

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**3.00pm 30 APRIL 2012**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Wakefield (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Randall, Robins and Summers

**Tenant Representatives:** Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Jean Davis (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), David Avery (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Roy Crowhurst (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network)

**PART ONE**

**98. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**98A Declarations of Substitute Members**

98.1 Councillor Mears declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wells. Roy Crowhurst declared that he was attending as a substitute for Beverley Weaver. Dave Avery declared that he was attending as a substitute for Tina Urquhart.

**98B Declarations of Interests**

98.2 Councillor Randall, Councillor Summers, Roy Crowhurst, Heather Hayes and Ted Harman declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

**98C Exclusion of the Press and Public**

98.3 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the 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 as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

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

## 99. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

### Amendments to the minutes

99.1 *Paragraph 83.4* – Delete reference to Local Action Team. It should now read “Councillor Farrow informed the Committee that he had received an invitation to the meeting on 21 March as Chair of the Woodingdean Tenants’ and Residents’ Association”.

99.2 *Paragraph 91.10* – Councillor Robins stated that the reference to family should be replaced with *Parents*.

99.3 *Paragraph 92.11* – Agreed to insert the word “surveyed” to the first line “...96% of tenants surveyed....”.

### Comments on the minutes

99.4 *Chair’s Communications on HCA Empty Homes Programme Funding - Paragraph 84.6* – Councillor Mears considered that this statement read out by the Chair (Councillor Randall at this meeting) was right in principle but commented that the wording might lead a lay person to think that the council were obtaining funding of £2 million.

99.5 *Housing Allocation Policy Review – Paragraph 91.17 and 91.18* - John Melson stated that there was no mention in the minutes that there had been an indicative vote on the substantive proposals which had rejected the Allocations Policy. He also stated that the minutes did not state that the Chair (Councillor Randall) had asked councillors to ignore tenants’ views. Barry Kent and Stewart Gover also considered that the word ignore had been used. Councillor Duncan responded to say that Councillor Randall had not instructed councillors to ignore tenants. He had reminded councillors they were not bound to vote in the same way as tenant representatives.

99.6 Councillor Robins reminded members that the Senior Lawyer had clarified the legal position regarding voting at the HMCC. Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that the Senior Lawyer was right in advising that councillors had to make their own decision. He accepted this was fair and lawful. That was why an indicative vote was taken followed by a councillor vote.

99.7 Councillor Randall stressed that it was ultimately the responsibility of councillors to make a decision as this was a consultation committee. It was perfectly acceptable for councillors to take a different view to tenants. He could not remember using the word ignore, but was happy to apologise if he did.

99.8 *Paragraph 92.11* – Tom Whiting still queried the statistic that 96% of tenants surveyed in sheltered accommodation were satisfied with housing services. He considered this was

unrealistic. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that the figure was correct. He had met with Tom and the Head of Tenancy Services to discuss this matter since the last meeting.

- 99.9 *Paragraph 93.5 – Specialist debt and money advice* - Councillor Farrow stated that his concern was that there was the potential for a need for more than 480 in depth specialist casework interventions. He requested that extra finance should be sought to enable a continuous review.
- 99.10 *Paragraph 96.4 – Performance Report* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for percentages and figures to be used in future reports.
- 99.11 *Paragraphs 87.3 and 97.3 – Clarke Court – Scooter Storage Scheme* – It was clarified that the scheme was almost complete. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that she was not aware that planning permission had been granted for the Leach Court scheme. She would find out more information and would meet with tenants in Leach Court.
- 99.12 *Paragraph 97.5 – Mobility Scooter Group* – Barry Kent stated that there was no further news about this group which had not met for some time. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that she would discuss this matter with the relevant officer and give an update to the Tenants Disability Network meeting.
- 99.13 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meeting held on 19 March 2012 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to amendments outlined above.

## 100. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

### City Assembly

- 100.1 The Chair informed members that the next City Assembly would take place on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May at Hove Town Hall. The theme would be communication and consultation and there would be workshops to give tenants the opportunity to discuss the suggestions and recommendations of the Innovation Group. Crèche facilities would be available and the council would be using web casting and social media as before. All tenants would be welcome to attend.

