

Public Involvement**Written Questions**

(A period of not more than 15 minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by members of the public).

5 written questions

Question: from Charles Harrison

Night Shelters

Would you please provide data indicating the total costs of operating each of the night shelters in Brighton and Hove, compared with the number of night beds occupied by the street homeless in each shelter, during the 2018 – 2019 winter period?

Question: from David Thomas

SWEP Question

The Guidance on SWEP from Homeless Link recommends a process “based on empathy for people sleeping rough in severe weather, rather than sticking to a fixed approach”. Accordingly, the Council’s August 2018 Specification for SWEP, after discussing the set triggers for opening the shelter, adds “The service’s primary focus is preventing a loss of life and therefore it will be expected to operate flexibly in times of extreme weather which may pose a risk to the lives of rough sleepers.” How many times so far this autumn has SWEP has been operated flexibly when the triggers did not apply?

Supplementary:

We acknowledge that the triggers in the 2018 Specification are low, for which we are grateful. My question is about the discretion to operate SWEP outside the triggers, “in times of extreme weather which may pose a risk to the life of rough sleepers.” There have been a number of severe storms in the last couple of months. On the second of November, there was very severe rain coupled with gale force winds over a long period of time, bringing the sea smashing over the whole width of the esplanade, uprooting trees in the Old Steyn. If that was not extreme weather posing a risk to life, what is?

Question: from Barry Hughes

Homeless Bill of Rights Question

On 25th July 2019 the Housing Coalition presented a petition to the full Council calling upon the city of Brighton & Hove to adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights. The Council welcomed the petition and referred it to the Housing Committee. On 18th September we appeared here to express our concerns. The Committee asked for the

executive director to prepare a report to bring to the next committee to enable them to consider it. The agenda for the committee has been published without any reference to such a report. Winter is upon us. Is this to be further delayed?

You will remember that last time we were concerned that the statutory consultations on the homelessness and rough sleeper policies was under way. The initial meeting for those consultations took place on 2nd November, and the first part of the meeting was on the Homeless Bill of Rights, which we welcome. What we welcome less is that the participants had been given the wrong version of the document; the English language version, rather poorly translated from the French, on the FEANTSA website; **not** the tweaked and added to version that was launched in this city with the support and participation of FEANTSA on 28th October last year, which was the document referred to in both parties manifestos and in the petition referred to the housing committee. Can the chair assure us that that was a mistake that will not be repeated?

Question: from Dave Croydon

Sustainability Measures for new Homes – Agenda item 29

I note that, on Agenda item 29, page 185, clause 3.2.3, the Estates Regeneration team, in collaboration with other colleagues, have been considering several initiatives to improve sustainability and carbon emissions standards, to support the Council's 10-year carbon neutral programme. I also note that there is a desire to develop zero carbon homes and improve air quality and well-being.

Would the Council consider adding the adoption of Passivhaus standards for new Council homes to their list of initiatives under review, as many other progressive Councils have demonstrated the benefits of these standards?

Question: from David Spafford

HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets

In the past there has been consultation between resident associations, councillors and Housing officers to study the HRA revenue and capital budgets for the following year. Previously, consultation has started in September, however I would suggest that it is not too late to hold meetings to help inform decisions which will be made by this committee and Policy and Resources Committee in January.

Supplementary

The council website used to proclaim that "Resident Involvement is at the heart of everything we do in Housing" on the new site I could not see this worthy claim – does this indicate a change in policy?

(c) Deputations

Two deputations received

Deputation on the need for Qualifying Long-Term Agreements

The contract with Mears is a ten-year partnering contract, which will end on 31st March 2020. The council agreed at the September 2018 Housing & New Homes Committee and at October 2018 Policy Resources & Growth Committee to deliver these services in a different way from April 2020. On 1st October 2019 the council issued a Section 20 Notice to leaseholders giving notice to enter into Qualifying Long Term Agreements for six types of work including roof, window and door replacements; these notices required a response by 4th November 2019. It was also indicated that the intention was to make these agreements for a period of five years with the option to extend by a further two years.

As the decision to deliver these services was taken by this committee in 2018 only this committee can agree to whatever new system is implemented and it therefore seems to us that it is precipitate to have issued these Section 20 notices ahead of Housing Committee consultation and discussion. There are a number of contentious issues in the proposals; the five-year term with the option to extend for two years would take the agreement beyond the life of the current administration. There is also an argument for selecting more than one supplier for the range of services described.

We are advised that there is no statutory need for the council to use the procedures for Long Term arrangements and that prior to the Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act of 2002 these did not exist. The QLTA procedures were introduced as an alternative not a requirement.

This deputation argues that the proposal to introduce these QLTAs should be abandoned and the Section 20 notices withdrawn, we also wish to see the matter debated by Housing Committee with a view to shortening the length of contracts given to suppliers and that monitoring procedures and accountability of all contractors should be improved.

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David Croydon, BN42 4LA

Jane Thorp BN2 9WE

David Spafford BN2 1SR

Charlotte Rogers BN2 0GH

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Deputation

ACORN Brighton Minimum Standards for Landlords Charter, Deputation Summary for November 13 2019, Brighton and Hove City Council Housing Committee meeting, 4.00 pm.

Summary

ACORN the union have produced a Minimum Standards for Brighton Landlords Charter for Brighton and Hove City Council to use as guidance for future housing policy.

This charter was written by ACORN Brighton members who have consulted hundreds of renters across the city including at our 'Big Renters Meeting'. The final draft of this charter was then voted on and approved at our Annual General Meeting on November 2, 2019.

This charter includes recommendations for affordable rents, tenancy length and fair evictions, repairs and maintenances and guidance on avoiding discrimination.

ACORN Brighton will call upon councillors to commit to using this charter to guide future housing policy.

This charter has been sent to all councillors on the committee and can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/acornlandlordscharter>

About ACORN

ACORN is a community union representing thousands of renters across the UK. Our Brighton branch was launched in February 2018 and since then has won successive campaigns against rogue landlords in Brighton. You can find further information on ACORN at <https://acorntheunion.org.uk/> or contact the Brighton branch at brighton@acorncommunities.org.uk.