BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: EAST AREA

2.00pm 9 SEPTEMBER 2026

BRISTOL ESTATE COMMUNITY ROOM, 146A DONALD HALL RD, BRIGHTON AND HOVE, BRIGHTON BN2 5DJ

MINUTES

Councillors: Williams & Simon.

Residents: Chris El Shabba, Janet Gearing, Dee Simson, Ben D'Montigny, Val Steadman, Anne Glow, Sandra Simpson

Officers: Mikila Beck, Martin Reid, Justine Harris, Harry Williams, Hannah Barker, Marie Button, Stephan Schreider, Chloe Mclaughlin, Shah Rahman, Geof Gage

Press: Sarah Booker-Lewis

14 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES

14.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Jacob Allen.

15 MINUTES & ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

15.1 Dee Simson advised that her name had been spelt incorrectly in the previous minutes.

15.2 **RESOLVED:** That subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 09 September 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

16 RESIDENT QUESTIONS, 2 & 3 STAR

16.1 In response to questions from Ben D'Montigny, Janet Gearing and Dee Simson, Harry Williams advised that the council was seeking to make best use of its housing stock given the high demand for larger homes. Harry noted that feedback received during the recent Housing Allocations Policy review had raised similar issues and that additional flexibility had been introduced to allow overcrowded households to accept properties with one fewer bedroom than their assessed need.

16.2 Harry advised that there were no current plans to review the policy further, but that these issues would be considered as part of any future review.

16.3 In response to questions from Ben D'Montigny and Janet Gearing, Harry advised that incentives for downsizing had been increased and that individual housing circumstances would be considered in accordance with the allocations policy, taking account of factors including housing need, tenancy arrangements and the risk of homelessness.

16.4 In response to further questions regarding downsizing and allocations, Harry Williams advised that incentives for downsizing had been increased and that individual circumstances would be assessed in line with the allocations policy.

16.5 In response to a question regarding the use of private landlords, Harry Williams explained that private sector accommodation continued to play a role in providing temporary accommodation while the council increased its supply of council-owned accommodation. He added that leased properties were required to meet council standards and formed part of wider efforts to improve accommodation quality and energy efficiency.

16.6 Hannah Barker highlighted guidance for tenant groups included in the agenda papers and advised that a tenant group toolkit would be made available online and in hard copy. She also outlined the support available through the Resource Centre, including training, advice and drop-in sessions.

16.7 The Chair advised that a recent meeting of panel co-chairs had been held to strengthen links between resident groups across the city and encouraged members to make use of the Resource Centre.

17 NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER UPDATE

17.1 Shah Rahman provided an update on the Neighbourhood Officer service, which had been operating for 12 months with a team of seven officers. Shah outlined the team's work on tenancy visits, estate inspections, casework, support for vulnerable residents and maintaining a visible presence on estates. Shah noted that the initial inspection programme was nearing completion and that feedback had highlighted the need to better publicise inspection dates.

17.2 Mark Harnett advised that recruitment to the service was ongoing and confirmed that Mark Wilkinson covered the East area. Mark explained that inspection dates were shared with tenant representatives and that monthly reports and action summaries were circulated to residents, tenant representatives and ward councillors.

17.3 In response to Janet Gearing's concerns that residents had not been informed of inspections in Woodingdean, Shah Rahman advised that Woodingdean had been one of the first areas inspected. Janet and Dee Simson stressed the importance of notifying tenant representatives of inspection dates and sharing inspection outcomes to avoid duplication and help identify local issues.

17.4 Mark Harnett advised that estate inspections took place monthly, although officers were regularly present on estates undertaking visits and engaging with residents outside scheduled inspections.

17.5 In response to Ben D’Montigny's question regarding the relationship between the Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Officer teams, Mark Harnett advised that the teams worked closely together, with Neighbourhood Officers focusing on enforcement and information gathering and Community Engagement Officers focusing on resident engagement.

18 WASTE MANAGEMENT AND WASTE AMNESTIES

18.1 Chloe Mclaughlin provided an update on the Waste Amnesty Pilot, which is now halfway through delivery. Feedback from residents had been positive, with approximately 4.5 tonnes of waste collected, including fridges, mattresses, televisions, sofas and armchairs. Residents had also donated items through the furniture recycling scheme, helping to reduce waste and support other tenants.

18.2 Chloe advised that discussions had begun on a wider programme including regular waste amnesties, increased graffiti removal capacity, jet washing of bin store areas and enhanced bulky waste collection services.

18.3 In response to Ben D'Montigny's question regarding whether regular waste amnesties could reduce fly-tipping and generate financial benefits, Chloe advised that it was too early to assess the impact, but this would be reviewed once the pilot concluded in December.

18.4 In response to Ben's comments regarding resident-led jet washing on local estates, Chloe advised that similar arrangements already existed on some estates, with the council providing equipment for residents to undertake the work.

18.5 In response to Janet Gearing's question regarding a waste amnesty event in Woodingdean, Chloe advised that Woodingdean was on the list for future events and was likely to be included in next year's spring-to-autumn programme. Janet requested that dates be provided in time for inclusion in local newsletters.

18.6 In response to Councillor Simon's question regarding notice periods for future events, Justine Harris advised that publicising dates too far in advance could encourage fly-tipping in affected areas. While residents could be advised of the approximate time of year, the formal notice period would remain relatively short. Chloe added that support would be available on the day for residents requiring assistance to remove items from their homes.