### Recruitment Events for Apprenticeship with Mears

- 100.2 The Chair informed members that in May there will be two recruitment events for young people who were interested in applying for an apprenticeship with Mears. This would bring the number of apprenticeships appointed by Mears up to 57. These events would take place on May 16<sup>th</sup> 9.00am -13.00pm at City College in Pelham St and on May 17<sup>th</sup> at City College buildings on Wilson Avenue

**Elizabeth Court Sheltered Housing Scheme**

100.3 The Chair informed members that this week saw the 30th anniversary of Elizabeth Court sheltered housing scheme. She had attended a celebration at Elizabeth Court with the Mayor and Councillor Jarrett, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health.

**101. CALLOVER**

101.1 The Chair asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.

101.2 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for debate and determination.

**102. PETITIONS**

102.1 There were none.

**103. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

103.1 There were none.

**104. DEPUTATIONS**

104.1 There were none.

**105. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

105.1 There were none.

**106. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

106.1 There were none.

**107. HOUSING SERVICES THE CITY DESERVES - IMPROVING SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION DELIVERY UNIT**

107.1 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Head of Tenancy Services. Slides of the presentation were circulated to members. The presentation set out changes being made to the service and the reasons for those changes. Members were shown a chart setting out the Commissioning Framework for Housing and Social Inclusion and were informed of the way in which residents had been involved in changing the service, and the ways in which the council was responding to tenants.

107.2 Members were shown the Housing & Social Inclusion Delivery Structure 2012/13 and were given details of the new teams within the service and the next steps in implementing the changes.

107.3 Councillor Farrow commented that as this was a major piece of work it would have been helpful if it had been presented in a report, which could have been read in advance of the meeting. Councillor Farrow was concerned at the use of the

expression “working smarter” in the section headed “Why Change”. He considered that this was derogatory wording as there were smart people already working for the service.

- 107.4 Councillor Farrow asked for an explanation of One Planet Brighton and under the section headed Management – Customer Service Team asked for the evidence base for resolving 80% of enquiries on first contact. Councillor Farrow referred to the bullet point “receive housing services from any housing office”. He had doubts that this would be easy to achieve. Councillor Farrow referred to the proposed area structure and was surprised to see Mouslecoomb in the Central area rather than the east area. He was also concerned that the Central area was split between Oxford Street and Selsfield Drive.
- 107.5 The Head of Tenancy Services explained that Smarter Working was a term used as part of the Corporate Plan. The term was about improving processes and was not about people. One Planet Brighton was also from the Corporate Plan and was about a different way of improving performance taking account of the environment by reducing carbon emissions and improving the sustainability of the stock.
- 107.6 The Head of Tenancy Services explained that the references to resolving 80% of enquiries on first contact and receiving housing services from any office were about the internal management of the service which needed to change. The proposed area structure was about the internal structure of staff. It did not relate to area panels. With regard to the question about Oxford Street and Selsfield Drive, it was the intention to enable tenants to use any reception at any housing office. For example, if a tenant lived in Mousecoomb and wanted to use Selsfield Drive or Oxford Street, officers could respond to the issue.
- 107.7 Councillor Farrow asked if the front line point of contact would be by telephone only. He stressed that many tenants had disabilities and local officers knew tenants.
- 107.8 The Head of Tenancy Services confirmed that contact would not only be by phone. Every housing office would have a Senior Duty Officer. Meanwhile, if tenants had an ongoing issue, they would have an identified key worker.
- 107.9 Stewart Gover noted that Saunders Park and Albion Hill were not mentioned. He considered more detail was required, in order for people to know which office to go to.
- 107.10 The Chair stressed that the area structure was based on wards. Albion Hill was in Queen’s Park Ward. She suggested that a map was produced to show tenants which ward they lived in.
- 107.11 Councillor Mears considered that there should have been a report rather than a presentation and felt that the proposals were vague in places. She asked for an explanation of “co-production and co-regulation”. Councillor Mears felt that the proposal for a single phone number was worrying and considered that the proposals were not very localised and would make it more difficult for tenants.
- 107.12 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion accepted the comments about the lack of a report but explained that HMCC had received a report on the Customer Access

Strategy in September 2011 and a report on an evaluation of Turning the Tide in January 2011. The key changes reported in the presentation were reflected in the Customer Access Strategy. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that references to co-production and co-regulation referred to the idea of service users being involved in the development of the service.

