

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL
EAST AREA
16/8/2022 7PM
MINUTES**

Attendees:

Residents: Alan Cooke (Chair), Rosemary Johnson, Janet Gearing

Councillors: Cllr Williams,

Officers: Francis Mitchell, Justine Harris, Indie Hix, Janet Dowdell, Sam Warren, Natalie Beckwith, Geoff Gage, Rachel Metcalfe,

Press: Felice Southwell,

1 – WELCOME, APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 There were no apologies.

2 – ACTIONS AND MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Rosemary Johnson stated Martin Reid had not yet contacted her regarding the Housing First Scheme.

2.2 Alan Cooke noted that on four out of five deadlines there were no responses.

2.3 Natalie Beckwith stated that officers had not responded to actions before the necessary deadline.

a. **ACTION – Community Engagement to chase up incomplete actions from previous meeting**

b. **RESOLVED – The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as correct record.**

3 – HOUSING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN PROGRESS UPDATE AND HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2022/23

3.1 Justine Harris delivered the report for this item.

3.2 The Panel was informed that windows in Council newbuilds will be double-glazed.

a. **ACTION – Justine Harris to define meaning of ‘Brighton and Hove Dwellings’ as seen in the fifth bullet point of the report (page 18).**

3.3 Janet Gearing was informed that the housing on Hartington Road was temporary accommodation.

3.4 The Chair was informed that while the 857 ‘other additional homes’ are considered social housing, they were not Council owned properties.

- 3.5 Rosemary Johnson was informed that rough sleepers accommodation falls under the buyback criteria.
- 3.6 Justine Harris informed Rosemary Johnson that she would ascertain the total budget for the buyback scheme.
- a. **ACTION** – Justine Harris to provide Rosemary Johnson with details on the budget of the buyback scheme.
- 3.7 The Chair stated that there are considerations taken when granting HMO licenses, such as the general density of HMO's in a geographic area.
- 3.8 Rosemary Johnson was informed by Justine Harris that buybacks are used to procure temporary accommodation.
- 3.9 Janet Gearing was informed that while it is easier to evict tenants from temporary accommodations, there is still a strict process to be followed.
- 3.10 Janet Gearing requested that windows in Craven Vale are repaired before winter to aid in efficient heating of homes. Geoff Gage stated that there was not currently a program of repairs for Craven Vale and that any repairs should be reported by residents to the Repairs Desk.
- 3.11 The Chair highlighted the importance of windows being repaired before winter to aid in fuel economy.
- 3.12 Geoff Gage informed the panel that the Council does not have access to contractors able to repair windows on a wholesale basis and that this task would instead involve a procurement exercise which would not be possible to finish in a small period of time.
- 3.13 Cllr Williams asked if emergency measures could be put in place to repair windows before winter, citing she would contact Rachel Sharpe regarding the use of emergency powers to resolve the matter.
- 3.14 Rosemary Johnson stated the importance of a city-wide system being put in place for windows to be replaced.
- a. **ACTION** – Geof Gage to contact Grant Ritchie regarding system of window repairs & replacements in Craven Vale before winter.
- 3.15 Cllr Williams highlighted the importance of seeking delegated powers to insulate windows before the winter.
- 3.16 Geoff Gage informed the panel that sprinklers would be built into all newbuild Council houses and flats.
- 3.17 Janet Gearing was informed that there were currently 228 empty homes in the city and suggested the Council has a dedicated that deals with housing swaps to ensure that residents are living in homes suited to their needs.

4 – RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS – 3 STAR

4.1 Planned Maintenance Schedules

- 4.2 The Chair stated that they believed the response to this question was reasonable.
- 4.3 Geoff Gage stated that there were hopes to publish the 3-year programme in mid-September and stated that it will be bought to the next round of area panels.
- 4.4 Janet Gearing was informed by Geof Gage that the Council applies for any grants it can but that this is often a long process.
- 4.5 Geoff Gage provided an overview on the Stock Condition Survey.
- 4.6 Rosemary Johnson requested a copy of the Asset Management Strategy.
- a. **ACTION** – Geof Gage to provide Rosemary Johnson with a copy of the Asset Management Strategy when it is released.
 - b. **RESOLVED** – The panel agreed that the response was satisfactory.

4.7 The Council is not enforcing its own allocations policy.

- 4.8 Justine Harris stated that the response given refers to the Housing Allocations Scheme guidance which is applicable to full tenancies but not temporary accommodation. Justine Harris further stated that although this guidance is not applicable to temporary accommodation, checks are carried out in all cases. Justine Harris noted that if somebody has previously had a criminal conviction that has been spent or there is support in place, then the decision may be made that they can be allocated a property.
- 4.9 Rosemary Johnson asked for details on the process for holding checks on potential residents.
- 4.10 Justine Harris stated that information can only be obtained from the police if the Council has a reason to believe that an individual may not qualify for social housing on the grounds of behaviour. Justine Harris stated that there is a risk assessment for individuals moving into temporary accommodation.
- 4.11 Janet Dowdell informed Rosemary Johnson that in cases where there is evidence that a resident has fraudulently claimed Council housing, action can be taken to take their tenancy back.
- 4.12 Janet Gearing cited the importance of data protection and understood that it is not possible to look into a resident's past without reasonable cause.

4.13 Sam Warren was informed that residents of concern who are associated with one another will not be placed in close proximity to each other.

- a. **RESOLVED** – The panel did not find the written response satisfactory, but were satisfied with the verbal follow-up provided in the meeting.

4.14 Empty Council Properties

4.15 Janet Gearing expressed dissatisfaction with the pandemic being listed as a reason that properties are vacant and stated that residents should be responsible for the decoration of their own properties to reduce relet times. Janet Gearing communicated that the demographic and Robert Lodge has changed and questioned whether that is why a property there has not been occupied.

- a. **RESOLVED** – The panel agreed that the response was satisfactory.

4.16 Key Fobs

4.17 Rosemary Johnson commented on the difficulty and price of obtaining key fobs from the Council.

4.18 Oversight of Environmental Improvement Budget

4.19 The Chair requested a complete summary of outstanding EIB proposals, requesting the cost of a footpath from Tillgate Close to Queensway.

- a. **ACTION** – Justine Harris to provide update on Tillgate Close footpath.

4.20 Janet Gearing was informed that the money used to provide bike storage around the City was granted by Central Government.

5 – RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS – 2 STAR

5.1 Privately owned properties rented by the Council lying empty

5.2 Janet Gearing was informed that of the 732 private sector properties leased by the Council, 34 are currently vacant and asked why those properties were awaiting works.

5.3 Justine Harris stated that the 34 properties were awaiting works and had been empty for longer due to the fact that the standard for temporary accommodation is higher.

6 – POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS (1:54:40)

- 6.1 Janet Gearing communicated that there are plans to install a football pitch in Woodingdean.
- 6.2 The Chair shared that on 3 September, Craven Vale will be hosting a Mediterranean event to see out the summer.
- 6.3 Rosemary Johnson stated that the estate walkabout had been successful and suggested a welcome letter be distributed to new residents who move into Craven Vale.

7 – AOB

- 7.1 Rosemary Johnson was informed that the Council does not automatically remove all carpets at the end of a tenancy, but that carpets do tend to be removed as a result of damage caused to them by works carried out during the refurbishment of the property.
- 7.2 Cllr Williams stated that provisions are being made for a fundraiser for a skatepark in Whitehawk and that options are being looked at for community hubs to host residents during the day in the winter.

