

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: NORTH AREA

18:00PM 9 SEPTEMBER 2024

HOUSING CENTRE – EASTERGATE ROAD, BRIGHTON, BN2 4QL

Present:

Councillors: Sheard (Co-Chair), De Oliviera, Mackey, Hill

Clerk: Niall Breen (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

Representatives/Tenants: Theresa Mackey (Highcroft Lodge), Jim Hornsby (Mimosa Court), Heather Hayes (Coldean), Donna James (Bates Estate), Ian Beck (Hollingdean), Desmond Jones (Hollingdean), Catherine Lawrence (Hollingbury), Mitch Watkinson (Bates Estate)

Officers: Geof Gage (Head of Housing Investment & Asset Management), Justine Harris (Head of Tenancy Services), Keely McDonald (Senior Community Engagement Officer), Grant Ritchie (Head of Housing Repairs & Maintenance, Sam Nolan (Senior Community Engagement Officer), Chloe Mclaughlin (Housing Estates Manager), Janet Dowdell (Tenancy Services Operations Manager)

Guests: Sarah Booker-Lewis (Local Democracy Reporter), George Carden (BBC Sussex)

OPEN SURGERY (DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL ISSUES)

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES 5 – 6

1.1 Cllr Sheard opened the meeting at 18:05 and thanked former resident co-chair Theresa Mackey who had resigned due to their election as a Ward Cllr in the Central Area and therefor had to resign their position to avoid any conflict of interest.

1.2 There were apologies from, Jane Hunter (East Moulescombe TRA).

2 MINUTES & ACTIONS 7 – 16

2.1 **RESOLVED:** The minutes were agreed unanimously by the panel as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

2.2 Residents noted that they had been inconvenienced by the circulation of the agenda and papers ahead of the panel. The Clerk duly noted this and assured the panel that the situation would be resolved.

2.3 NAO1 – Regarding CCTV works on the Bates Estate. Residents confirmed that this was ongoing, and no action had been taken at the time of the meeting. Chloe Mclaughlin (CM) confirmed that they had visited the area and explained the logistics process for the implementation of measures requested. Detailing short term measures (CCTV) as well as longer term measures & environmental enforcement still under consideration. Bates

Estates representatives underlined seriousness of issue and gave several examples, CM confirmed that a 'hotspot' had been identified by officers and measures were being actively considered, the officer provided a period for implementation of December/January. Recorded as ongoing.

2.4 NAO2 – Regarding ascertaining the responsibility for blocked drains/gulleys in Hollingdean. Ian Beck (IB) detailed the actions taken by the authority in regard to the issue, noting that they had worked with Cllr Fowler on the issue with 24 of the 26 notable blockages in the area being reported as cleared. IB also noted that the blockages on the corner of Davey Drive and Upper Hollingdean Road were not resolved and was contributing to flooding in Lewes Road. Grant Ritchie (GR) explained that there were no in-house drainage teams for housing and the Repair & Maintenance teams tried to tackle them where they were able to. GR also explained that the jurisdiction for the drains and gulleys often fell to Highways. IB confirmed that this had been reported to highways with no adequate response. Justine Harris (JH) confirmed they would follow this up with officers. Recorded as ongoing.

2.5 NAO3 – Regarding grass cutting and overgrowth management in Hollingdean. IB detailed a major issue, noting it had been raised repeatedly in resident only meetings, regarding the frequency of operations to tackle overgrowth as well as the inadequate clean up of debris and overgrowth cuttings left over from management. It was noted that this was causing mobility issues for residents, especially the elderly and vulnerable. Two specific trees in the area were noted as particularly dangerous, one behind Blocks' 1-6 Southmont which was endangering power lines and another on Tavistock Down. Officers confirmed that they would follow this up with the arboriculture team.

2.6 Desmond Jones (DJ) noted several issues regarding overgrowth and requested clarification from officers on the responsibility for overgrowth. Chloe Mclaughlin (CM) confirmed the responsibility was with Robert Walker (RW) (Head of CityParks) and also informed the panel that personnel from CM's team (Housing Estates Management) were often seconded to support CityParks. CM also confirmed overgrowth complaints had been noted and requested in future that residents contact the officer directly with regard to the issue. Recorded as ongoing.

