

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: NORTH AREA

7.00pm 26 NOVEMBER 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING - SKYPE

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Fowler (Chair), Councillor Knight

Representatives: Heather Hayes, Ian Beck, Des Jones, Peter O'Connor, Judy Goss, Bridghde Steward

Officers: Glyn Huelin, Bethan Hudson, Rebecca Mann, Thomas Bald

17 APOLOGIES

17.1 Apologies from Tracey Hill, Amanda Grimshaw, Jane Hunter, and Ray Goble.

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

18.1 The Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

19 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

19.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“We would like to acknowledge the feedback that residents and staff took time to give us about the last round of Area Panels. There are challenges with using the internet particularly with software, different devices and networks. I recognise that this can make the meeting more complicated to follow and we hope that these issues can be gradually resolved. We also know that online meetings can be difficult for some and the community engagement team are working with residents to support as many people as possible to access them. It was very useful to learn how people felt about having a large single online meeting and you can be reassured the feedback, both negative and positive, will be used to help improve the way meetings are organised in the future. I would like to remind everyone that the Area Panels are for future planning and issues that affect everyone, they are not the forum to raise individual issues, or repairs that have not been dealt with. If you do have an individual issue that is stuck in the system, please do speak to your Community Engagement Officer who will be able to put you in touch with the right service or person.”

20 NORTH AREA AGENDA

Reports Going to the Housing Committee

20.1 Glyn Huelin mentioned that this is currently a meeting that was postponed, so Housing Committee had already taken place. He mentioned the following items that were discussed at Housing Committee:

- The next steps to tackle rough sleeping and accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Review of the allocations policy.
- How home improvement agency services are delivered, particularly through the disabled facilities grant.
- 2 reports around disposal by lease of small sites to the community land trust, one at Hinton Close in Hollingdean and one at Natal Road in Moulsecoomb.

20.2 Heather Hayes was informed that the allocations team had stopped lettings at the start of the pandemic but have since taken them back up again with a backlog of empty properties due for refurbishment.

Good News from Resident's Groups

20.3 Bridghde Steward mentioned that collections had started in Mouslecoomb for food banks, and the Cowley Club on London Road are also doing a vegan food bank.

20.4 Kate Knight also mentioned that Moulsecoomb community market had started, and all the planting had been done.

21 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

21.1 Heather Hayes mentioned that people are having trouble getting through to the repairs hotline. Glyn Huelin responded that the repairs desk shut down at the start of the pandemic and restarted in September.

21.2 Cllr Fowler asked if the grass cutting and grounds maintenance response was satisfactory. Ian Beck asked when the windows will be replaced in Hollingdean. Glyn Huelin asked if there was a specific block where the windows should be replaced, and Ian Beck responded that it was mainly houses in Hollingdean that needed work, not the flats.

21.3 Cllr Fowler asked if people were happy with the response to the communications between the Council and Residents, and the tenancy termination after a tenant's death response. Heather Hayes responded that the termination after a death is a very sensitive issue, and you have to give families time to get rid of the furniture. Peter O'Connor mentioned that sometimes people empty out flats when they aren't the next of kin. Des Jones asked how the system would operate as his next of kin lives in New Zealand. Glyn Huelin responded that he can find out the process, but they wouldn't need to come to the UK to empty the flat.

21.4 Cllr Fowler asked if people were happy with the response to the gardening scheme for elderly and disabled tenants. Heather Hayes responded that tenants vary in their commitment to the upkeep of the gardens.

22 NORTH AREA EDB BIDS

22.1 Bethan Hudson gave the following updates of the main and quick bids for 2019-20 in Keith Perry and Kay Atherton's absence:

- Lindfield Court - the carpet replacement needs to be purchased from Southern Counties Supplies.

- Elwyn Jones Court – the planters requested were out of stock, so more information is needed about which plants are required as well as an alternative planter.
- Jasmine Court – the garden furniture was out of stock, so will need to be purchased again.
- Lindfield Court – the computer upgrade needs to be looked at again depending on details, so after another copy of bid form will need to be seen.
- Nettleton Dudeney – specific plant, fruit, and vegetable seeds need to be identified to buy them.
- Coldean – specific flower bulbs need to be identified to buy them.
- Bates Estate – another meeting with the chair is needed to discuss specifics.
- Lindfield court – the hedges at front and side need to be replaced.
- Stanmer Court – the bid threshold may need to be changed.

22.2 Bethan Hudson then gave the following updates of the outstanding quick bids for 2020-21:

- Coldean – the noticeboards need to be removed, and replaced with the same noticeboards on Bates Estate
- Coldean – 2 benches need to be fixed to the ground on the slabs.
- Jasmine Court – a laptop for communal lounge needs to be looked at.

22.3 Heather Hayes mentioned that she would be happy to meet on site at Coldean to oversee proceedings in terms of the notice boards, and would like to speak to Keith about putting rose bushes in instead of bulbs.

22.4 Ian Beck pointed out that a number of EDB bids hadn't been actioned from months ago, and there have been complaints from the residents. Bollards up by Horton Road was refused due to cost, and the community garden up by Stanmer Villas hasn't been actioned due to it being the wrong type of land. Rebecca Mann responded that she had spoken to Keith about ordering the new locks, so will be seeing them in the next few weeks, and the other bids hadn't been actioned due to the reasons stated, and also that if any projects had been refused they can be resubmitted to have another look. Des Jones added that that the brambles on Horton Road are getting out of hand and need an inspection. Bethan Hudson confirmed she would contact Eddie Wilson for a response.

