

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
NORTH AREA HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL

7.00pm 25 SEPTEMBER 2014

ST GEORGE'S HALL, NEWICK ROAD, BRIGHTON, BN1 9JG

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Farrow (Chair) and Councillor Marsh.

Representatives: Kath Davis (Broadfields) Su Hansen (Bates Estate TA), Heather Hayes (CTRA), Rita King (Nettleton & Dudeney), Bob Spacie (Laburnum Grove), Ken Valder (Bevendean TA)

Non-Voting Delegates: Irene Hills (Laburnum Grove), Walter Sargison (Broadfields), Jenny Simmonds (Coldean),

Officers: Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement), Hilary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager), Sharon Davies (Partnering Project Manager), Benjamin Okagbue (Head of Property & Investment)

Guests:

12 APOLOGIES

12.1 Apologies were received from Keith Cohen and Councillor Meadows.

13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 13.1 John Marchant raised issues relating to changes to Area Panels and the voting procedure and results at Area Panel which he questioned. The Chair stressed that this matter had been agreed by full Council. He suggested that the Head of Income, Involvement and Improvement send an email to John to clarify the situation.
- 13.2 Rita Kings asked for changes to be made to the minutes. She did not mention leaseholders under paragraph 2.4. She was only asking how long tenants would have to pay 76p a week Rita referred to paragraph 3.9 and asked this to be changed to read 'Rita King stated that she understood that representatives could only stand on a maximum of 1.
- 13.3 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 August 2014 be approved and signed as the correct record subject to the amendments listed in paragraph 13.2 above.

14 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 14.1 The Chair stated that he was happy to take any items that were important to associations under Chair's Communications.
- 14.2 It was agreed on this occasion that matters raised by John Marchant (Travellers) and Bob Spacie (EDB Panel) would be considered under Any Other Business and Item 19.

15 ELECTIONS / STRENGTHENING AREA PANELS

- 15.1 The Panel had before them a report on the election process. A number of positions were available and the Panel were requested to elect to Service Improvement Groups, Deputy Chair of the Area Panel, Strengthening Area Panels Task and Finish Group and Tenant Disability Network.
- 15.2 The Head of Income Involvement & Improvement explained that a Deputy Chair was required in case Councillor Farrow was unable to attend. The Strengthening Area Panel Task & Finish Group was time limited and would look at ways to improve the Area Panel system.
- 15.3 The Chair stated that disabled people were the group most discriminated against, and he urged disabled tenants to seek representation on the Tenant Disability Network.
- 15.4 The Resident Involvement Officer explained the voting system and there was a discussion on times and venues of meetings of the Areas Panel meetings. Some members stated that they could only attend evening meetings. Venues suggested by tenants were the Community Hall in Thompson Road, Laburnham Grove, and the Housing Centre. It was agreed that the next meeting should take place at Laburnham Grove in the evening and that officers should investigate venues suggested by tenants for future meetings. The Chair stressed that the venues should be a good size, should be fully assessable, have parking and preferably not charge.
- 15.5 Following nominations and elections by anonymous electronic voting, tenant representatives were elected to groups on behalf of the North & East area:
- 15.6 **Home - Service Improvement Group**
Representatives: Tracey Cox, Barbara Castleton and Bob Spacie – co-opted North EDB rep until April 2015. (Reps already in place)
Deputies: Mary Marchant (already in place) Vacant
- 15.7 **Tenancy – Service Improvement Group**
Representatives: Martin Cullen (already in place) **Paul Wright (elected)**.
Deputies: Heather Hayes (already in place) **Jenny Simmonds (elected)**.
- 15.8 **Neighbourhood & Community – Service Improvement Group**
Representatives: Jenny Simmonds (already in place) Vacant.
Deputies: Vacant
- 15.9 **Involvement & Empowerment – Service Improvement Group**

Representatives: Vacant
Deputies: Vacant

15.10 **Business & Value for Money – Service Improvement Group**

Representatives: Vacant
Deputies: Vacant

15.11 Resident **Deputy Chair of the Area Panel**
Bob Spacie (elected).

15.12 **Representative on Strengthening Area Panel Task & Finish Group**
Bob Spacie (elected).

15.13 **Tenant Disability Network**

Representatives: ***Martin Cullen (elected).***
Deputies: Vacant

15.14 **Volunteers for Social Media Training - Tuesday 18 November between 10.00am to 4.00pm in the Jubilee Library**
Bob Spacie & Irene Hills.