2.7 NAO4 – Regarding outstanding works at the Coldean Youth Club. Heather Hayes (HH) informed the panel that the 'Community Corner' had closed and stated it was their intention for the issue to not persist further. Sam Nolan (SN) confirmed that they would follow up, Keely McDonald (KM) confirmed they were in contact with the Coldean Youth Club and discussions were ongoing regarding the finances for heating which had been earmarked and the general operation of the community space. Recorded as ongoing.

2.8 NA1 – Regarding overgrowth management and amenities maintenance policies. CM gave a verbal brief in response to the item, and it was agreed as complete.

2.9 NA2 – Regarding the provision of information to Cllr Hill regarding the safety of temporary and emergency accommodation. JH confirmed that they had circulated the relevant information, and it was agreed as complete.

2.10 NA3 – Regarding the provision of information to N-HAP Residents regarding the installation of windows. Donna James raised a query regarding leaseholder payment and

requested further information. Geof Gage (GG) noted that the consultation had potentially not taken place yet and confirmed they would follow up with further information.

2.11 Mitch Watkinson (MW) raised a query regarding lack of agricultural management by those undertaking works (external contractors), often leading to damaged gardens which residents had invested time and money in. GR confirmed and made note, Selsfield Drive, Hawkridge, Bates Estate.

3 ELECTION OF RESIDENT CO-CHAIR

3.1 Cllr Theresa Mackey (Cllr Mackey) (Resident for purposes of N-HAP) and MW proposed Donna James as the new Resident Co-Chair, they were duly elected unopposed.

3.2 Donna James made the following speech after their election -

“As someone who has been active in the community for a long time, representing my community feels very important. I’ve worked in and for communities for a long time and as a representative of Bates Estate I want to use my experiences to help others and as a parent I want to show that it’s great to give back to the community. I want to help give everyone a fair voice and help open better communications between tenants and the council, which I know has been missing, and I want to make sure people feel listened to.”

4 BUDGET CONSULTATION UPDATE

4.1 JH provided a verbal briefing on the item, regarding the timeframe for the Budget Consultation period going forwards.

5 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 24/25

17 – 36

5.1 GR provided a verbal briefing on the item as included in the agenda, making note of the KPI’s the report was measured against. IB gave their congratulations to GR and the team for ensuring the housing repairs hotline was in good operational working order as well as being more responsive and knowledgeable on issues. GR gave context to the improvements in the service.

5.2 Cllr Mackey requested further information regarding stage 1 and 2 complaints, GR confirmed that resources had lead to a drop in response times in Q1 due to the staffing issues.

6 HATE INCIDENT POLICY CONSULTATION

37 – 54

6.1 JH provided a verbal briefing on the item as included in the agenda. Providing a breakdown of information on the ‘YourVoice’ consultation that had recently been implemented,

6.2 Cllr Mackey thanked the officers for their efforts and gave their backing to the policy.

6.3 MW raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour in Bates Estate and how this policy would affect that. Janet Dowdell provided a verbal briefing on the operational steps

being taken with regard to the policy, as well as how this was interwoven with other initiatives in the authority and local area to ensure the tenancy could succeed, detailing a stepped approach to such issues.

6.4 MW queried the policies approach to those who had already been rehoused. JH detailed the authorities' response to this and made note that they had the ability to request a closure order from the magistrates as well as the arrangements for housing officers to work with both the perpetrators and the victims to ensure the least disturbance possible.

6.5 HH queried as to why authorities would move the victim and not the perpetrator, JD informed residents that every case was different and there was no 'blanket approach'. HH detailed a case of anti-social behaviour in Coldean, JD responded that they were not aware of the individual case and that the best thing for residents to do was to report the incidents to the authority.

6.6 DJ queried whether hate incidents and anti-social behaviour were mutually exclusive and the difference between the two and criminal behaviour. JD provided the definition of a hate incident, providing a brief on the outline for the policy, 'providing a response to victims of hate incidents. This confirmed the original question regarding whether Hate Incidents could take the form of anti-social or criminal behaviour. DJ noted a case that had been raised in Hollingdean, JD confirmed that they were unable to comment on individual cases but reaffirmed the policy's intention of providing a response to issues being raised such as this one.

