

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: WEST HOVE & PORTSLADE AREA**

**2.00pm 19 FEBRUARY 2019**

**SANDERS HOUSE, INGRAM CRESCENT**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:**

**Representatives:** Ted Chapman (Vice Chair - Clarendon and Ellen RA), Roy Crowhurst (Woods House RA), Vic Dodd (Ingram Crescent RA), Ann Packham (Ingram Crescent RA), Ann Tizzard (Knoll), Graham Dawes (Philip Court RA), Muriel Briault (NPRA)

**Officers:** Peter Wileman (Community Safety Manager), Hilary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager), John Currell (Housing Asset Strategy Manager), Eddie Wilson (Mears), Pat Liddell (Resident Involvement Officer) Martin Reid (Assistant Director of Housing) and Kat Hoare (Democratic Services Officer – Lower)

**Apologies:** Councillor Noonan

**56 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

56.1 Roy Crowhurst acted as a substitute Chair for the Meeting since Councillor Moonan had sent her apologies due to illness.

**57 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

57.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“I am pleased to let you know that Resident Inspectors will be taking part in a training event developed in partnership with a new organisation - South East Training Uniting People, also known as SETUP. This group brings Resident Involvement officers from Brighton and Hove together with officers in similar jobs in Eastbourne & Lewes District Council, Wealden District Council, Optivo Housing Association, Brighton Housing Trust and Seaside Homes.

This event was suggested by Brighton and Hove and will be led by a trainer from TPAS, a national group promoting tenant participation. Our Resident Inspectors will meet residents from the other organisations, so as well as being a training event it will also be a great opportunity to network and share ideas. Please get in touch with the Resident Involvement team if you are interested in taking part, or have an idea for future training events.

Also on the subject of training, a member of the Resident Involvement team recently attended a Dementia Awareness event run by the Dementia Friends group. The trainer has offered to come along to association meetings and run a 45 minute session to raise aware about dementia and the support that is available for people with the condition, their family and carers. If any association would like to arrange

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this, please let the Resident Involvement team know and they will put you in touch with the trainer.

I am also very happy to share the news that Martin Reid is to take up a secondment position as Assistant Director, Housing until April 2020. Martin was previously Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment. I am sure you will want to join me in wishing Martin the best of luck in his new role.”

He also confirmed that the RI had set up tomorrow for meeting from 12 – 2pm

**58 APOLOGIES**

58.1 Apologies were received from: Cllr Noonan, Pat Weller, Cllr Nemeth, Joan Westmoreland, Cllr Peltzer Dunn and Cllr Atkinson, Pat Lidell

**59 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

59.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with the following additional note:

Hilary Edgar confirmed that the meeting mentioned on page 5- Paragraph 45.1 would now be held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and Hilary confirmed that she would be in touch later this week with further details.

**60 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME 11 - 34**

**60.1 Estate Inspections**

A resident asked for clarification on the new process for inspections and Hilary Edgar replied that it was currently a work in progress with more information being provided in the near future. The resident also asked about the “Don’t Walk By” initiative outlined on page 12 and Hilary confirmed that she had further information on this initiative which encouraged residents to report on problems and she confirmed that she would leave the written information out for residents to take away from this meeting. The resident queried whether this had been put back a year from Spring 2019 and Hilary replied that although it had been delayed, it had not been put back by a year.

A Resident wanted to report an overflowing drain with cement poured into it, which was still blocked at 62 Godwin Road. Martin Reid replied that he would look into this.

**60.2 Drain clearance**

A resident asked about drain clearance at Conway Court, as mentioned on page 13, since they stated that there was a huge difference between the 24 hours and 20 days specified. They stated that that residents have talked about a big lake and when a 20 day repair period was put in place, this may have seeped away and therefore the main drains issues were not being properly addressed. The Mears spokesperson said that it had been noted in the call centre log that the drain was overflowing and they confirmed that the response time was categorised as 24 hours for emergencies and up to 20 days for routine call outs. They confirmed that over Christmas this

particular case had been reported on 20 December and was then attended on 24<sup>th</sup> December – four days later. The resident stated that there had been many drains issues and the current system was not working or dealing effectively with these issues. It was noted that the person reporting the drain issue had to give extensive information and that the way it was reported affected how fast the issue was dealt with. A resident then spoke about a gap of a period of 5 months between reporting a drains issue and a vehicle being sent to deal with this and they were not sure whether this was on the part of an estate covered by the Highways team. Martin Reid confirmed that there was a difference between the way that the Highways and Housing teams handled repairs and he stated that it was something that he would talk about with Mears. He also stated that if patterns were emerging then they would look into the particular issue that Councillor Barnett had raised.

