

# BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

7.00pm 17 OCTOBER 2018

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Gibson (Chair)

**Representatives:** Margaret Reynolds (Leach Court), Roger Small (Leach Court), Eileen Stewart (Somerset Point), Martin Cunningham (Hampshire Court), John Dubery (HCRD), Jason Williams (Hereford Court), Barry Hughes (Sylvan Hall), David Spafford (Ardingly Court), Rita Devitt (Somerset Point), Carl Boardman (Warwick Mount) and Tomm Nyhus (Somerset Point)

**Officers:** Glynn Huelin (Business & Performance Manager), Grant Ritchie (Lead Consultant - Health & Safety), Martin Reid (Head of Housing Strategy Property & Investment), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement) and Anoushka Clayton-Walshe (Democratic Services Apprentice)

**Guests:** Brian Chynick, Christian Chynick, Viv Cromelly, Anthony Prick (Pankhurst area), Charlotte Rogers (Park Count), Sam Thorpe ( Hanover RA), Patricia Farchy and Sue Soar

### 32 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

34.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

*"You may know that Rachel Chasseaud left the post of Head of Tenancy Services at the end of August 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 being at our next panel meeting.*

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

**33 APOLOGIES**

33.1 Apologies were received from Tony Worsfold, Theresa Mackey and Tony McCoy.

**34 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

35.1 Residents stated that item 20.4 should refer to non-housing land.

35.2 The Chair added a timeframe to item 28.3; working group involvement took place over three meetings during a three week period.

35.3 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 5 September 2018 be approved and signed as the correct record.

**35 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME****35.1 1) Leaseholder charges**

- Residents stated that they had asked a range of questions to officers previous to the meeting that had not been answered and had received contradictory responses, these included: why the proposed works would span over so many years, why the work was in various different on different blocks and how the costings were calculated. Residents added that it was not true, as stated, that they had been aware of the proposed works from 2014 and that the council had failed to produce the formal document that reports this when requested.
- Officers responded that the extended time frame was due to issues with the scheme, for example the refusal of planning permission, and was unlikely to be completed before the termination of the Mears contract. Officers stated that they would communicate with residents and move forward with the key concerns to decide on what works, agree on specifications of works, agree basis for tender and provide dialogue on the basis of the estimated costings.
- Residents asked if Officers were withdrawing the costings estimate and stated that it should have been evaluated more robustly before the figure was released. Residents added that leaseholders deserve to know the situation and the description of the works; it should not take action groups to gain transparency.
- Officers responded that the costings were an estimate which may have been higher than the actual figure and that in the past they only wanted to provide an estimate on consultation stages however there were legitimate criticisms on needing to give residents more say. Officers added that with the end of the Mears contract, the council could look to more contractors in the market and have the capacity focus internally on in-house work.
- In response to residents, officers responded that there would be a meeting and a survey before the end of the year to generate an estimate of a financial figure that all parties could support. Officers added that there had been criticism in the past for doing all the works in one go; however this practice was cost effective in terms of the scaffolding.

- In response to Residents, Officers stated the council did not operate as a private landlord with access to sinking funds.
- The Chair noted that there were strong feelings on the charges and accepted that there were past failures; there was now space for clarity and resident involvement which would be supported by follow up meeting with Martin Reid, the Head of Housing Strategy Property & Investment, to continue discussions.

### 35.2 2) Estate Development Budget – Main bids

- Residents raised concern for fencing services being removed from the Estate Development Budget (EDB) because some areas did not have open spaces and had little else to bid for. Residents added that the EDB was supposed to be a community budget and fencing seemed logical to be provided on the Housing Revenue Account.
- The Chair stated that there was not enough information on what had been planned and proposed on estates in the long-term. He added that there needed to be expanded methods of identifying schemes and funding and that information and discussion groups were needed on estates of future works.
- Officers responded that they had committed to do so and that information was available online, however they recognised that the record should be more transient and up to date.

## 36 SEASIDE HOMES - FUTURE ELECTION OF COUNCIL TENANT REPRESENTATIVE

- 36.1 Hilary Edgar stated that there was a job vacancy for the Seaside homes Representative and the election would be early 2019.
- 36.2 In response to Residents, the Chair said that in the past each area panel elected a representative, which was also open to leaseholders, and now there were potentially two more spaces. He added that as a board member they had brought 499 properties back into use and as a registered charity there were many potential exciting projects.
- 36.3 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 fulfilled its duty to its beneficiaries and delivered on our vision, mission and values.
- 36.4 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.
- 36.5 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>

**37 FIELD OFFICER UPDATE**

- 37.1 Annie Sparks, the Regulatory Services Manager, introduced the briefing of the new Field Officer (FO) roles. The Field Officer would work cross-service and seek community collaboration by attending Area Housing Panels, Leaseholder Action Groups and reporting to the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities & Equalities Committee (NICE). These Field Officers were from a variety of backgrounds with a selection of skills and operated seven days per week with a flexible working pattern for fast effective enforcement towards service referral. The team was currently live; however it would be in full operation from early December 2018.
- 37.2 In response to residents, officers stated that there was not currently a direct inbox for the Field Officers and the direct service required should be contacted for the time being, however this was in the process of improvement. Officers added that the progress of the team will be going to NICE Committee on 3 December 2018 to then follow with regular updates.
- 37.3 In response to residents, officers stated that an estate inspection model was currently in consultation and subject to committee to which a new model would be established in the New Year. Officers acknowledged that inspections had not worked well for years and they wanted to involve residents in the re-modelling and find a responsive solution to look at estates to effectively link general maintenance and services.
- 37.4 In response to residents, officers stated that the Field Officers were initially city wide until they knew the needs in different areas. Currently the Field Officers she travelled via bus, however when a fast response was needed they could use the City Car Club. Officers added that due to the nature and the hours of service demand and it was important that the transport was appropriate for the situation, although this would be under review and they were open to alternative options.
- 37.5 The Chair noted that the performance would be monitored and reviewed and information would be brought back to the Panel.

