

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

2.00pm 11 OCTOBER 2022

THE BARNARD CENTRE, ST. JOHNS MOUNT, MOUNT PLEASANT, BRIGHTON, BN2
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MINUTES

Present:

Councillors: Hugh-Jones (Chair), Rainey

Representatives: Carl Boardman (Warwick Mount Residents Association), Theresa Mackey (Highcroft Lodge Residents Association), Jason Williams (Hereford Court Residents Association) and Linda King (Essex Place Tenants Association)

Officers: Sam Warren (Community Engagement Manager), Simon Bannister (Community Engagement Officer), Janet Dowdall (Tenancy Services Operations Manager), Justine Harris (Head of Tenancy Services), Hannah Barker (Community Engagement Officer), Grant Ritchie (Head of Housing Repairs & Maintenance), Natalie Beckwith (Community Engagement Administrator), Francis Mitchell (Democratic Services Support Officer) and Emma Thomson (Democratic Services Officer)

Guests: Norman Williams, Emma Salcombe and Chris Row

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Councillor Steph Powell, Geof Gage (Head of Housing Investment & Asset Management) and Eileen Stewart (Somerset Point Residents Association) sent apologies.
- 1.2 The Chair gave the following communication:

Barry Hughes' funeral is at 10am on Monday 17th October at the North Chapel of Woodvale Crematorium. If people want to go, we probably need to know numbers. If you can let us know through the Community Engagement Team by emailing the Community Engagement inbox.

I also have a couple of bits of news. I visited one of our Seniors Housing schemes on Friday, and the reason I wanted to visit was because they have been shortlisted for a national award for their garden. When I visited, we walked in, and the lounge was full of amazing photography because there are several residents that have started doing art. One of them has been for a photographer for decades so there were pictures that he'd done back in the 70s which were beautifully framed. He and someone else who lives there, who has come to photography relatively recently, had both entered the Open Houses exhibition this year and been commended, so they had their certificates up as well. The scheme is also being redecorated at the moment in

different colours for each floor and the Council has taken advise on that and its looking great and will look even better when its finished. The garden was lovely, loads of apples, they have chickens and minor bees, so it's a really great scheme.

The other thing, for anyone that wasn't aware, there was a Citywide Housing Conference that was tenant led on Saturday in Hove Town Hall. That was basically talking about disability and adaptations that the Council can make, and there were officers there from Occupational Therapy and Adult Social Care. There was also an opportunity during that event to go through some of the budget for next year, to the extent that we know at the moment, but there will be a further opportunity later in the year to go through the budget in a bit more detail.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 The minutes from the meeting held on 16 August 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3 ACTIONS OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 Justine Harris provided a verbal update for the action relating to key fobs. Emma Salcombe confirmed the main concern is security as vulnerable residents are being targeted to gain access to the building. Justine Harris advised further consideration can be given to addressing what can be done going forward in terms of security and key fobs, particularly in relation to the accessibility and security of the rear access door for Warwick Mount laundry room.
- 3.2 Theresa Mackey advised that she had received no further information from Grant Ritchie with regards to the disparity of the cost of parking in the Highcroft Lodge car park and on street parking and ongoing fly tipping. Grant Ritchie confirmed he would liaise with Justine Harris to ensure the relevant person deals with both issues and phone Theresa Mackey.
- 3.3 **RESOLVED:** The Actions from the meeting held on 16 August 2022 were agreed as completed subject to the above comments.

4 ESTATES WALKABOUT REVIEW - HOUSING SERVICES

- 4.1 The Head of Tenancy Services, Justine Harris, introduced the report starting on page 15 of the Agenda.
- 4.2 Jason Williams was advised that over a period of two years, a walkabout of around 220 routes will be undertaken, so every area of the city will be covered.
- 4.3 Norman Williams raised several issues with the fire doors in Essex Place that have been ongoing for 22 years, specifically relating to the closure mechanisms, wind pressure and accessibility for wheelchair users. Grant Ritchie stated that he planned to speak to Geof Gage to see if accessibility and mobility around communal parts of blocks could be considered when carrying out planned works since there are different operating and securing mechanisms that could be introduced going forward.
- 4.4 Emma Salcombe stated that residents had enquired about installing a push button, however, were informed that it would be too expensive for their block alone and would

not be addressed at this time. Further considerations were to be given to how to make the doors more accessible, however, no word has been received. Grant Ritchie advised he would follow up with Geof Gage to get a response.