- 60.3 A resident asked the Mears spokesperson if there was a set of questions that staff asked in an emergency and the Mears Spokesperson replied that there was a special set of diagnostic question. Another resident asked if there was progress in looking into the issues of drains across the City, since this was an ongoing problem and whether there were preventative measures such as stopping leaves falling into drains and Alistair Red replied that there was no programme of investment currently but that it was something that the Council could look into .

### **3. Community Payback**

- 60.4 Hilary Edgar stated that she had still not received any response back regarding the Community payback as stated on page 15. She stated that she would ask the Estates team on this issue.

### **4. Clarendon & Ellen**

- 60.5 A resident stated that they were not happy with response and that they had not seen them since they had walk off over a dispute over an invoice. The resident confirmed that there was lot of half completed work and that the property looks the same as it had in 2010 and she felt that everything now should go through the Resident Involvement Team. Hilary Edgar stated that everything had now gone to the Payback team and there had been a lot of sickness within t he Team. Hilary confirmed that regarding the EDB work they would have to look at alternative ways of carrying this out and that they would also arrange for another team to do shed and garden work. Hilary confirmed that they wanted to work with us that there was, but there was a current staffing issue.
- 60.6 There were no questions around the East & Central areas.

- 60.7 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to note the reports.

## **61 THE FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE**

- 61.1 Sharon Davies introduced this report about the future arrangements when the contract with Mears ceased in 2020. She confirmed that as a Team they were keen to continue engagement with everyone. She confirmed there was a paper proposing a task and finish group consisting of 12 resident to reflect the tenure of the housing stock. There would be two leaseholders, two reps from the Home Service Improvement group, four

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from the Area Panel Group and others from the Business & Value for Money group plus two volunteers. The group would still feed in from the Area panels and report back into the Home Group. Sharon distributed a handout on the kind of issues people would take on, demonstrating a variety of different areas that people could get involved in.

- 61.2 In response to a query on the percentages stated in paragraph 2.23, she confirmed that 18 per cent was the equivalent to 2 leaseholders.
- 61.3 Alison Grime – resident was nominated and seconded as Rep and Muriel Bryant - resident was nominated for the Leaseholder side.
- 61.4 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to note the report.

### **62 FIELD OFFICERS UPDATE**

- 62.1 Brett Stacey introduced the update on the Field Officer team. The team was originally recruited in July 2018 with a plan to start in September 2018, but the first recruitment phase was delayed therefore did not begin until November 2018, thus giving rise to an incremental start. He confirmed that they were starting with a number of different areas of work including: planning, housing, parks, environmental health. They are now also offering the additional resource of enforcement work for 7 of the 9 services. Brett confirmed that from this week they were also undertaking drug prevention and ASB work on estates. He confirmed that these were pilot test tests and may be rolled out more widely in the future. He confirmed that the team had also been involved in the new estate inspections procedure and that there was a split between repairs and improvements. He stated that Field Officers (FOs) were part of the “Don’t Walk By” initiative but in terms of environmental improvement there would be more formal procedures put in place for residents and these could be fed back to the Estate Development Budget. He confirmed that there was a lot of detail to be worked out on this and thus it would not be made fully available until Summer 2019, to coincide with the timing of the first consultation .
- 62.2 A resident asked if the new procedures would include Area Reps going through their requirements for inspections with the Field Officers and Brett Stacey replied that this was no longer being continued in the same way, as it had not been supported by residents. He confirmed that there would be a meeting where residents could bring their concerns and there would be reps from the new Repairs service present. He added that they hoped to have a broader view of improvements, so that repairs could be reported at any time.
- 62.3 A resident asked if it was possible to email the FO team with their list of concerns to be addressed and Brett Stacey replied that he did not have the tools to address this within the team. He stated that the “Don’t Walk By” initiative demonstrated how resident could report anything directly to the relevant service and that there was a new online system and App being developed and should be available in the near future. Alistair Reid added that the Field Officer team was an extra resource, but that residents would still be directed through to the housing teams as they had previously.
- 62.4 A resident stated that regarding estate inspections, residents really appreciated when the same person – rather than a whole team was active on their behalf and both reported and followed up on issues. Brett replied that this was more of a problem

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associated with the Repairs team previously and that it was not now the part of the FO role to follow up on previous and historic calls and complaints.