**38 A NEW DEAL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING - GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER AND CONSULTATION**

- 38.1 Hilary Edgar gave a briefing on the government green paper. She stated that the Social Housing Green Paper proposes fundamental reform to ensure social houses provided an essential, safe, well managed service for all those who needed it. She referred residents to page 29 of the paper to see how they could get involved.
- 38.2 Residents questioned what this paper meant for the prospect of social rent and whether this paper was simply a disguise for the government diverting investment from other projects.
- 38.3 In response to residents, the Chair stated that this was an empowering opportunity and held landlords to account. He said this paper would secure a future for social housing by scrapping the cap, enabling the council to build more homes, and that councils were no longer compelled to sell empty properties. He added that in terms of a future of social rent, it was not an impossible and was often debated in Housing & New Homes Committee.

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

### **39 FIRE SAFETY UPDATE**

39.1 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 consultation with a mixed response and nature of the proposal had changed whereby the system would now be optional and put the proposals through forums to boost a more positive image. The current schemes were in partnership with East Sussex Fire & Rescue through a split budget and will be rolled out to other blocks in the city following consultation. He added that residents would be encouraged to install a sprinkler on their flat entrance door in order to protect common areas that would reduce the fire size and not just aid evacuation.

39.2 In response to Residents, Officers stated that the estimated figure without funding stood at a £1,500 per device and costs to leaseholders would range per flat, depending on how many devices were installed and were very block specific.

39.3 Residents raised concern of malicious engagement with the sprinkler systems as some central areas were anti-social hotspots. They questioned if there were any way for this behaviour to be negated and who would foot the bill for misuse.

39.4 Officers responded that the devices would either be protected by making them discreet or using caging and it would be at resident's discretion. They added that if malicious damage were to occur that the insurance claim would class as escaping water and would not affect premiums or excess.

39.5 In response to residents, officers stated that the scheme roll out was expected to be 6-7 years with smooth consultation and that they were currently looking to identify the most suitable blocks to move to next.

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

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

40.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the update future delivery of repairs, maintenance and capital works through the transition period and beyond the termination of the Mears contract in 2020. The key decisions from the report that went through the Housing & New Homes Committee and the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee was that repairs and customer service would be brought back in-house, major capital works would function on a multi-contractor framework and that specialist works would continue to operate through the mechanical and electrical teams. She added there would be full communication among all parties as this was a huge change for residents and officers.

40.2 In response to residents, Officers stated that not all staff would transfer from the Mears contract although many positions would be protected. A Programme Manager had now been recruited; but at this point it was too early to assume roles before the restructure. Officers added that this was a sensitive discussion and the legal implications such as the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE) had to be dealt with care.

- 40.3 Residents raised concern for the number of tenants that did not respect Mears contractors and how this would relate to the restructure. Residents additionally questioned the current and future long-term strategies and how residents would be involved.
- 40.4 The Chair responded that the STAR survey provided a balanced level of satisfaction of Mears and provided the council with a good insight into the opportunities of working within the same organisation. The Chair applauded all the research and effort Officers had made in to accounting all the options for the council moving forward.
- 40.5 Officers stated that the transition was in its early stages and residents would be involved in setting objectives for what they wanted to see delivered. Officers added that the transparency of the process, the value for money and bespoke provisions across the estates of the city were all important considerations.
- 40.6 **RESOLVED** – That the panel noted the report.

#### **41 2019/20 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- 41.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the discussion of the 2019/20 budget to gain feedback from residents to take to the 19 October 2018 Citywide Conference. 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 survey.
- 41.2 Residents raised the following areas for improvement:
- pruning of trees and bushes
  - enforcement on fly tipping
  - grounds maintenance
  - security presence
  - support for residents in maintaining their own area
  - appearance on bin storage
  - lighting
  - speeding enforcement
- 41.3 Officers stated that the main area for the budget consultation that arose for residents and councillors were fuel poverty, decoration, fly tipping, to address isolation for vulnerable tenants, improved maintenance for older council stock and to increase social housing stock. Officers added they intended the money for environmental improvements to go in to a meaningful project and focus on smaller improvements that would make an immediate difference for residents.
- 41.4 The Chair questioned on how residents would be involved in prioritising and forming the budget and what would happen after the Citywide Conference.
- 41.5 Officers responded that the next draft of budget papers would have more detail on the spending programmes and at this stage the discussion was consulting on what material differences residents wanted to see. Officers added that it would be false to

say that this would include the whole budget because parts had been decided through the Housing Asset management Strategy.

41.6 The Chair stated that not everything was set in stone and through these processes would emerge some real choice for residents.

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

**42 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

42.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, stated that concerns arose from the North Area Housing Panel regarding the format of the Housing Management Performance Reports. She added that the Area Housing Panels received the report in the same format as the Housing & New Homes Committee, however if residents it would be possible to provide residents a specialised documents, for example a summary report or infographic.

42.2 Residents responded that they would like to continue to receive the full report.

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

**43 CITY WIDE REPORTS**

43.1 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the reports.

**44 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**45 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

46.1 The date of the next meeting would be 5 December 2018.

The meeting concluded at 21:00

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

