

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: EAST AREA
18.00pm 12 JUNE 2024
WHITEHAWK LIBRARY & COMMUNITY HUB

Present:

Ward Councillors: Williams, Allen, Jacqui

Residents: Leah Webb, Anne Glow, Chris El-Shabba, Val Steadman, Angela

Officers: Martin Reid (Assistant Director Housing), Justine Harris (Head of Tenancy Services), Janet Dowdell (Tenancy Services Operations Manager), Geof Gage (Head of Housing Investment & Asset Management), Keely McDonald (Senior Community Engagement Officer), Grant Ritchie (Head of Housing Repairs & Maintenance), Sabina Karabasic (Community Engagement Administrator), Jane White (Business & Performance Manager), Sharon Halle-Richards (Performance & Improvement Officer), Emma Gilbert (Tenancy Services Operations Manager), Claire Nicholls (Community Engagement Officer), Sam Nolan (Community Engagement Manager)

Clerk: Niall Breen – Democratic Services Officer Apprentice

Guests: Sarah Booker-Lewis (Local Democracy Reporter)

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| 1. | WELCOME, APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS | 5-6 |
| 1.1 | There were apologies from Dee Simpson (Residents' Association) and Keely McDonald (Senior Community Engagement Officer) | |
| 2. | MINUTES & ACTIONS OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING | 7-16 |
| 2.1 | It was noted Minutes to be corrected retrospectively on attendance, panel agreed the content to be accurate as otherwise. | |
| 2.2 | EA1 – Regarding concerns surrounding the process used to log maintenance requests. Confirmed as complete, verbal brief given by Grant Ritchie (GR) and Geof Gage (GG) at the panel. | |
| 2.3 | EA2 – Regarding the requested provision to the panel of the statistics for available social housing in each of the four housing areas within the authority. Confirmed as complete. | |
| 2.4 | EA3 – Regarding providing information to residents on the procedures surrounding the reporting of vandalism. Confirmed as complete – verbal brief from officers on initiatives and different services available. | |

- 2.5 EA4 – Regarding providing information to residents on the average wait time for those requiring social housing, in temporary accommodation. Confirmed as complete – verbal brief from officers on systematic pressures & steps being taken.
- 2.6 EA5 – Regarding providing further information to residents relating income limits for the new proposed allocations policy. Confirmed as complete – consultation to update process in October BHCC Cabinet meeting.
- 2.7 EAO1 – Regarding works required at Sandhurst Avenue. Ongoing, officers confirmed they will follow up.
- 2.8 EAO2 – Regarding the number of Gas Safety Compliant properties. Complete (correct at time of answer) – Verbal brief from Martin Reid (MR) on policy and how this affects the figures.

3. RESPONSES TO RESIDENT QUESTIONS 17-40

- 3.1 E3.4 – Residents request clarification on why fencing removed from EDB bid options. – Justine Harris (JH) provided a verbal briefing which clarified on specifics as to why this had changed, referencing the cost/budget/jurisdiction limiting factors, as well as the service/contracted capacity, individual discretion & accessibility/safety of properties the authority is responsible for. It was noted that in exceptional circumstances this could be changed.
- 3.2 E3.3 – Residents raised concerns they had not been informed of potential exposure to asbestos and detailed lack of engagement from authority. They requested clarification on issue and also raised wider questions regarding information given to lease holders and raised concerns of communal areas being impacted. MR gave verbal brief of the context of issue, relating to legacy properties in authority stock. MR also detailed a response to tenants as: requesting residents/tenants/lease holders to contact authority before undertaking works/disturbing potential areas impacted with Asbestos, MR detailed legal duty of the local authority in communal area maintenance, GG confirmed 99% completion and resurveys undertaken annually. Residents raised concerns of response time from the Local Authority – MR clarified that individual cases could be attended to, noted benefit of H-AP’s taking place in person. Noted that process required improvement and handbook could be updated to make information clearer.
- 3.3 Responses to RQ’s – otherwise satisfactory

4. HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 23-24 41-64

- 4.1 JH provided a verbal brief on the item as included in the agenda documents.
- 4.2 Residents queried how different forms of supporting payments were distributed, JH clarified that those receiving UC would receive direct payments, leading to arrears and those on other support/allowances would be paid directly to the Local Authority. The panel discussed the changes and how this could affect residents.

- 4.3 Residents raised concerns over works undertaken on properties purchased in Meadway development for Local Authority property stock, MR clarified and gave verbal brief on standards that must be upheld for social housing in the authority, leading to additional works, they further added that all works and initiatives were in the business plan and fully costed.
- 4.4 Cllr Allen requested clarification on whether the call statistics in the HPR Q4 23/24 concerned calls undertaken or outgoing. Officers confirmed to follow up and provide a more detailed briefing.
- 4.5 Residents raised queries on how anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases were being solved, informative/detail to identify improvements – JH provided a verbal brief on the ASB report, and actions being undertaken in response. Officers provided confirmation there would be a follow up at the next panel.