- 62.5 A resident asked about the area of gardens and trees which required maintenance and whether this would still happen within the new system of inspections. Brett answered that this area would now be addressed within the “Don’t Walk By” initiative. Martin Reid added that there was now an extra resource around garden maintenance that had been introduced.
- 62.6 Councillor Barnett asked that if a list of problems or requirements was dropped into Victoria Road Housing Office regarding inspections, would they receive feedback on this. She confirmed that since the recent lack of estate wardens, there had been a deterioration in the estate inspections, which she felt was not acceptable for tenants. Martin Reid confirmed that if a list was left the issues could be reported as usual and that this could be left with Housing management team to be dealt with.
- 62.7 A resident asked if estate inspections were detailed in the tenancy agreement? Brett Stacey confirmed that it was in the tenancy agreement and that these issues were not being ignored but that the FO Team was a separate area. It was stated that it was worthwhile for the Council to have this stated within the tenancy agreement since there was now money in the budget for this and they would have to spend money cleaning flats and homes before the next tenant moved in. It was confirmed that Jake Willard was the contact on this via customer service.
- 62.8 A resident asked how many FOs there were and what their role was currently within the team. Brett confirmed there were 8 FOs and one Manager at present in the team and their role involved a number of different areas including evidence gathering and enforcement which was generally a 2- 3 stage procedure. He also added that they were assisting with any area previously covered by Housing Officers such monitoring noise and disruption such as people gathering in stairwells.
- 62.9 Councillor Gilbey checked about the availability of FOs after 8pm. Brett Stacey replied that the FO standard hours of working were before 8pm ,but that there was an option for FOs to extend their working hours when required. He stated that most complaints occurred during the period of 5 – 8 pm and that monitoring noise late at night did not work as way of prevention.
- 62.10 Councillor Barnett asked whether estate inspection queries would be dealt with immediately, since there had been a case Hangleton which had continued for many months and that since it involved temporary accommodation, the landlord should have been involved at a much earlier stage. Martin Reid replied that Jake’s role was in connection with the outside and garden areas, so they were trying to increase the activity on this on the estates and that letters were being sent to residents and that they wanted to help them resolve these issues.
- 62.11 A resident stated that they had a problem with 2-3 people sleeping underneath the stairs in the communal areas of one block and Martin Reid confirmed that the FOs could assist with this and liaise with St Mungo’s on finding these people more suitable accommodation. Brett Stacey confirmed that this situation should be reported and the FOs could visit them to sort this problem. He added that there were no new channels of reporting for FOs – they are just an additional service that can be utilised. He also

stated that Cityclean may pass a job on to the FO team for specialist enforcement support.

**63 UPDATE ON THE EDB REVIEW 41-52**

- 63.1 Hilary Edgar introduced this report which confirmed that the EDB funding budget would need to be reduced and make the most of council resources, so that the scheme could become better managed with a greater clarity required on its rules. She stated that the Task and Finish group was originally set up in July 2018 with four members from this Housing Area Panel West forming part of the group and the group has met seven times so far. She confirmed that three main things had occurred: Firstly the reduction in the budget had not happened. Secondly that from 2020 repairs will be carried out in house and the EDB would also be carried taken over by the Council. Thirdly, the improvement budget was approved at £500K ( as stated in the table in Appendix B on p. 43 ) so that the maximum level of bids could stay the same for at least a year. She confirmed that the budget was divided into four areas and they want to ringfence the number of seniors who are bidding as well as making information available to residents earlier. She confirmed that points 7 – 10 of the Report highlighted the importance of speeding up the processing, increase the value of quick bids and reduce the number of meetings. She also confirmed that they would like to introduce a community chest for revenue projects..
- 63.2 In reply to Roy Crowhurst – Chair’s question about the set up for seniors housing, Hilary replied that the sheltered housing action group meeting would try this new approach for one year and that the pricing still needed to be looked at. She also confirmed that she had spoken to Peter Huntsback about how to price these bids and that they would be looking into this.
- 63.3 A Resident stated that this sounded like a good plan, but reminded residents that in the last area Panel there had been an issue of the underspend in the West Budget and they asked whether this overspend was going back into the overall budget for the whole of Brighton, rather than just the West area. Hilary replied that the issue of how the budget was split between the areas was being reviewed, but that there had not been any change to this and that the Task and Finish group is where this decision would be made, since this money would currently meet the needs of a wider group of people. A resident also confirmed that the underspend had not be confirmed until all the area meetings had taken place and that they felt it should not be shared as other areas did not understand the requirements of this area.
- 63.4 Roy Crowhurst – Chair stated that people should not put in spurious bids just because the money is available. He stated that over the next two years the budget would remain the same, but from 2021 onwards there would be a dramatic cut with £200K shared between all four areas and there would therefore be no underspend in that year. He added that a lot of residents did not apply for quick bids and that was the reason for the underspend. Hilary replied that it was a political decision and that the size of the budget may change after the election. A resident then added that they felt it was more important to sort the underspend this year and that regarding point D on page 25 – that Central want an increase in the share, they asked where this left the other Housing Area Panel. Hilary Edgar replied that this was likely to happen in the future.

