

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

3.00pm 26 MARCH 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Wakefield (Chair); Councillor Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson), Farrow, Jarrett, Pidgeon, Robins, Kennedy and Mears

Tenant Representatives David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Jean Davis (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Roy Crowhurst (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Keith Cohen (Hi Rise Action Group), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group), Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network), Charles Penrose (Sheltered Housing Action Group), Robert Spacie (North & East Area Housing Management Panel) and Rita King (North & East Area Housing Management Panel)

PART ONE

47. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

47A Declarations of Substitute Members

47.1 Councillor Mears declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wells. Mr D Avery declared that he was attending as a substitute for Ms T Urquhart.

47B Declarations of Interests

47.2 There were none.

47C Exclusion of the Press and Public

47.3 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.

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

48. MINUTES

- 48.1 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 40.9 and asked if Councillor Farrow had received a written response. Councillor Farrow confirmed he had. It was agreed that the response would be circulated to all members of the HMCSC.
- 48.2 Councillor Mears asked for confirmation that the Authority used a single allocation policy and that other departments were not using alternative policies. The Head of Housing confirmed there was only one allocation policy which was used by all departments.
- 48.3 Mr C Penrose said that he had not seen the allocation policy, and was advised that it could be viewed on the Council's webpage.
- 48.4 **RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee held on 12 February 2013 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

49. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 49.1 There was none.

50. CALL-OVER

- 50.1 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for discussion.

51. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 51.1 There were no petitions, written questions or deputations.

52. ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

- 52.1 There were no petitions, written questions, letters or notices of motion.

53. SHELTERED HOUSING PROVISION

- 53.1 Mr P Huntbach, Older Persons Housing Manager, and Mr C Penrose (Sheltered Housing Action Group), gave a presentation on the Sheltered Housing Service. The presentation gave an overview of the service.
- 53.2 Mr R Crowhurst noted that the majority of people in sheltered housing who lived in studio flats were male, and asked why that was. Mr Huntbach said that women tended to prefer one bedroom flats and men were happy with studio flats. Mr Crowhurst asked Mr Huntbach why he was called the 'Older Persons' Housing Manager if there were some people in their 40/50s living in sheltered accommodation. Mr Huntbach said that the majority of residents were older, but there were some people who needed to move to sheltered accommodation earlier than others.
- 53.3 Mr Spacie said that tenants in sheltered housing were concerned that anything the tenants wanted to do had to be considered by the Sheltered Housing Management Team (SHMT). In one case tenants had been waiting a number of months for internet connection but the SHMT had still not resolved the matter. Mr Huntbach was aware of

the matter, and said that the Council's ICT team were trying to resolve the issue of security for a computer which would be situated in a public place; the matter was still on going.

- 53.4 Councillor Mears said that the waiting list for sheltered accommodation had been 500 and asked if it was still the same. Mr Huntbach confirmed it was.
- 53.5 Councillor Mears asked what discussions had taken place between Housing and Adult Social Care on the provision of sheltered housing. Ms R Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services) said that meetings were being held with partner agencies to look at how to help people to remain in their own homes, rather than them having to move into extra care. This was a new approach, and the proposal was to review the service with the involvement of both residents and members. When the review was completed a report would be provided. Mr Penrose asked if a working group could be formed with tenants, councillors, and officers etc to consider ideas. The Chair agreed in principle, and said that it would be preferable to mainly have those who were currently in sheltered housing, or who were due to move into sheltered housing, to form the working group.
- 53.6 Mr Spacie referred to the gender imbalance in some sheltered accommodation, and suggested that some studio flats could be altered to become one bedroom flats which would attract more women. The Chair asked Mr Spacie how he felt the sexes and different age groups got on together. Mr Spacie said that all older people got on well and socialised together, but the younger ones tended to keep themselves to themselves. Ms J Davis said there were a number of younger people where she lived and everyone got on very well.
- 53.7 Mr Crowhurst asked if there were figures for anti social behaviour in sheltered housing. Mr Huntbach said that there were 14 incidents last year, and the perpetrators' ages ranged from 52 to 90.
- 53.8 Mr Murtagh suggested that if there were any problems with people integrating, that one solution could be to allocate those of different ages to different housing schemes.
- 53.9 Councillor Pidgeon said that he worked with Jasmine Court, and the lift doors had been difficult to open for a number of years and asked why it had not yet been resolved. Mr Huntbach said he wasn't aware of the matter but would look into it.
- 53.10 Mr Crowhurst asked if there could be a Rapid Response Unit for sheltered housing, so if an issue arose such as grab rail being broken it could be fixed as soon as possible. Councillor Jarrett said that ensuring tenants were safe should be a priority and supported the idea. Mr Huntbach said that the authority already had Trusted Assessors within the Estate Service who carried out this type of work.
- 53.11 Ms R King suggested that as there were a number of younger people living in sheltered housing, that Mr Huntbach's title be changed to 'Sheltered Housing Manager'. The Chair said that suggestion would be considered.

54. NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS BY SOCIAL TENANTS AGAINST THEIR LANDLORDS.

- 54.1 The Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place on the new arrangements for dealing with complaints by social housing tenants against their landlords. The report was presented by Mr B Foley (Standards and Complaints Manager).
- 54.2 Mr Spacie noted that in 2012/13 there were thirteen eligible cases for the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO), and said he was surprised it was so low. Mr Foley said that complaints were considered by the Council as a Stage 1 and then, where needed, as a Stage 2 complaint. The vast majority of complaints were currently resolved without the need to go to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 54.3 Ms Barnard asked about data protection in relation to tenant panels. Mr Foley referred to the report and said that members of a tenant panel should be properly trained to carry out the role, including being properly trained in handling personal data. It may also be appropriate for panel members to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- 54.4 Mr Worsfold asked if this applied to leaseholders or just tenants. Mr Foley said he believed it was just tenants but he would seek clarification. (After the meeting Mr Foley confirmed that the IHO scheme would be available to tenants, but disputes about charges would continue to be dealt with through the Council's Service Charge Dispute Procedure).
- 54.5 Mr Crowhurst was concerned about confidentiality of a tenant panel and said he would prefer Ward Councillors to continue to deal with any complaints. Mr Cohen also had concerns over tenant panels, and suggested that agreement would be needed from everyone as to who sat on a panel.
- 54.6 Ms King said that she and her fellow tenants were currently dealing with a complaint with the Council. The matter had not been resolved internally and so it had been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 54.7 Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted the report referred to 'a' tenant panel and asked whether that meant that one panel could be set up to cover the whole city. Mr Foley said that a local authority could have as many or as few panels as it wished. One designated panel could cover all the social landlords in the area. Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted the report set out six possible criteria for a tenant panel. Mr Foley said it would be necessary to discuss and consider what criteria should be used.
- 54.8 Councillor Mears asked how many people would sit on each panel, what would happen if tenants didn't want a certain panel, and said that Area Panels should be given an opportunity to fully discuss the matter. Mr Foley confirmed that the new arrangements would be discussed with Area Panels.
- 54.9 Councillor Robins was concerned that an MP not from the city, or someone who was not a ward councillor could consider a complaint about an issue they knew nothing about.

54.10 Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that the proposed recommendation 2.2a include the wording 'and Area Panel Members'. The Sub-Committee agreed.

54.11 RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee note the report.
- (ii) That Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee requests the Standards and Complaints Manager:
 - a. Produces a briefing note for elected members, local MPs and Area Panel members on how the Housing Ombudsman Scheme will operate.
 - b. Arranges a training workshop for elected members to enable them to act as Designated Persons
 - c. Produces material that will publicise the new process to tenants.

55. UPDATE ON ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS 2012, AND PROPOSALS FOR 2013 REPORT

55.1 The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Place, which provided an update on the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders in 2012, and proposals for the 2013 report. The report was presented by Ms Dafe, Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement (Housing).

55.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn thought that reducing the annual report to just four pages, would make it too small and to ensure all the relevant information was provided the report needed to be eight pages long.

55.3 Councillor Farrow thought it wasn't necessary to be too prescriptive on the number of pages; the important thing was that people read the report and understood the information provided.

55.3.1 Mr Kent said that the previous annual report was brilliant and he saw no reason to change it.

55.4 Mr Murtagh asked if there had been a survey after the last annual report. Ms Dafe confirmed that there had been some feedback and people seemed happy with it.

