

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 23 SEPTEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Caulfield (Chairman); Allen, Davey, Mears, Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson), Simson and Wells

Tenant Representatives: Chris El-Shabba (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Beryl Snelling (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Tina Urquhart (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Muriel Briault (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and John Melson (High Rise Action Group)

PART ONE

20. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

20a Declarations of Substitutes

| 20.1 Councillor | For Councillor |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pidgeon | Harmer – Strange |
| Randall | Fryer |

20b Declarations of Interest

20.2 There were none.

20c. Exclusion of Press and Public

20.3 The Committee Considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether , if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information s defined in Schedule !2A, Part 5A, Section 100A(4) or 1001 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

20.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

21.1 Tom Whiting referred to the petition received from sheltered housing residents (Paragraph 7.1 refers), stating that this represented a 90% response rate calling on the city Council to retain the present system of Scheme Managers.

21.2 Councillor Simpson referred to Paragraph 15.7 and sought to clarify the tenure arrangements relative to the 393 properties referred to.

21.1 In response to a query from John Melson, the Assistant Director explained that information relative to the number of applicants and refusals had been collated and was available and would be included in future performance reports.

21.4 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2008 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member.

22. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

22.1 The Chairman welcomed all present and reiterated her priorities and commitment that tenants would continue be at the heart of the service; that housing management would be a 'three-star' service and that improvements stemming from recent consultation would be on-going and evident.

22.2 **RESOLVED** - That the position be noted.

23. CALLOVER

23.1 **RESOLVED** - All items were reserved for discussion.

24. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

24.1 There were none.

25. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

25.1 There were none.

26. PETITIONS

26.1 There were none.

27. DEPUTATIONS

27.1 There were none.

28. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

28.1 There were none.

29. LOCAL DELIVERY VEHICLE

29.1 The Committee considered a report of the director of Adult Social Care and Housing relative to proposals to establish a housing Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV) (for copy see minute book).

29.2 The Director explained that following the recommendation of the Housing Management Consultative Committee (22 July 2008) and approval of the Housing Cabinet Member to proceed to the proposed development and finalisation phases of Stage 2 of the review of Housing Green Paper options, the proposal to establish LDV had been further developed and refined. The purpose in proposing the LDV was set out and it was noted that the current proposal complied with the parameters which had been set in the light of the tenants overwhelming rejection of the stock transfer proposal in 2007, namely:

- No RSL involvement;
- No freehold transfer;
- No transfer of tenanted properties; and
- Maximum transfer of 499 properties within a period of 5 years.

29.3 A full discussion took place in respect of the various issues surrounding the proposed LDV. Councillors and tenant representatives flagged up many areas of concern which they had or on which they would require further clarification in the future. The Chairman confirmed that these issues would be taken on board and that full consultation would take place as the process rolled forward.

29.4 Having considered the report in detail Members voted unanimously in support of the concept of the LDV but also agreed that there were additional issues and recommendations which they wished to put before the specially convened meeting of Cabinet to take place on 24 September 2008.

29.5 An indicative vote was also taken from tenant representatives present. Nine were in attendance out of a possible 11 and their indicative vote was also one of unanimous support, albeit that they also raised issues which are also encompassed in the bullet points set out in (2) below.

29.6 **RESOLVED** - That the Housing Management Consultative Committee, consider and commend for approval of the Cabinet meeting to be held on 24 September 2008, the report regarding the establishment of the proposed Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV) and the granting of leases attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and

(2) The HMCC whilst supporting a proposed LDV in principle also wish to make the following recommendations and representations to Cabinet:

- That works should meet a locally set "Brighton" standard as well as decent homes standards set by the government (this to be determined as a result of further detailed consultation with tenants and those representing them in order to identify and determine their specific needs):

- Detailed information regarding the financial implications to be provided as the scheme rolls forward (this to include a detailed analysis of both the potential advantages and disadvantages of opting for charitable status);
- Regular updates to be provided (to HMCC), relative to detailed financial and other information as part of an on – going process in advance of further reports being put before the Cabinet for approval ;
- Additional meeting(s) of the HMCC to be scheduled as necessary in order to inform and facilitate this process (as referred to above);
- Details to be provided to the Area Panels as an integral part of the consultation process , their input to be fed into the HMCC meetings; ;
- Information relative to the properties involved to continue to be reported in the same manner as the first tranche (should that information not be available in the public domain ;
- Monitoring of housing supply throughout the process - Area Panels and HMCC to be informed in advance relative to this and all other relevant details as they emerge in advance of further approvals being sought by Cabinet and Council (the timeframe for this first stage in order to commence the process and to ascertain potential funding sources was accepted); and
- Whilst accepted that employment and training opportunities would arise as part of the procurement process and should be reported as such that this consideration should nonetheless form an integral part of the aims of any “company” set up as the LDV.

30. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2007 / 2008 FINAL OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN FOR 2008 / 2009

30.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing setting out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2007 / 08 final outturn and the forecast outturn for 2008 / 09 as at month 4 (for copy see minute book).