18.7 Chloe advised that where demand remained after an event, collection arrangements could be extended if necessary.

18.8 In response to Dee Simson's question regarding the alignment of bulky waste charges with Environmental Services, Chloe confirmed that residents would be required to pay for collections outside Waste Amnesty events.

18.9 In response to a further question from Janet Gearing, Chloe advised that charges would be brought into line with Environmental Services' charging structure.

19 ESTATE INSPECTIONS

19.1 This item was discussed alongside the Neighbourhood Officer Update.

20 HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT

20.1 Harry Williams introduced the draft Housing Annual Report, which brought together performance information, resident feedback and priorities for the year ahead. He advised that the report would be presented to committee in September and shared with residents through Homing In.

20.2 Martin Reid provided a housing performance update, advising that emergency repairs continued to be completed within target timescales, while routine repairs remained below target but were improving. Increased reporting of damp and mould issues had created additional demand, and work was underway to increase capacity through recruitment, apprenticeships, training and contractor support. He added that preventative maintenance programmes were being developed to reduce future demand.

20.3 In response to Dee Simson's question regarding apprenticeships, Mikila Beck advised that the service promoted opportunities through local schools and currently offered apprenticeships across a range of trades and support roles.

20.4 Martin Reid advised that 88.5% of council homes met the Decent Homes Standard and that a comprehensive stock condition survey would shortly begin to assess the condition, safety and energy efficiency of the housing stock. He noted that £54 million would be invested in council homes during the year.

20.5 In response to questions from Dee Simson regarding non-traditional properties and buybacks, Martin Reid advised that surveys would assess all aspects of properties, help inform future investment programmes and ensure acquired and bought-back homes were brought up to the required standard.

20.6 Hannah Barker advised that residents would shortly receive information about the stock condition surveys and that officers could attend tenant meetings to explain the programme and answer questions

20.7 Martin Reid advised that the average re-let time was 61 days and highlighted the success of the buyback programme, which had returned 118 former council homes to the housing stock. He added that only 1.2% of council homes were currently vacant.

20.8 In response to questions regarding the Solar PV programme, Martin Reid advised that resident satisfaction was monitored and opportunities to expand installations would continue to be explored. Geof Gage added that the scheme was reviewed annually and options for extending installations to blocks were being considered.

20.9 Harry Williams advised that, following a suggestion from Ben D’Montigny at the previous meeting, future performance reports would include information on the outcomes of closed cases from Quarter 3 onwards.

21 REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

21.1 Mikila Beck provided an update on the work of the Repairs Feedback Team, advising that residents were helping to shape the repairs service through the panel.

21.2 Mikila noted that, since June, the group had reviewed the draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy and repairs claims form to improve accessibility and ease of use. Communication had been identified as a key issue, and a script had been introduced to ensure residents were kept informed about repair timescales and next steps. Mikila also confirmed that the online form issue had been resolved and thanked residents for their involvement.

21.3 Ben D'Montigny advised that weekly drop-in sessions had been well received by residents, who appreciated the opportunity to speak to officers face-to-face and Mikila Beck advised that further drop-in sessions across the city were being considered.

21.4 The Chair raised concerns about advice given regarding emergency repairs and suggested that staff receive appropriate training. Mikila Beck agreed to discuss the matter further with the Chair.

22 VULNERABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

22.1 Justine Harris introduced the item, advising that residents were being invited to help shape the strategy to make council services more accessible and responsive to individual needs, including flexibility around repairs appointments and works carried out in residents' homes.

22.2 Justine noted that consultation would commence later in the year, with resident representatives invited to attend engagement sessions, and that feedback, particularly from residents who had experienced barriers to accessing services, would be used to strengthen the final strategy.

23 EDB REVIEW

23.1 Shah Rahman gave an update on the review of the funding process, advising that the aim was to assess the effectiveness and accessibility of the current arrangements, understand the types of projects residents wished to fund, and identify opportunities to widen participation.

23.2 Shah noted that a literature review had been completed and that consultation with staff and residents would take place over the coming months, with recommendations to be developed by December and improvements targeted for implementation in the new financial year.

23.3 The Chair confirmed that applications could still be submitted via Lucy Beasley.

23.4 In response to Janet Gearing's question, Shah confirmed that the deadline for main bids remained the end of September.

23.5 In response to Dee Simson's query regarding the online application form, Shah advised that it should be available and they are looking into the link not working properly.

24 TENANT EVENT DAY UPDATE

24.1 The panel were advised that the Tenant Event Day would take place on Saturday 17 October, from 11.00am to 4.00pm at Hove Town Hall. It was noted that the event programme would be circulated in advance of the next meeting.

24.2 Hannah Barker shared a promotional poster, which would be displayed, and Justine Harris advised that the event would also be promoted through social media and other communication channels.

24.3 The Chair advised that additional committee members would be sought in the coming year and expressed hope that the event would be both enjoyable and informative for residents.

24.4 The Chair also advised that a crèche would be available for children.

25 ANY OTHER BUSINESS/POSITIVE NEWS STORIES

25.1 Dee Simson gave an update on the Woodingdean community garden project, advising that it had been highly successful and was providing produce to the local food hub through lottery-funded support.

25.2 The Chair advised that plans were being considered for two raised vegetable beds at Robert Lodge and commended residents who were maintaining the garden.

25.3 Dee Simson also noted that an EIB-funded community garden project was progressing well.

25.4 Sandra Simpson advised that plans were underway to establish an ADHD support group.

The meeting concluded at 3.40pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of