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63.5 Hilary stated that she was almost certain that an EDB voting panel was not required, but that the annual meeting would still take place ,but would not be filmed this year.

63.6 A resident stated that there was a concern at the last Residents Meeting that people did not know how to apply for an EDB bid and Hilary confirmed that Pat Lidell had put in a lot of work helping residents in doing this. A resident also queried that bids for fencing, since they understood that the council did have a fencing budget for certain areas and surely it was the Council's responsibility to check who would pay for this repair. Hilary replied that there was a new fencing policy that people could apply for and that work would be done in assisting people with their bid over the next couple of months.

63.7 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to note the report.

**64 ELECTIONS TO VACANT SEASIDE HOMES TRUSTEE POSITIONS 53-56**

64.1 Hilary Edgar stated that there had been 2 resident vacancies for these positions which were advertised previously at the panel meeting. Two people – David Spafford and Barry Hughes from the Central panel had been nominated. The panel voted that they agreed to support these two candidates.

64.2 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to support the candidates: David Spafford and Barry Hughes

**65 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT 57- 84**

65.1 Hilary Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager, summarised the report, highlighting the summary sheet for the period of Oct – December 2018

65.2 Residents asked about the role of mobile wardens and Hilary replied that they were part of the response team that carried out small repairs and that it was also stated that the council had performed well in the area of rent collection.

65.3 **RESOLVED:** That the panel agreed to note the report.

**66 CITY WIDE REPORTS 85 – 88**

66.1 There were no questions on this item.

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

**67 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

67.1 Hilary Edgar confirmed that she had a sheet of meetings dates for the next municipal year which she would share .

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67.2 Joe Macrae raised the issue that he had seen people dumping unwanted furniture and items from vans on his estate and asked what could be done about this issue. Martin Reid replied that he would speak to him personally and contact Cityclean on this.

67.3 Councillor Barnett stated that she had attended an Open Day at Hazelholt and asked if there were problems with these flats, since there appeared to be a low uptake and yet so many people were waiting for sheltered housing. Roy Crowhurst replied that some were studios and some flats were converted and were possibly regarded as too small and that independent consultants were carrying out a review and a report would decide on what should be done about this. Councillor Barnett also mentioned Linfield Court in Woodingdean which was problematic to let due to its location at the top of a hill which was only serviced by one bus. Martin Reid asked residents for their views on how the council could invest in blocks in order to break any barriers that may prevent people from moving in to any of the 23 schemes across the City. He wondered if they required help with decoration or carpeting.

Roy Crowhurst replied that the Council needed to work with potential tenants who required help with downsizing in order to mentor them through the process, especially those who did not have friends or family around to support them during their move. Councillor Barnett stated that one of the most popular properties she knew was Churchill House which was old, but popular due to the location, which was very important for this age group. Another resident confirmed that the Hazelholt properties were good for single people and was surprised about the lack of uptake. Another resident mentioned that there was a problem with a lack of storage space in Sanders House. Martin Reid confirmed that he would report back through SHAG on how the council could improve and invest well in the scheme.

**68 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

68.1 The date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

There was also a late confirmation that Martin Reid had taken on the new appointment as Assistant Director of Housing.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of