55.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted that the report recommended reducing the size of the report to four pages and suggested that recommendation 2.2 be amended to read 'That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee notes the proposed plan and timetable for producing a concise report of eight pages. That was agreed by the Sub-Committee.

56.7 RESOLVED

- (i) That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee notes the progress in implementing improvement plans included in the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders for the financial year ending 2013 highlighted in Appendix 1 to the report.

- (ii) That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee notes the proposed plan and timetable for producing a concise report of eight pages.

56. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2012/13

- 56.1 The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Place, on Housing Management Performance Report Quarter 3 2012/13. The report was presented by Ms Dafe, the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement (Housing).
- 56.2 Mr B Kent noted the tables in the report, and asked what 'Y' and 'N' stood for. It was confirmed that it was 'Yes' and 'No'. It was agreed in that future reports the full word would be used rather than an abbreviation.
- 56.3 Councillor Farrow referred to paragraph 4.2 and asked if more information could be provided on the percentage of appointments kept by the contractor. Ms Dafe agreed that a fuller explanation would be provided in future reports. Councillor Farrow noted that only 96% of light bulbs were replaced within one working day, and asked why that was. Ms Dafe said that 5 bulbs were replaced within three days rather than one, but that was over the Christmas period. The Councillor referred to Appendix 1 and asked for more information on the long term empty property in Queens Park and Withdean. It was confirmed that the property in Queens Park could be the new Brooke Mead Development, but that was dependent on funding. The property in Withdean was a property in the garden of a larger building in Preston Road, and again the site could not be developed until funding was secured.
- 56.4 Councillor Robins noted that tenant satisfaction with repairs was 99.03%, and asked how that had been measured. Ms Dafe said that when a job had been completed tenants were given a feedback form for them to complete. There were a number of comments from the Sub-Committee that asking people to provide feedback either straight away, or to give the completed form to the contractor, could lead to the satisfaction level not being truly reflective. The Chair suggested that way tenant satisfaction was obtained could be reviewed.
- 56.5 Councillor Mears noted that the rent collected had gone down. Ms Dafe said that was due to Christmas, and other factors such as children returning to school in September; the current economic situation would be unlikely to improve things. Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 4.5 and noted that only 95% of those in sheltered housing had an up to date support plan. Ms Dafe said that some residents declined a support plan, one resident had been unwell and another was working and they had not been able to meet with them.
- 56.6 Mr Penrose noted that paragraph 4.5 referred to 24 schemes; he was only aware of 23 schemes and asked for a list so he could contact those three schemes which did not provide at least one social activity a week. It was agreed that he would be provided with a list.
- 56.7 Councillor Peltzer Dunn said that it would be useful for the report to provide comparisons with the same quarter from the previous year. Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted that there were a number of empty properties and how the lost rental was calculated. Ms Dafe said that any rental lost was calculated year on year. The amount

lost had improved as there were a number of empty properties which had now been moved to the LDV.

- 56.8 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to Appendix 1, and asked whether the number of days given ran from the first day that the property became empty. Ms Dafe confirmed it did.
- 56.9 Mr Kent asked if a map could be provided showing land owned by the Council. Officers said that there was a link on the Council's webpage to a map of land use of council owned land. The Chair asked if that link could be provided in the Minutes. The website address is, [http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/maps/Land Use of Council Owned Land 2011.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/maps/Land_Use_of_Council_Owned_Land_2011.pdf)
- 56.10 Councillor Jarrett requested that for safety reasons replacement lights in common ways be replaced as a priority.
- 56.11 Mr Worsfold referred to paragraph 4.0 and asked why there was former tenant arrears. Ms Dafe said that whilst some would be recovered it was very difficult to obtain the full amount, particularly when tenants had left.
- 56.12 **RESOLVED** That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee noted and commented on the report.

57. HOUSING MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE 2012

- 57.1 The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Place, on Housing Management Restructure 2012. The report was presented by Ms Chasseaud, the Head of Tenancy Services (Housing).
- 57.2 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the report, but said that she had requested information about who agreed the new post of Head of City Regeneration not about the restructuring. The Strategic Director, Place should provide that information.
- 57.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted that the report stated that the structure and organisation of staff would be kept under review, and whilst he agreed with that, he hoped that a report would come to the sub-committee to advise of any proposed changes.
- 57.4 **RESOLVED** That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 6.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