23 TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

23.1 Rebecca Mann gave a presentation in the absence of Sam Warren, and made the following points:

- The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and section 105 of the Housing Act set out clear standards and duties for consultation on matters of housing management. These are:
 - to be informed of the authority's proposals in respect of the matter and
 - to make their views known to the authority within a specified period;
 - and the authority shall, before making any decision on the matter, consider any representations made to it in accordance with those arrangements.

- The corporate plan for a stronger city includes working alongside communities and what matters to them, incorporating the green/labour programme of improving transparency and accountability in the housing department, ensuring housing tenants have more coproduction opportunities in decision making around housing policy and service delivery, to work with the council and not simply be consulted.
- The community engagement team will work with residents to support strong, active, and inclusive communities that can influence and shape the city in which they live and work.
- A cross tenure engagement team has enabled tenants and leaseholders to be engaged and involved with a broad range of council services.
- The current voice of active tenants is very small, and the age of these active tenants is overwhelmingly 50+. The Council aims to involve people of all ages.
- 67% of tenants and leaseholders were satisfied with their involvement with the council.
- This satisfaction is likely to be as much about telephone queries and the repairs as resident involvement and consultation.
- The older tenants (aged 65+) significantly more satisfied (78%), opposite was true for the under 35's and those aged 35 - 49 (58% and 60% respectively).
- This is reflected in the make-up of our most engaged residents, with very limited engagement from within these age groups.
- 10% of our tenants identify within a minority ethnic group, a tiny proportion involved in TRA's.
- We have no young people (under 18) involved in housing management.
- We have a large section of people with disabilities and older people actively involved.
- Feedback from residents include the following:
 - Meetings need to be more joined up too much duplication.
 - Officers talk 'at them' with information and there is little time for real debate and opportunity to influence.
 - Residents want to do things in their communities and on estates, they need support and resources to do this.
 - Ways to get involved need to be expanded to interest more people.

- Structures and voting in 'reps' can limit wider participation.
 - Residents want their input to create real change.
- The Leaseholder Engagement Strategy was approved at Housing Committee in 2018.
 - This strategy needs a time bound action plan to ensure its implementation.
 - LAG needs support to enable increased leaseholder engagement.
 - Need some exclusive engagement with the leaseholders outside of the wider engagement structures.
 - The Estate Development Budget (EDB) has the following features:
 - Fundamental means to engage and empower residents.
 - A small percentage of tenants and leaseholders are bidding.
 - 8 residents are on the decision-making panel.
 - Review group proposed to support community projects.
 - For the future of Leaseholder engagement, it is important to promote:
 - Proactive Engagement – developing relationships with tenants by offering or joining everyday activities, consultations, and events.
 - Responsive Engagement – Supports and enables services in the Council to speak to residents through outward communication and feedback.
 - Structural Engagement – Formal engagement through meetings and procedures to address Council policy and practice.
 - Moving forward, the following will be pursued:
 - Three-year plans with clear timelines will be developed for 20/21-22/23 for each engagement approach.
 - Support to LAG to develop priorities and action plan for leaseholder engagement.
 - Merge Service improvement groups to create two main groups focusing on 'Buildings' and 'People'.
 - EDB to fund capital and revenue projects.
 - Task and finish groups for time limited projects
 - Area Panel to refer 'sticky issues' to Service Improvement Groups for resolution with reporting back structure
 - All reports to residents to state the outcome of engagement required
 - More fun activities and other opportunities to involve people in sharing their views
 - Improved social media presence
 - More Opportunities to engage online
 - Digital support
 - Focused consultation

- Engagement with people in emergency and temporary accommodation
- The following were the recommendations from the Housing Committee:
 - The delivery of more ‘pro-active’ styles of engagement with tenants and leaseholders to consult and engage with a wider and more diverse group of residents.
 - The proposed changes to the current engagement’s structures for tenants and leaseholders as set out in Appendix One.
 - The maximisation of Estate Development Budget by agreeing to fund revenue, as well as capital projects.
 - Supporting tenant and leaseholder input with the Environmental Improvements Budget to give tenants a greater say over environmental projects.
 - To work with the Estate Development Budget [residents] panel and develop ‘participatory budgeting’ style voting system for EDB, for approval by Housing Committee in March 2022.

23.2 Ian Beck pointed out that the Council haven’t contacted the Hollingdean Resident’s association since April, are difficult to contact, and this issue of communication is consistent as no feedback has been taken on board in terms of including residents. Rebecca Mann confirmed that she hadn’t received any messages from Ian Beck and would have responded if there was.

23.3 Councillor Knight commented that she was surprised at the lack of officers present at the meeting. Rebecca Mann informed Councillor Knight that the presentation was intended for the Area Panel members and resident representatives that were involved. Councillor Knight then went on to say that the language in the presentation was off-putting and full of jargon, and for people to engage, this information needs to be provided accessibly. Rebecca Mann said she would give this feedback to the team.

24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24.1 Cllr Knight asked if the slides from the CityWide Conference about Council Allocation policy could be circulated. Rebecca Mann confirmed she would follow this up.

The meeting concluded at 20:20.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of