5. HIAM Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy + Laundry Review

- 5.1 Jane White (JW) provided a verbal brief on the item as included in the agenda documents (HIAM). The Cllr Co-Chair reaffirmed importance of communications between all levels of the authority and the Residents Associations (RA's) and requested clarification on methods of engagement with the HIAM strategy. – JW clarified on methods including, Your Voice, Homing In, Ward surgeries and surveys. The Cllr Co-Chair further added Cllrs could be greater involved. Residents requested clarification on legislative outline guiding the process– MR reaffirmed this, noted greater desire to work with RA's and Ward Cllrs going forwards.
- 5.2 Residents requested clarification on how high rise were classified – GG clarified it was 18m or 7 stories+. Residents requested clarification on considerations given to educating residents relating to fire safety, MR provided a verbal answer and stated intention of service to listen and not only transmit info to the resident side. MR clarified to residents that no property in the authority stock contained ACM cladding similar to that of Grenfell tragedy – they further added checks being undertaken and priority for housing service to know blocks in detail. JW summed up that strategy was not solely concerning fire but entire safety spectrum in the Local Authority property stock. Officers reaffirmed the BHCC commitment to engage with residents.
- 5.3 JW provided a verbal brief on the item as included in the agenda documents (Laundry) – made clear to panel that review did not include senior housing as it was a separate contract. It was noted there were 515 households in Local Authority properties with access to laundry, with 120 consistently using them, costing the local authority £40k annually. The Cllr Co-Chair refuted + gave context for importance to residents and the wider community. JW provided detail of survey being undertaken, confirmed this would inform policy discussion, drop-in surgeries and contact details to be circulated to residents/relevant parties to allow for engagement.

5.4 The Cllr Co-Chair noted since pandemic payments for service were withdrawn and queried this, MR clarified contractor providing service led changes since the Cost-of-Living Crisis and Pandemic. This has led to review taking place and input from residents would inform the future policy.

6. POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

6.1 Residents detailed progress of initiatives in Bristol Estate.

6.2 Residents detailed progress on Valley Social Centre project confirming they were in contact with the charity commission contact, Sam Nolan (SN) confirmed support from local authority.

6.3 Sabina Karabasic (SK) detailed progress on community initiatives in the area.

6.4 Residents confirmed secure EDB funding for works Central Park, Woodingdean and new replacement sports equipment for community facilities.

6.5 Robert Lodge residents confirmed progress in occupancy uptake increasing and upcoming programmes.

7. AOB

65-86

7.1 Residents raised concerns regarding overgrowth management. JH confirmed estates services would follow up individually after the panel.

7.2 Residents raised questions regarding uptake of apprentices in housing maintenance including the level of specialisations offered. MR provided a verbal brief on uptake, 26 in last F/Y (23/24).

7.2 Further questions were raised regarding how uptake is specified. MR linked to availability of courses from providers, operational needs of service and levy funding available. It was noted this changes year-year depending on requirements and support.

7.3 Residents raised questions regarding management of vulnerable disabled residents before, during and after maintenance works, referring to resident experience and opportunity for input. Officers confirmed this would be followed up and brought to a future panel as its own item for discussion

7.4 Resident raised concerns surrounding (individual issue) insect infestations in building and impact upon them, noting a lack of input/engagement from the local authority – Officers noted the concern raised and confirmed they would follow up individually after the panel.

7.5 Residents raised concerns regarding gutter clearances & irregular scheduling. Officers confirmed they would follow up after the panel.

- 7.6 Residents raised concerns regarding filming taking place in Swanbridge, it was noted they informed by the production firm, not the local authority. They detailed disruption inside building and residents unable to use parking spaces paid for duration of filming, further noting a lack of clarity regarding disruption.
- 7.7 Questions were raised by residents regarding who on the local authority side makes decision regarding disruption. JH provided verbal clarification, events team noted and have contacted housing, 2/4 proposed productions declined by housing/estates, events team have added they are working to improve engagement process with residents. Local Authority agreed as landlord that consultation needs to improve going forward.
- 7.8 Residents raised resident inspections programme – JH clarified no current process but plan underway to re-introduce the scheme. Ward Cllrs to be included going forwards.
- 7.9 Residents raised the distribution of anti-bleeding kits in a similar matter to defib kits.
- 7.10 Cllr Co-Chair closed at 19.58

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