- 107.13 Councillor Randall made the point that the council were working closely with the most vulnerable families in the city and that there were a number of ways to contact people. He stated that it would be useful to have some figures regarding the use of social media. He assumed that there would be a bank of people to answer the single phone number.
- 107.14 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that Housing and Social Inclusion would be involved in the work that was being commissioned to help families on low incomes. Meanwhile there was a great deal of information for tenants on access to the internet. 56% of tenants surveyed had access to the internet. The survey showed that a higher percentage of younger tenants had access to the internet.
- 107.15 John Melson thought it was a good presentation but would have preferred a report. He was concerned that the area structure was based on wards rather than areas. He was encouraged to see how clearly the presentation demonstrated the importance of residents input in the proposals.
- 107.16 Heather Hayes had concerns about the proposed area structure. She had tried to phone the Oxford Street office and someone in the Victoria Road office had answered the phone. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that this was due to problems with the computer system last week. It was one reason why there was need for change with one team trained to answer the phone. It would not be a call centre approach and the staff would have a mix of duties and still have contact with tenants.
- 107.17 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the section on Management – Customer Service Team (resolve 80% of enquires on first contact). He asked if people would be referred on to an area if the first person they spoke to could not answer the question. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement explained that it was the intention to deal with 80% of the enquiries on first contact. Some difficult queries might be referred on. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion stressed that the majority of enquiries were general, and other social landlords achieved these kinds of outcomes.
- 107.18 Councillor Peltzer Dunn expressed concern about the phased approach of launching the new service in July and the telephone service in the autumn. He considered that a whole service should be launched. He felt that there was a great deal that was good in the presentation but commented that he was not being asked to make a decision, and found it difficult to take ownership of what was before the committee. He considered that a report should be brought back asking for approval for the implementation of the service.
- 107.19 The Strategic Director Place stressed that the presentation had been given to councillors and tenants as part of the consultation process. The proposals were not a

policy issue. They had been based on what had already been approved. Internal re-organisations were not brought to committee for approval.

107.20 There was agreement that a report should come back to the HMCC. The Chair stated that she, Councillor Randall and the Strategic Director would discuss how to take this matter forward.

#### **108. REPORT OF THE INNOVATION GROUP ON RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT**

- 108.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which shared with the HMCC the work and recommendations of the Innovations Group. Members were informed that the Innovations Group had been meeting since November 2011 to look at ways that resident involvement could be widened to include as many residents who wished to contribute to their housing management service in ways that they preferred and to modernise the Council's approaches while strengthening support for tenant and resident associations (TRAs). The recommendations in the report were designed to achieve this.
- 108.2 The Chair advised that the Committee were being asked to comment on the suggestions and recommendations that had been made by the Innovations Group and stated that there would be an opportunity for further discussion at the City Assembly on 19 May. All these comments would be fed into the report before coming back to the HMCC when there could be further discussion and additions before the final report was submitted to the Housing Committee for a decision.
- 108.3 Trish Barnard asked why the report was not going to the Area Panels. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that an interim report had been submitted to the Area Panels. The report was being submitted to the City Assembly as it had city wide implications.
- 108.4 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from Sam Murphy and Julie Nichols who were both residents on the Innovations Group. Copies of the slides were circulated to members.
- 108.5 Roy Crowhurst stated that although the Area Panels had received a presentation, they had not seen this report. It was bypassing the Area Panels and going direct to the City Assembly. He expressed the view that the report might lead to some residents leaving the tenant's movement rather than attracting new members. A great deal of effort had been made over the years to get more tenants involved.
- 108.6 John Melson considered that there was a good consultation process at the moment and he felt that the Area Panels should not be bypassed. He stated that when the Innovations Group had been created, it had co-opted people without any consultation with tenants. Members of the Hi Rise Action Group completely rejected the methodology of the Innovations Group. Mr Melson stated that he was talking to fellow residents and they were in the process of forming a Residents' Action Group. Mr Melson said he was disgusted with the report which he considered was bypassing residents' views.