30.2 John Melson referred to the condition of a number of the windows of properties in Whitehawk and the need for the necessary remedial./ replacement work as a matter of priority. Tom Whiting, Tina Urquhart, Heather Hayes and Stewart Gover also cited other examples of works requiring urgent action and others which had been commenced or completed which in their view were less immediate. Stewart Gover and Tom Whiting referred to instances where new sturdier front doors had been fitted but which were either too heavy or the necessary adjustments had not been made to enable them to be used by those who had limited strength to open or close them.

30.3 The Chairman responded that she was aware of the instances cited and the conditions tenants were living with in some areas of the City. This situation had arisen as a result of the piecemeal approach to the carrying out of works in consequence of there being insufficient funds to carry out longer term works. It was recognised that tenants needed to be properly consulted with and involved in the process. It was intended that over the next year to 18 months the changes in the procurement process would enable an improved citywide plan to emerge.

30.4 Councillor Randall referred to the fact that a percentage of the rental income generated was given to central government. He considered that this was unacceptable and enquired what action was being taken to seek to remedy this. He also considered that any further improvements which could be effected in terms of vacancy management would be welcome. Whilst properties were empty pending remedial work they were unavailable for letting, this cost the Council money.

30.5 The Chairman responded explaining that the Council had joined the "Negative Housing Subsidy" campaign led by Waverley Borough Council which was campaigning to ensure that reforms of the HRA subsidy rules would mean that rental income collected by individual local authorities was paid back to them in full by central government.

30.7 Councillors Simpson and Wells expressed support for a proper planned maintenance programme based on a definitive stock condition survey. Councillor Mears concurred in that view stating that it was clearly recognised that there was a need to be able to react to emergencies but also to have a sustained long term maintenance programme in place. Tina Urquhart stated that surveyors visiting her estate preparatory to works being carried out had informed tenants that w/ef 1 September only emergency repairs would be carried out, in light of the information contained within the report she enquired whether this was correct. The Chairman confirmed that that information had been incorrect and that she and Councillor Mears, the Leader of the Council would ensure that this situation was corrected and that all Officers were aware of the current situation.

30.8 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee note that the final outturn for the HRA for 2007 / 08 was an underspending of £1.310 million compared to the budgeted position of a small surplus of £ 0.129 million. This represents a variance of 2.99% of the gross revenue budget of £43.463 million. General HRA revenue reserves have increased by £1.439 million to £5.615 million as at 31 March 2008;

(2) That the Committee note that the earmarked revenue reserves for the Estate Development Budget (EDB) are £34,000 as at 31 March 2008; and

(3) that the Committee note that the forecast breakeven position for 2008 / 09 as at Month 4 which includes an additional contribution from HRA reserves to fund additional energy costs.

31. SHELTERED HOUSING FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

31.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing updating Members on the work of the Sheltered Housing Focus Group looking at issues raised by tenants concerning Council owned sheltered housing in the City (for copy see minute book).

31.2 Councillor Randall stated that in his view there was a need for a menu of care required as not all older tenants were residents of sheltered housing schemes. Stewart Gover stated that there was a need for differing levels of provision; "supercare" schemes were to be applauded however. Councillor Pidgeon referred to the need to ensure that works were carried out quickly once identified. He stated that he had been notified of an instance where a lift had been out of operation for 5 weeks whilst awaiting a replacement part, clearly that was unacceptable.

31.3 Councillor Simpson commended the work of the focus group stating that if its findings could be used to facilitate action against an identified need that would be valuable. The Chairman confirmed that it was important to facilitate this process.

31.4 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee notes the progress of the Sheltered Housing Focus Group to date.

(2) The Committee notes the report on the outcomes of the initial scheme based consultation events report (appendix 2);

(3) The Committee notes further consultation events are to be held with sheltered housing schemes and Housing Management officers; and

(4) The Committee notes that officers will arrange visits to the sheltered housing schemes with shared facilities for the Cabinet Member for Housing.

32. CHAIRMANS' WORKING GROUPS (TENANCY AGREEMENT)

32.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing presenting the results of the tenant led Chairman's Working Group considering the development and adoption of a revised tenancy agreement for tenants living in council housing (for copy see minute book)

32.2 Chris El Shabba gave a presentation on behalf of Barry Hughes who was unable to be present. Tenant representatives indicated the need for agreements to be clear and consistent and for a sympathetic approach to be employed when dealing with succession of tenancy issues where adult children had been living in a property with their parents when they became deceased. Several incidents were cited including one which had been related recently in the "Argus". The Director responded stating that she was investigating this matter and fully accepted that the manner in which that case had been dealt with had been unacceptable, she was also seeking to ensure that measures were put into place to so that that all staff received training as appropriate to ensure that such incidents did not occur again .

32.3 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee note the conclusions of the working group outlined in the presentation and draft tenancy agreement attached at appendix 2; and

(2) That the Committee note the conclusions of the working group which will be taken forward as the basis for wider consultation with stakeholders and tenants on the development and adoption of a revised tenancy agreement for tenants living in council housing and forward to the housing cabinet member for approval.

The meeting concluded at 7.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of