Council was continuing to work closely with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. In response to the latest government information on fire doors, the Council was temporarily halting its routine front door replacement programme in blocks of flats following a national agreement by manufacturers to suspend production of fire doors.
- 22.2 In response to concerns raised by Residents, Officers stated that a random sample of fire doors were tested across the Council's stock but focussing on high-rise blocks. If Residents had particular concerns about improperly fitted fire doors, Officers encouraged them to report these doors. Additionally Officers stated that the original timber doors were most likely fire proof. The fire doors that had already been fitted were generally safe for 30 minutes; however this was dependant on conditions and fit.
- 22.3 In response to Residents, Officers stated that automatic door closing devices needed to be fitted on all fire doors to ensure that they were closed to provide protection in the event of a fire. If Residents knew of any doors where the device had been removed or was broken they should report this so it be repaired. If the doors were

being closed to quickly or with excessive force this was probably a sign that the device was faulty and Residents should report it rather than attempt to remove it.

- 22.4 The Chair asked that further advice be published in the Homing In magazine.
- 22.5 Residents expressed concern that leaseholders may be liable for the cost of replacing doors which they purchased through packaged offered by the Council.
- 22.6 Officers responded that as the government had not published its conclusions regarding the efficacy of Masterdor and IG door fire doors that it was too early to make any comments about a potential replacement scheme.
- 22.7 The Chair acknowledged that this was a developing situation and process.
- 22.8 In response to Residents Officers stated that even fire door which had failed test still had a 15 minute safe period and it was felt that this was a reasonable amount of time for evacuation and emergency services to respond. Officers added that Grenfell was not a direct analogue for high-rise blocks in the city which were generally of a better design.
- 22.9 The Chair stated that the report would be going to the Housing % New Homes Committee with updated detail and for more information residents should contact their local Councillor. Officers were very mindful of Grenfell regarding fire safety and that Councillors would rightfully scrutinise the ongoing process to make sure residents were satisfied with the transparency of the investigation.
- 22.10 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

23 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS REVIEW

- 23.1 Officers presented the report and outlined the new allocations policy. There were four queues within the allocations policy, each queue was allocated a given a percentage allocation of properties including: homeless (40%), transfers (30%), home-seekers (20%) and council's interests (10%). The replaced banding would allow the allocations process to work faster.
- 23.2 Residents raised they should have been able to move within the scheme and their communities without having to be re-entered into the allocation lists. Residents stated that it was important for the housing allocation policy to allow for residents moving within scheme as this would enable people to move within scheme meaning they could live in more suitable accommodation close to their established support networks
- 23.3 Officers responded that a resident whose needs became more severe would be a priority when shortlisted which was the purpose of the Band A which was proposed in the new policy. Residents could also agree to swap homes within schemes.
- 23.4 In response to residents, Officers stated that they would investigate any schemes where Residents felt age restrictions had previously applied and were being enforced. However Officers added that some historically over 55 blocks were no longer age restricted as equalities legislation had made this difficult to justify.

- 23.5 Residents raised concerns for tenants with changing situations. If a very elderly resident wanted to move downstairs, residents questioned if they would have to already be on the allocation list.
- 23.6 In response to Residents Officers confirmed if a block was subject to Right-to Buy there was no limit on the number of properties in the block that could become leasehold properties.
- 23.7 Resident stated that they were concerned that the Council was not doing enough to preserve good quality furniture and carpets from the homes of Residents that had passed away.
- 23.8 Officers responded that they did have re-use and recycling in place for furniture left in properties but that there was limited capacity to store item and when this store is full they may need to dispose of usable furniture. However Officers acknowledged that they support given to new Residents in terms of furniture provided could be improved.
- 23.9 The Chair stated that if Residents had concerns about the new policy that had not been addressed in the meeting they could contact him or any other member of the Housing & New Homes Committee.
- 23.10 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

24 OPTIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY OF HOUSING REPAIRS, PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL WORKS

- 24.1 Glyn Huelin, Business & Performance Manager, introduced the report and emphasised the importance of the feedback received through consultation with residents and other stakeholders.
- 24.2 The Chair noted that the housing repairs contract would be the subject of a special Housing & New Homes Committee on 26 September 2018.
- 24.3 In response to Residents, Officers stated that Mears were required by the existing contract to carry out quality insurance checks, although the Council did check any major works. The new contract would likely have a different system in place to scrutinise works done.
- 24.4 Delia Hills assured Residents that the feedback calls made after repairs were not merely looking for positive feedback and all issues or faults reported would be recorded.
- 24.5 Residents did state that their experience of Mears had not been entirely negative and Mears had definitely done good work during the contract.
- 24.6 In response to Residents, Delia Hills agreed at the situation regarding wet room puddling was not satisfactory and she would follow up outside of the meeting to ensure that repairs took place.
- 24.7 In response to Residents, Officers stated that they tried to align any work with decorating so that newly decorated areas would not be disturbed by new fittings or

similar. Thy apologised if this had happened and stated that the contractors carrying out the work should have returned the area in the stated that they had found it in.