- 108.7 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement reported that the Area Panels had received an interim presentation on the work carried out so far. It had been decided at the Area Panels to let everyone know about the work of the Innovation Group. In answer to Roy Crowhurst's point about resident involvement, there was a great deal in the report about this issue. Tenants had spoken about a lack of support in local areas and poorly attended meetings. The report was recommending a new approach with additional support through training, and having the tenants' representatives themselves training newly elected tenants' representatives. There were a range of suggestions in the report that would help tenant involvement. In terms of the assumption that the proposals would put people off wanting to be involved, the aim was to have a strong, vital tenant movement.
- 108.8 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement referred to John Melson's comments and stated that the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group were contacted first in terms of electing people to the Innovations Group. They had decided the matter should be considered at the Area Panels.
- 108.9 Julie Nichols remarked that members of HMCC had been elected to the Innovations Group. She stressed the importance of working together to go out and engage tenants who currently did not want to get involved.
- 108.10 Councillor Mears had a number of concerns about the report. She stressed the importance of the HMCC as a platform for tenants to express their views. She felt that the report did not reflect that. Although she understood the move to a scrutiny panel she noted that matters were often scrutinised after the event. Councillor Mears felt the wording of the report was trying to stifle debate and she did not want to see tenants being sidelined. She stated that it was important that the tenants should feel comfortable with the recommendations.
- 108.11 The Chair stated that she believed tenants were crucial to decision making.
- 108.12 Councillor Peltzer Dunn said that he considered the report to be interim bearing in mind that there was no feedback from the constructive meeting in April. He had considerable sympathy with the report but felt that he should not comment until the report had been submitted to the City Assembly and came back to HMCC before being submitted to the Housing Committee.
- 108.13 The Head of Tenancy Services thanked members for their comments. She stressed that she did not want members to think that members of the Innovation Group did not think HMCC important.
- 108.14 Councillor Mears referred to the comment in the report that HMCC was used as a political platform. She felt this was a misleading and inappropriate comment. There had always been debate and shared views in HMCC.
- 108.15 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the report had been drafted by officers with feedback from the Innovation Group. Officers had tried not to change feedback. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement stated that the comments were representative of the feeling of people who were involved. For all its good points there was some negative feedback from HMCC. Officers wanted to acknowledge that outside there was that perception.



- 108.16 Julie Nichols stated that she was pleased to hear the committee's views. She and Sam Murphy had given collective views to the committee. There was no intent that HMCC should disappear or that there should not be discussion. They wanted HMCC to be a platform where people could have discussion and make considered views.
- 108.17 The Chair stated that the report was stating feelings expressed by tenants across the city. They wanted a wide and vibrant tenant movement. It would be wonderful to attract new people with a range of ages.
- 108.18 Stewart Gover expressed concerns that the report of the Innovations Group came into conflict with S98 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. He has spoken to Simon Kirby MP who will be sharing this information with Eric Pickles, Secretary for State.
- 108.19 The Head of Tenancy Services stated that in her reading of the Housing and Regeneration Act, there was nothing to suggest the Innovation Group was contravening the Act. When the report was submitted to again to HMCC and the Housing Committee there would be legal implications regarding that point.
- 108.20 The Chair invited Stewart to the next meeting of the Innovation Group and asked him to bring the legislation he quoted from.
- 108.21 Heather Hayes asked for abbreviations to be explained in the document in future and the Chair agreed this should happen.
- 108.22 John Melson stated that the report was a history of what tenants had tried to achieve before with the exception of tenant scrutiny. He did not think more tenants would become involved as a result.
- 108.23 Tom Whiting stated that he felt there was some good sense in the report, but he considered there was not enough material in front of the committee to express a clear view.
- 108.24 Councillor Randall thanked members of the Innovation Group for the work they had carried out. It was an honest and thorough attempt to involve more people in the tenant movement. The burden was put on too few people at meetings.
- 108.25 Ted Harman stated that he considered it to be a good report. There was a lack of trust among tenants which was why they did not come to meetings. The Chair stressed that building up trust was important to the tenant movement.
- 108.26 Councillor Farrow stressed the need to work collaboratively. The report needed to be carefully considered and brought back to the HMCC.
- 108.27 The Head of Tenancy Services stated that the current report was part of a consultation and was not dictating anything. HMCC's feedback was needed. If members disagreed they should let officers know how they would like it to be done differently. The proposals were about further legitimising the tenant movement. If nothing was done the tenant movement would die on the vine. Having a vibrant tenant movement was critical to the Council as social landlords and the Council had no interest in undermining it.

- 108.28 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee’s comments, as set out above, on the proposals listed below be noted.
- (i) Code of conduct
  - (ii) Framework for resident involvement
  - (iii) Creation of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel
  - (iv) Menu for involvement
  - (v) Training offer with some compulsory training
  - (vi) Recommendations to form an action plan for taking forward suggestions to make them happen (summarised on page 36).
- (2) That it is noted that there will be further discussion and consultation at City Assembly on 19 May, before recommendations are presented to HMCC and the final report to the relevant committee.

The meeting concluded at 6.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of