- 4.5 Theresa Mackey echoed the previous comments made by other residents and asserted that making reasonable adjustments should be a matter of priority to ensure blocks are safe and accessible for residents with disabilities. Grant Ritchie agreed but stated that the issue needs to be addressed as a wider piece of work, in the interim internal doors will be replaced and any problems with fire doors should be reported as a repair and will be dealt with.
- 4.6 Norman Williams highlighted that the onus should not be placed on tenants to report repairs in communal areas as the Housing Estates Assistant should be reporting them. Justine Harris advised work has been done with the team to ensure issues are being reported back, however, she would follow up on this again. Justine also confirmed she would follow up with colleagues regarding scheduling internal block inspections.
- 4.7 **RESOLVED:**
- Grant Ritchie to speak to Geof Gage about accessibility and mobility around communal parts of blocks to see if this can be considered when carrying out planned works
 - Grant Ritchie to follow up with Geof Gage to get a response on making the fire doors in Essex Place more accessible for disabled residents if unable to install a push button at present
 - Justine Harris to follow up with Housing Estates Assistants to ensure issues/ repairs in communal areas of blocks are being reported back
 - Justine Harris to follow up with colleagues regarding scheduling internal block inspections

5 AREA PANEL REVIEW PAPER - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Community Engagement Manager, Sam Warren, introduced the presentation starting on page 25 of the Agenda.
- 5.2 Representatives and officers discussed the findings of the review and offered suggestions on managing people wanting both daytime and evening meetings, improving communication channels and online participation and chairing.
- 5.3 Sam Warren advised that a report capturing the findings and discussion will be brought to the next Area Panel with recommendations.

6 ALL 4 AREAS 3-STAR DOCUMENTS

6.1 *Anti-Social Behaviour*

Justine Harris referred to the response and confirmed that ASB will be on the Agenda for the next Area Panel on 13 December.

6.2 *Carparks at Somerset Point, Essex Place and Warwick Mount*

No further discussion was held as the matter was covered earlier in the meeting.

6.3 *Cleaners at Essex Place and Citywide*

Chris Row advised that what was set out in the response is not currently happening at Essex Place as the landings are not cleaned on a weekly basis and rubbish is repeatedly left outside. Justine Harris confirmed she would follow up with the Estates team and provide residents with an update.

6.4 *Insulation of Council Properties*

Grant Ritchie reiterated the response, highlighting that working through the backlog of repairs is the current focus and once this is managed then more work will be done around insulation.

6.5 *Making our city accessible for people with disabilities*

Emma Salcombe advised that the response does not address the issue of people parking on kerbs and restricting access for disabled people. Norman Williams added that this is a major issue citywide as many businesses put tables and chairs out in the pavement without a permit and as no restrictions are enforced to prevent drivers from parking on corners and obstructing disability ramps. Cllr Hugh-Gibson requested that tenants get involved with the Accessible City Strategy and submit evidence to ensure the Council can produce a robust piece of work.

6.6 **RESOLVED:**

- Justine Harris to follow up with Estates team regarding cleaners at Essex Place and provide an update

7 **LOCAL 2-STAR DOCUMENTS**

7.1 *Free laundry room at Essex Place*

Emma Salcombe advised that the question had been captured incorrectly and that two questions were raised. Firstly, as there was a rumour that the Council were planning to shut down sheltered accommodation laundry rooms, could this be corrected? Justine Harris advised this was not the case. Secondly, while charges for the laundry room have ceased, the Council has no revenue, therefore, who is footing the bill? Norman Williams said he had been advised the cost was being added to tenant's rent. Justine agreed to clarify if this was the case, how much it is costing and what the impact may be.

7.2 *Highcroft Lodge Carpark*

No further discussion was held as the matter was covered earlier in the meeting.

7.3 *Poor State of Pavements: Local Improvements*

No further discussion was held as the matter was covered earlier in the meeting.

7.4 *Windows at Highcroft Lodge*

Councillor Hugh-Jones advised that if residents have genuine concerns about the safety of windows, then it needs to be reported as a repair.

7.5 **RESOLVED:**

- Justine Harris to clarify if the cost of laundry room provision is being added to Essex Place tenant's rent, how much it is costing and what the impact may be.

8 POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

8.1 Theresa Mackey highlighted the great work done by the cleaner for Highcroft Lodge, stating that she goes above and beyond her duties and regularly helps disabled tenants who cannot get to the bins by taking their rubbish out for them.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 There was no discussion.

The meeting concluded at 4.10pm

