

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL****HOUSING COMMITTEE****4.00pm 14 JANUARY 2015****COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL****MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Randall (Chair)

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Phillips (Deputy Chair), Barnett, Daniel, Meadows, Kennedy, Mears, Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson), Rufus and Wilson (Group Spokesperson)

**PART ONE****46 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS****46(a) Declarations of Substitute Members**

46.1 There were none.

**46(b) Declarations of Interests**

46.2 Councillor Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 50 and 54 as she worked for a registered provider.

**46(c) Exclusion of the Press and Public**

46.3 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.

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

**47 MINUTES**

47.1 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 39.12 which referred to four reports that would be submitted to future meetings. Councillor Mears asked for timescales. The Chair explained that the update on the Eastern Road Corridor and the report on the Anti-social

behaviour, Crime and Policing Act would be submitted to the next Committee. Sheltered Housing Stock Review was on this agenda.

- 47.2 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 42.4 in relation to the Whitehawk Library site and stated that she was still waiting for a report on this matter. She was also still waiting for the health and safety audit on Oxford Street, although the Executive Director had sent her the health and safety report.
- 47.3 The Executive Director replied that he would send Councillor Mears the Audit on Health and Safety. The Chair assured Councillor Mears that she would receive a report on the Whitehawk Library site.
- 47.4 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 44.7. She had asked for policies on homelessness. She would also like to see numbers of bed and breakfast over the last four years. The Executive Director replied that these policies were still in progress. A reply with the policies would be sent to Councillor Mears.
- 47.5 The Chair asked for an amendment to paragraph 39.11 (ninth line). The last sentence should read 'One key area was sheltered housing where there were *several* tenants.....etc'.
- 47.6 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the minutes of the Housing Committee held on 12 November 2014 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendment suggested above.

#### 48 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 48.1 The Chair reported that since the last meeting he had given evidence at the Private Rented Scrutiny Panel and the Budget Scrutiny Panel. The relationship between Adult Social Care, Housing & Public Health was discussed in relation to the issue of homelessness. There was agreement that there was a need for clarity about the relationships between the different departments. (Clarity on budgets, on who did what and who was responsible.)
- 48.2 The Chair reported that a murder had taken place at Warwick Mount at Xmas. The people involved were visitors not tenants. Council staff and the police had given a great deal of support to the residents, culminating in a public meeting which was attended by local councillors, officers and the police. New security arrangements had been put in Warwick Mount before the murder. These were being reviewed again and another plan for security would be coming forward.
- 48.3 The first tenant moved into her new flat at Evelyn Court just before Xmas. The work was nearly finished at Sanders House and Evelyn Court work was going on very well.
- 48.4 The Chair reported that he had visited the Resource Centre which worked with tenants associations in the City. The Board was made up of tenants and there had been talks about the future of the centre.

48.5 The Chair reported that he visited the Smarter Live Scheme last week. This was an unusual and successful housing scheme for homeless people in Goldsmid Road.

48.6 The Chair paid tribute to John Melson who had died the previous week. He had been very committed to the tenants' movement and the welfare of his neighbours.

#### **49 CALL OVER**

49.1 It was agreed that all items be reserved for discussion.

#### **50 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

50.1 There were no Petitions

50.2 Mr Chris Taylor asked the following public question:

“Given that the council has access to electoral registration and council tax data listing how many people live in each property, will the council agree to using this data to systematically identify all potential HMOs by a given date, instead of apparently pushing responsibility for this onto local residents who do not have access to the same information, and are not in a position to prove whether a property is an HMO or not?”

50.3 The Chair replied as follows:

“Failure to apply to license an HMO that should be licensed is a criminal offence.

The Private Sector Housing team has an ongoing enforcement project following implementation of the current Additional HMO Licensing scheme in the five Lewes Road wards, to ensure that necessary applications are made for those that should be licensed.

Though it would not generally be lawful for the council to use electoral registration and council tax data as ‘fishing’ tools to identify all HMOs, electoral registration and council tax information is used by the team as part of our enforcement work along with information obtained from members of the public, from other teams and from visits to properties. Relying as it does on information provided by owners and occupiers, electoral registration and council tax data does not always accurately reflect actual current occupation, hence a range of information sources are used to identify potentially licensable HMOs.

The list of properties identified from the enforcement project currently stands about 1100 properties, about 850 of which have been investigated to date resulting in the receipt of almost 500 extra licence applications – 17.5% of the 2745 licences issued as at 9 January 2015 - and four prosecutions in connection with failure to apply (figures apply across both additional and national mandatory licensing schemes) . The addresses of all HMOs for which licence applications are received in the five Lewes Road wards are passed to the Planning team for use in connection with the Article 4 Direction they enforce relating to numbers of HMOs in those wards.

