

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL  
EAST AREA PANEL  
11.09.2024  
MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

**Councillors:** Allen

**Residents:** Chris El Shabba (Chair), Ofoma, Ben D'Montigny, Janet Gearing, Dee Simson, Max, Terry, Angela, Becky, Tommy Charles,

**Officers:** Francis Mitchell, Sam Nolan, Janet Dowdell, Justine Harris, Grant Ritchie, Keely McDonald, Geof Gage, Gab Tiranti

**Press:** Sarah Booker-Lewis

**1 – WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES**

1.1 There were no apologies.

**2 – MINUTES & ACTIONS OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed pending minor amendment.

**3 – ELECTION OF RESIDENT CO-CHAIRS**

3.1 Keely McDonald introduced this item and conducted a vote in line with the Area Panel Terms of Reference and as there was only one candidate, it was unanimously agreed by attendees that Chris El-Shabba would continue sitting as resident co-chair.

**4 – BUDGET CONSULTATION UPDATE**

4.1 Justine Harris provided a verbal update on this item, providing an overview on the status of the budget and the timeline for its delivery to Budget Council in February 2025.

## **5 – HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 24-25**

- 5.1 Grant Ritchie presented the report on this item, delivering an update on the status of housing repairs and maintenance in the city.
- 5.2 Janet Gearing was informed that waiting times for repairs were partly caused by staffing issues.
- 5.3 Janet Gearing was informed that 24 hours was the maximum timeframe for emergency external door repairs. Grant Ritchie stated that often such emergency repairs would be completed within 4 hours.
- 5.4 Dee Simson was informed that staff absence numbers pertained to office staff.
- 5.5 The Chair commended the ASB team, particularly the short lead times for issues to be dealt with.
- 5.6 Grant Ritchie suggested residents submit photographs to the repairs team in order that operatives can appropriately identify what work needs to be carried out.
- 5.7 Ofoma was informed of the remit and differences between the estates and repairs teams.
- 5.8 Grant Ritchie stated that United Living was a short-term contractor being used to manage less complicated repair jobs.
- 5.9 Grant Ritchie stated that while phone-calls were often dealt with quicker by the repairs team, emails are also generally responded to within 24 hours.

## **6 – RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT HIGH RISE**

- 6.1 Geof Gage and Justine Harris presented the report on this item, delivering an update on the resident engagement strategy for high-rise blocks.
- 6.2 Ben D'Montigny requested residents receive clarification regarding immediate and delayed (stay put) evacuations.
- 6.3 Sam Nolan stated that safety procedures put in place by the Council could be overridden by Fire Services at the scene of an emergency.
- 6.4 Becky questioned the safety of electric-scooter containers being stored under the exposed feet of their high-rise, particularly citing that the integrity of such

containers was compromised by having been drilled into.

6.5 Geof Gage stated that he would investigate safety concerns regarding scooter storage containers at Kingfisher Court and nearby high-rises.

a. **ACTION** – Geof Gage to investigate safety concerns regarding scooter storage containers at Kingfisher Court and nearby high-rises.

6.6 Justine Harris provided an update on work being done to remove bulk waste from high rises.

6.7 Janet Gearing questioned why Council tenants were charged for collection of bulk-waste, but fly-tippers were not. Justine Harris stated that the maximum penalty for fly-tipping was £1000.

## **7 – HATE INCIDENT POLICY CONSULTATION**

7.1 Justine Harris presented the report on this item, providing an overview of how the Council responds to hate incidents involving effecting Council tenants and leaseholders.

7.2 Ben D'Montigny requested more detail from the report on what actions could be taken to deal with hate incidents.

7.3 Janet Dowdell stated that hate incidents should be reported to the Council's customer service team online or over the phone but emphasised that if a crime is committed, then it should first be reported to the police.

## **8 – ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

8.1 Justine Harris provided a verbal update on the Council's new Housing Allocation Policy, stating that the consultation period had come to an end and provided a timeline for the policy's delivery to Cabinet in October or November 2024.

## **9 – BREAK**

## **10 – APPRENTICESHIPS IN HOUSING MAINTENANCE**

10.1 Grant Ritchie provided a verbal update on this item, delivering an overview of apprenticeship in housing maintenance. Grant Ritchie highlighted

the importance of apprenticeships in maintaining an educated and specialised workforce and shared that the apprenticeship schemes were providing benefit to maintenance teams.

10.2 The Chair commended the success of the apprenticeship scheme.

10.3 Dee Simson was informed that retention rates for apprentices were high.

## **11 – SUPPORTING DISABLED TENANTS’ NEEDS DURING WORKS**

11.1 Janet Dowdell provided a verbal update on this item, detailing the ways in which disabled tenants were supported during repair and maintenance works. Janet Dowdell stated that when necessary, housing officers assist the repairs service in arranging support for tenants; such support included finding temporary accommodation for tenants and storing their personal belongings.

11.2 The Chair shared their experience with operatives, stating that they were generally very helpful.

11.3 Geof Gage agreed to follow up with Sarah Potter regarding ongoing works at Robert Lodge.

a. **ACTION** – Geof Gage to follow up with Sarah Potter regarding ongoing works at Robert Lodge.

11.4 Councillor Simon raised concerns regarding operatives withdrawing from tenants’ houses before works were complete due to not being able to meet disabled resident’s needs, suggesting that operatives could be made aware of tenants needs before they are dispatched. Councillor Simon further suggested adding criteria to the repair request form to indicate whether a tenant has additional needs.

11.5 Grant Ritchie provided an overview of the processes followed in arranging repair works.

11.6 Ben D’Montigny suggested contacting residents requesting whether they require help before repairs are carried out.

## **12 – HOUSING REGULATORY JUDGEMENT**

12.1 Justine Harris delivered the presentation on this item.

12.2 Grant Ritchie provided Dee Simson with an update on electrical safety compliance.

### **13 – RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME**

13.1 The panel decided to take residents questions as read.

### **14 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

14.1 Janet Gearing questioned when grass would be cut at Woodingdean Lawn Memorial, criticising its unkept state.

14.2 Councillor Allen shared that grass at Woodingdean Lawn Memorial would be cut within a month and stated that the grass is allowed to grow over the summer to promote biodiversity in the area.

### **15 – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

