

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: NORTH AREA

7.00pm 15 FEBRUARY 2023

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors: Fowler (Chair) and Meadows

Representatives: Jane Hunter (East Moulsecoomb Tenants and Residents Association), Heather Hayes (Coldean Independents), Jenny Simmons (Coldean Independents), Ian Knowles (Bates Estate Community Association), Jim Hornsby (Mimosa Court Leaseholders Association), Mitch Watkinson (Bates Estate Community Association), Ian Beck (Hollingdean Residents Association) and Des Jones (Hollingdean Residents Association)

Officers: Simon Bannister (Community Engagement Officer), Geof Gage (Head of Housing Investment & Asset Management), Sam Warren (Community Engagement Manager), Justine Harris (Head of Tenancy Services), Martin Reid (Assistant Director Housing Management), Grant Ritchie (Head of Housing Repairs & Maintenance) and Emma Thomson (Democratic Services Officer)

Guests: Adrian Hunter (Moulsecoomb Way), Paul Wright (Coldean) and Sarah Booker-Lewis (Local Democracy Reporter)

1 WELCOME, APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Cllr Knight and Lola Schofield (Bates Estate Community Association) sent apologies.

2 ACTIONS AND MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The minutes from the meeting held on 14 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 The actions were agreed as completed.

3 EDB REVIEW CONCLUSION REPORT

3.1 The Head of Tenancy Services, Justine Harris, and Community Engagement Manager, Sam Warren, introduced the Estate Development Budget (EDB) report which sought discussion and comment on the recommendations for the EDB Review Group.

3.2 In response to Cllr Meadows point about landlord leaseholders living within the area, Sam Warren advised that the report referred to resident leaseholders who lived within the boundary of the area but she would consider the point further.

- 3.3 With regards to Jim Hornsby's point about the distinction between commercial and non-resident leaseholders, Sam Warren stated that it hadn't been clarified and was quite challenging to define though there was no desire to exclude anybody from attending the area panels.

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

- 4.1 The Assistant Director for Housing Management, Martin Reid, introduced the Council Housing Performance report.
- 4.2 Heather Hayes was advised that the repairs team had recruited up to the levels they originally aimed for though there were some issues engaging contractors.
- 4.3 Jane Hunter was informed that stock conditions survey were undertaken to decide how the department invests and some works were in response to health and safety or as part of a planned programme.
- 4.4 Mitch Watkinson was notified that there was a program for the windows at Bates Estate though it had been revisited since a particular of type window was required which had led to delays. Geof Gage advised he would ensure the reasons for the decision to delay the program had been communicated to residents.
- 4.5 Ian Beck was advised that 83 days for routine repairs was an average and included older and bigger jobs which increased the average, therefore most repairs didn't take that long to complete.

5 AREA PANEL REVIEW: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REPORT

- 5.1 The Community Engagement Manager, Sam Warren, introduced the report which outlined the proposed new terms of reference for Housing Area Panels.
- 5.2 Cllr Meadows was notified that tenants could still raise issues if it was an example of something happening more widely, but the surgery would allow them to raise individual issues before the panel. Further, Sam Warren advised that a number of services were paid by HRA, therefore anything under that budget would still be discussed though may be referred to a different meeting to be resolved more quickly and effectively where relevant.

6 RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS

Poor maintenance of verges, pavements and highways

- 6.1 Ian Beck and Des Jones highlighted that the issue was still ongoing and City Parks had consistently failed to respond to questions and queries from residents. Further, residents had begun to start dealing with overgrown bushes and trees themselves due to frustration.
- 6.2 Justine Harris advised she had met with Rob Walker and they would be bringing a report to the next panel to discuss the issues raised further and move things forward. Justine also advised she would organise for the branches to be removed from outside the last two blocks of flats at Tavistock Down.

- 6.3 In response to Mitch Watkinson's enquiry regarding weed killing, Justine Harris advised she would confirm what was currently being used to remove weeds since the previous chemical was found to be poisonous.

Repair Services

- 6.4 Martin Reid advised that more staff and contractors had been taken on and a report was going to the Policy & Resources Committee in March to consider key areas of performance. Further, the performance report showed that more repairs were being done than at any time, works had built up over the COVID-19 period and a terrible winter had contributed to this as there was a 33% increase in reports of damp.
- 6.5 Grant Ritchie added that the number of repairs was continually reducing, however a particularly high number of repairs were coming in. Grant advised that by March, the service hope to embed some of the progress that had been made which had taken longer than anticipated due to the aforementioned factors. Further, Grant stated that an operator would talk people through simple faults and if they were unable to resolve the issue then a repair would be booked. Beyond this, the online system would provide clearer information and improve the quality of reporting and efficiency of the service.
- 6.6 Jane Hunter was advised that there wasn't a timescale for responding to damp and mould issues as of yet though the government were considering setting one for 10-14 days.

Damp and Mould

- 6.7 Martin Reid and Grant Ritchie reiterated the information that was provided in the response, outlined the criteria that was used to risk assess cases, and highlighted the importance of investing in new roofs and windows to prevent the issue rather than react to it.

7 POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

- 7.1 No discussion was held.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Jim Hornsby highlighted that it was challenging to follow the meeting when joining remotely since there was only one microphone and an echo which made it difficult to hear and the small images made it harder to decipher who was speaking.

The meeting concluded at 8.50pm