16 TENANCY POLICY 2014

16.1 The Panel were asked to provide feedback on the draft Tenancy Policy. The briefing paper and draft Tenancy Policy were presented by the Performance & Improvement Officer. Tenants' feedback would be reported to the Housing Committee in a policy document in November 2014.

16.2 The report stated that once agreed, the policy would be published on the council's website and would be available in alternative formats on request. There had been an online consultation facility, to determine the policy on discretionary succession.

16.3 A tenant stressed that not all tenants were online. Rita King referred to the section on Tackling Tenancy Fraud in the briefing paper. This stated that 'Routine visits to all tenants, take place every three years which includes checks on identity'. Rita considered three years was too long and that there were many problems with fraud at the moment.

16.4 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

17 PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 2014/15

17.1 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement presented a Housing Management Performance Report for Quarter 1 2014/15. There were 27 traffic light indicators. 22 were green, 4 amber and one red. The red indicator related to tenant satisfaction with repairs (respondents from period who were satisfied or fairly satisfied). The target of 96% was set when Mears were using handheld devices. Satisfaction surveys were now taking place over the phone or via email. There had been a small response.

- 17.2 James Cryer, Mears Ltd explained that customer satisfaction had fallen to 92.45%. James explained that the Repairs Helpdesk was now being managed more successfully and there was more capacity to carry out telephone surveys. The aim was to carry out 350 surveys a month.
- 17.3 John Marchant stated that it was taking a long time to get work completed. Tracey Cox commented that some months ago a number of tenants had volunteered to take calls, but had heard nothing. She stressed that Mears did not have enough staff and that tenants wanted to talk to other tenants.
- 17.4 James Cryer confirmed that there were 8 members of staff. The Resident Involvement Officer reported that this matter was now being considered at the Home – Service Improvement Group. Information would be input into the Resident Assessor Group.
- 17.5 Rita King mentioned that tenants in her block had no TV on Sunday evening as someone had taken down the apparatus on some of the blocks. She had left 9 messages on the phone about this matter. The Health & Safety Manager stated that this was likely to be a problem with the TV provider rather than the TV aerial. The TV would hopefully be back on today or at the weekend.
- 17.6 Bob Spacie referred to performance indicator 1 – rent collected as proportion of rent due for the year (projected rate – current arrears of £887k). He noted that rent arrears were increasing and asked when it would stop.
- 17.7 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that she could not say when it would stop. This was dependent on tenants paying their rent. Some tenants were struggling due to changes in welfare benefits. For example, some tenants with disabilities were receiving less money than a year ago and electricity bills and food prices had increased. Officers were trying to support tenants and money mentors were providing advice. Elderly people were in the group with the highest arrears, and there was a need to make sure they were receiving all the benefits to which they were entitled.
- 17.8 Bob Spacie referred to Appendix 2 – Long term empty properties. He noted that there were four empty sheltered studio flats. He asked about work on converting bedsitting rooms. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that at Sanders House, 7 bedsitting rooms had been converted to include a kitchenette and separate bedroom and shower room. It was hoped that similar work would be carried out in Evelyn House. James Cryer confirmed that it was a priority that all bedsitting rooms at Sanders House and Evelyn House would have their own bathrooms within 18 months' time.
- 17.9 Bob Spacie asked how many people were on the housing waiting list. The Head of Income, Involvement and Improvement explained that the number was over 20,000.
- 17.10 **RESOLVED-** That the update be noted.

18 SPRINKLERS HIGH RISE BLOCKS

- 18.1 The Panel considered a report of the Contract Compliance Manager which reported that the Council had been approached by East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service with the offer to carry out pilots for the retro fitting of sprinkler systems in two high rise blocks and that they would match fund these projects. The Panel was informed that the pilot would start at Somerset Point. The report was presented by the Health and Safety Manager, Brett Wells.
- 18.2 A tenant noted that the pilot was directed at high rise blocks and asked why low rise blocks were not included. The Health and Safety Manager agreed that all properties had some risk but the risk would have more impact if the block had 17 or 18 floors.
- 18.3 Rita King raised a question about the accuracy of figures in Appendix 1 in relation to Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge. The Health and Safety Manager explained that the figures had been provided by the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. He apologised if some of the figures were not correct.
- 18.4 Ray Metcalfe asked how smoke would leave the stairwells via the vents installed at the top. The Health and Safety Manager explained that the Fire Brigade would in the event of smoke logging occurring would place a fan at the bottom of the stairs forcing the smoke to leave via the vents. The vents are passive and require air circulation to dispel the smoke.
- 18.5 Rita King mentioned that lift repairs had lasted three days in Nettleton Court. The dust had set off the fire alarm and the fire brigade had attended. There was a piercing noise for 2 ½ hours.
- 18.6 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