7 BREAK

7.1 The panel adjourned for a refreshment break from 18:53 to 19:53.

8 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT HIGH RISE

55 – 70

8.1 GG provided a verbal briefing on the item as per included in the agenda papers.

8.2 DJ requested further circulation of documents to the Resident's Associations, GG confirmed they would follow this up, also noted that item in agenda was a draft and not the final document.

8.3 Cllr Mackey raised a query regarding engagement with those who were not as literate or able to access the information online, GG confirmed the circulation would take place in multiple languages and outlined other measures taken to ensure engagement with all those necessary.

8.4 HH raised a query regarding materials used in internal works and their safety, DJ confirmed asbestos tests had been undertaken but none was found there, officers confirmed safety of construction materials. IB raised a query regarding the Grenfell tragedy, asking the panel if there were buildings with the same ACM cladding, GG confirmed this was not the case in BHCC properties.

8.4 Jim Hornsby (JimH) raised points regarding Mimosa Court, providing context on roof replacement, a major works undertaken on the building in the last few years and noted

that as a result an observation window was bricked up. Preventing residents from being able to ascertain blockages on the roof. JimH detailed that in their understanding of the process, inspection should have been made by end of last month. However there had been no acknowledgement of this and further noted the ideal time would be after leaf fall in year. JimH requested action on confirmation, GR confirmed that this could take place. JimH requested to be informed at next North Area Panel on the progress of the issue.

8.5 JimH raised points regarding an outstanding EDB bid since 2021 for Mimosa Court, concerning improving the cosmetics of the surrounding area. They noted their disquiet at the lack of in dept information provided to residents in the answers. GR confirmed that social value element of contract still stands, the officer confirmed they would discuss with KM regarding contribution from authority on residents undertaking work themselves. IB confirmed that they would raise the issue at the EDB meeting at HTH.

8.6 Cllr RH noted regarding fire safety, confirmed no 'Grenfell' ACM cladding in authority and noted also that ESFRS had specialised training and capabilities to tackle similar incidents in high rise social housing

9 HOUSING REGULATORY JUDGEMENT

9.1 JH provided a verbal briefing of the item as included in the agenda papers. Detailing the response to the authority reporting itself to the regulator, leading to judgement and implementation of measures discussed.

9.2 MW raised a query regarding the placement of carbon monoxide detectors, GR confirmed that they should be in fixed locations.

9.3 Cllr Mackey queried JH regarding measurement of progress regarding similar issues, JH detailed the process, and the steps involved, the example being given was water safety and risk assessment.

10 RESIDENT'S QUESTIONS

71 – 86

10.1 N3.1 Regarding anti-social behaviour and crime across the North Area. IB detailed context of the issue raised in the question, noting that Sussex Police had sent officers to attend the residents only meeting but there had been no further progression. Requested feedback on matter and how it was being progressed by the authority.

10.2 Cllr Sheard confirmed that the authority was limited by whether or not they were council tenants. JD provided a verbal briefing about the Joint Action Group between Sussex Police and BHCC and response framework. Emerging issues are flagged, to be followed up monthly, JD detailed residents must report further incidents to the police to ensure adequate resources are available and issue is properly flagged.

10.3 Donna James made note their disappointment at the lack of presence in Bates Estate from PCSO's and lack of communication since the previous PCSO for the area was reassigned, they noted the replacement has not attended resident meetings. JD confirmed to follow up with the neighbourhood Sergeant.

11 POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

11.1 IB noted their appreciation for the successful prevention of anti-social behaviour in Hollingdean.

11.2 DJ made note of their 'Clean Up' community event for the Bates Estate , they thanked CM and their team for the support and contribution to the event.

11.3 SN Informed the panel to update them on the increasing capability of the community engagement team and their increased recruitment.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 GR made a request that tenants and colleagues to contact the authority regarding maintenance requests as the weather changes through the Autumn

12.2 HH queried why properties were being left empty when the wait list was so long. JH confirmed that all their properties were let and so it could only be properties in a joint ownership scheme.