- 24.8 Residents raised concern that communal areas were in an appalling state and some areas had not been re-decorated for nearly two decades. Estate Development Budget bids had been placed, however bids had been rejected due to estates no fitting specifications.
- 24.9 Officers responded they will be commissioning work on charter and seniors housing that would include a section on decoration which would feedback into reviews. Officers agreed that a lot of their stock did look tired and acknowledged that an important aspect for sheltered housing was to feel welcome in communal areas. This was an issue that would be raised going forward.
- 24.10 The Chair stated that the case would be flagged and that feedback for the wider environment and communal areas would be incorporated in to the report. The main areas that had been drawn to attention were less repeated monitoring, less wasteful use of scaffolding, getting jobs done right first time, improved coordination with decoration, shorter contracts and a report that draws together all the wider themes.
- 24.11 Residents stated that there should be some acknowledgement for the positive aspects of the Mears contract, such as the responsive help desk and their feedback mechanism. They raised the negative implications of long-term contracts such as historical problems with fraud and the difficulties for leaseholders. They noted that if the contract were to change in future that the help desk service should be replicated by other providers.
- 24.12 The Chair stated that it was important for Residents views to be heard at committee and he encouraged residents to contact him with concerns or issues that they felt had not been raised at the meeting or through the consultation process.
- 24.13 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

25 IMPROVE YOUR ESTATES PROGRAMME

- 25.1 Mel Fraser, the Performance & Improvement Officer, presented the report on the actions that resulted from the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) satisfaction survey. The update the focussed on the progress made of actions to improve Council housing public areas and the general quality of life on estates, including: Discretionary Decorating and Gardening Schemes, Review of Estate Inspections, Untidy Gardens and Grounds Maintenance.
- 25.2 Residents raised issue of the poor frequency of lawn maintenance and that is was a job the council was accountable for and that Residents have had to try to manage gardens independently.
- 25.3 Officers responded that there would be a remit about gardens and round maintenance and acknowledged there were many issues in this area that would go forward to review.

- 25.4 The Chair questioned Officers on how residents would be involved in this review.
- 25.5 Officers responded that this question would be forwarded. Officers stated that in terms of communal gardens, a garden project would be developed. This project would use volunteers, new resources and resident involvement that incorporated many online garden share and neighbourhood schemes. This project has been tricky and will be featured in the City Wide meeting.
- 25.6 Residents raised concerns that many people in sheltered housing were vulnerable so there must be safeguards in to who would be invited to the estates. Residents added their concerns of demarcation dispute between contractors.
- 25.7 Officers agreed to forward those points
- 25.8 The Chair recommended to re-visit these issues as they deserved more time and that after the City Wide conference there will be updated information to move forward.
- 25.9 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

26 HOME PURCHASE POLICY UPDATE

- 26.1 Officers outlined the Housing Management and Performance Report.
- 26.2 Residents questioned the total number of affordable homes there were in city and how many were allocated to each new building development.
- 26.3 Officers responded that the number of affordable homes required differed on each scheme and development.
- 26.4 The Chair said that the general policy was that 40% of all developments that have at least ten units were required to be affordable, however often developers said that they could not afford that rate. In that case, committees had to decide whether they were satisfied with the claim to go ahead which could be frustrating if the housing organisation simply did not want to manage affordable homes. The report supported managing these affordable homes.
- 26.5 Residents raised that capital works projects would cause financial stress for leaseholders.
- 26.6 Officers responded they would more feedback from leaseholders to take a managed approach.
- 26.7 The Chair noted the report should bring expansion for the affordable homes scheme.
- 26.8 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

27 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

- 27.1 The Chair stated that he regretted the panel did not have more time to consider the item and directed them to contact Tom Matthews, Housing Performance Analyst, at tom.matthews@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

27.2 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

28 BUDGET PLANNING

28.1 The Chair referred that the report that was released annually for new budget plans and stated that it did impinge on residents through the Estate Development Budget. He then questioned if residents would like to repeat this year's process of the successful working groups.

28.2 Residents responded that the working group had run better than previous years and gained detailed information on the shrunken budget.

28.3 The Chair noted there had been lots of discussion that had not involved tenants. He recommended that meeting working groups should in future be spread over the year and be independent of Area Housing Panels.

28.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

29 CITY WIDE REPORTS

29.1 The Chair noted this report.

30 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

30.1 A Resident stated that her local resident housing association had dissolved when last attending the panel and requested permission to attend the Central Area Housing Panel in future. She said due to this she felt that she had lost her local voice.

30.2 Rebecca Mann, the Resident Involvement Officer, responded that the Resident was welcome to attend, however she would not be allowed to vote.

30.3 The Chair added that that resident was encouraged to attend and that the panel rarely voted anyway and it was in everyone's best interest to expand the panel – not reduce.

30.4 Residents stated that it was very useful talking to other Residents on the estates adding that others should be reminded that they have meetings and without attendance they do not stand a chance for their voice to be heard.

31 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

31.1 The date of the next meeting would be 17 October 2018.

The meeting concluded at 16:10

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

The meeting concluded at 15.35

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