19 ITEMS FROM TENANT ONLY MEETING

- 19.1 Heather Hayes referred to 1 - Changes to Sheltered Housing. She stressed that in some blocks elderly people had sons and daughters living with them. She asked if the rules had changed. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the rules had not changed in that respect.
- 19.2 A tenant stated that they did not like the suggestion of calling sheltered housing 'Senior Citizens' Housing'. It was not just for older people. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stressed that residents within sheltered housing are considering what change of name they prefer.
- 19.3 Rita King referred to 2 - Laundry Room at Nettleton & Dudeney. She was not happy with the response from Delia Hills, Mears Resident Liaison Officer. James Crier, Mears Ltd explained that an application would need to be made to the Estates Development Budget for decorations to the laundry.
- 19.4 Bob Spacie confirmed that there was money available in the EDB for bids. He suggested that an application was made as soon as possible.
- 19.5 Rita King referred to 3 - Nettleton & Dudeney Car Park. Notices had been placed in the car park and there was a great improvement.

19.6 Bob Spacie referred to 5. Estate Development Budget (EDB) review. A meeting had been held on 24 September to discuss the review. There would be a report to the next Area Panel.

19.7 **RESOLVED-** That the responses provided to the issues raised at the Tenant Only meeting be noted.

20 COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY (FOR INFORMATION)

20.1 The Panel had before them a briefing paper on Community Interest Companies (CICs).

20.2 Bob Spacie asked if Community Groups could bid for EDB money. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that CICs could bid for EDB money in the same way as Tenant Associations. CICs could be a collection of tenants and residents.

20.3 **RESOLVED-** That the reports and minutes of the various Citywide groups be noted.

21 CITY WIDE REPORTS

21.1 **RESOLVED-** That the reports and minutes of the various Citywide groups be noted.

22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22.1 John Marchant expressed concern about Travellers in the Wild Park. He mentioned that wire fencing and CCTV cameras had been placed at the Devil's Dyke to protect 40 sheep. He asked why CCTV could not be placed in the Wild Park.

22.2 The Chair said he would refer this matter to the Head of Tenancy Services. He would ask for an answer to be circulated to all Panel members.

22.3 Barbara Castleton stated that there was a CCTV camera covering the entrance to the Wild Park. The Chair asked the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement to check that the camera was working.

22.4 Rita King mentioned that her cleaner, who was employed by the council had been asked to pick up needles at Nettleton & Dudeney but had not had a hepatitis injection. The Chair stated that this matter needed to be referred to Human Resources. People could also be in danger of contracting other viruses from needles such as HIV. The Health and Safety Manager reported that council workers were advised to use a picker stick and place needles in a needle box. The Chair replied that the supervisor and staff in question needed to be made aware of safety procedures.

22.5 Ray Metcalfe expressed concern about younger people being moved into blocks housing older people. The Chair asked officers to explain the policy regarding this matter.

- 22.6 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that there were only a few 50 plus blocks left. The Right to Buy meant that once a flat was sold, it could be sold on or rented to anyone, whatever their age. There had been a number of studies that suggested that intergenerational living was beneficial. However, problems with anti-social behaviour needed to be resolved.
- 22.7 Rita King stated that residents at Nettleton & Dudeney were experiencing a great deal of anti-social behaviour. Rita asked whether the bedroom tax was applied to Seaside Homes. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the bedroom tax was applied to all social housing. The Government had enforced the bedroom tax.
- 22.8 The Resident Involvement Officer proposed placing report packs on the council's web page for other residents to have access to them if they wished. This was agreed by the Panel.
- 22.9 It was agreed that the next Panel meeting take place at Laburnham Grove at 7.00pm. The Chair asked for an early note to be sent out to remind tenants of the venue, time and date along with a map.

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