We appreciate that local residents are not in a position to prove whether or not a property is an HMO and we would not expect them to do so. They are, however, ideally placed to have an awareness of how properties in their neighbourhoods are occupied and we are grateful if they pass this information on as it enables us to use the information at our disposal and to focus our investigations much more efficiently than would otherwise be the case.”

50.4 Mr Taylor asked the following supplementary question:

“Will the council give serious consideration to adopting our other six proposals for better enforcement of the Article 4 legislation, and give a detailed response on each of these at the next committee meeting on March 4th, if not before?”

50.5 The Chair replied as follows:

“Article 4 legislation was used as a Planning response, in this case to address further proliferation of newly converted HMOs in the Lewes Road wards to which we also apply additional HMO licensing. In light of this I would refer a detailed response to proposals in relation to Article 4 enforcement to a future Economic Development and Culture Committee.”

50.6 **RESOLVED-** That the Public question be noted.

50.7 The Committee considered the following deputation which had been submitted by Ms Diana Bernhardt – Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes.

### **Community Housing Network**

“**The Community Housing Network** are a group of like-minded, local community based organisations who are concerned about the escalating unmet demand for social housing and the impact that this has on homelessness and local families in housing need. Historically, Housing Associations have aimed to house the poor but changes in funding have led to increased commercialisation of the sector creating a gap in the housing provider market for the homeless and for those who cannot afford deposits or increased rents. The community housing sector is ready to fill this gap.

For over the past 3 years, the community housing sector has successfully developed **463 new units of social rented housing in the city**. Without exception, all of these extra units have been provided without the need for subsidy from the council or the Homes and Communities Agency. These new units include:

- 416 empty properties have been brought back into use by Brighton Hove Seaside Community Homes to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people. All of the housing has been developed through private finance without the need for grant funding
- 36 new homes developed by Brighton Housing Trust through a private loan to provide much needed self-contained accommodation for people moving on from homeless hostels
- 11 studio flats for homeless people financed and developed by Brighton YMCA.

Our success has been achieved through **working in partnership and thinking creatively about funding** to keep rents genuinely affordable. In addition to the housing above, work has already commenced to develop **nearly 90 additional units over the next 2 years**. Again all of these additional units will be provided without the need for grant. These additional units include a further 83 empty properties being brought back into use by Brighton Hove Seaside Community Homes and 6 new self-contained flats developed by Southdown Housing Association for homeless people moving on to greater independence.

Our achievements exceed the Affordable Housing Programme delivered by larger Housing Associations over recent years. The next 2015-18 Affordable Housing Programme plans **75** new homes, and **only 14 are proposed for rent** with the remaining 61 being for shared ownership. Whilst shared ownership may have offered an option for working people to get on the property ladder in the past, it is now beyond the reach of most people. For example, a 1 bedroomed shared ownership flat at One Hove Park is marketed at £287,500 with 25% equity of £71,875.

This context highlights the increasing gap in affordable housing for rent and the need to embrace local, community-based providers that offer innovative funding models to deliver social housing at genuinely affordable rents. This deputation therefore seeks to achieve **a level playing field** for the community housing sector by opening up existing partnerships and prioritising new and innovative delivery models that meet the city's housing aims.

In particular, this deputation is asking for:

### **1. Equality of Opportunity**

The larger Registered Providers already have an established dialogue with the council through the Brighton and Hove Development Partnership. To provide equality, we need **a new formal mechanism** for community-based organisations (such as quarterly meetings) to present ideas and business plans within realistic timescales. The Community Housing Network can also offer different options for the transfer or leasing of land to ensure public assets are protected whilst keeping land costs to a minimum to keep rents affordable.

### **2. Recognition**

The Community Housing Network is a collection of organisations and models that deserves to be recognised as a sector in its own right. This needs to be recognised in the Housing Strategy along with a **commitment to work in partnership** with the Community Housing Network and to establish joint ventures where these are in the best interests of the city.

### **3. Transparency**

We need a transparent information sharing and decision making process. To maximise possibilities to innovate, we need **early information of potential publicly owned sites** and an indication of the planning and development features that the Council would support.

#### 4. Delivery

We need a **commitment that practical solutions will be found** to overcome the barriers to community housing providers (such as recession measures for S106 contributions and options to dispose land at less than 'best consideration').

50.8 The Chair replied as follows:

“Brighton & Hove City Council welcomes and values the efforts and success of the city’s community housing providers in taking innovative approaches to helping support local people with their housing need, in particular options supporting delivery of homes for Affordable Rent.

Through our existing Housing Strategy the City Council has a strong track record of acknowledging the importance of and supporting community housing providers including through: promoting renewal of housing co-op short-life leases; supporting HCA Empty Homes & Affordable Housing Programme funding bids; exploring options for a co-pilot community housing development with the Estate Regeneration Team; CVSF Housing Network representation on the Strategic Housing Partnership; meetings with Community Works and the Community Housing Network in preparation of the Housing Strategy 2015.

The draft Housing Strategy 2015, currently in its approval phase, has a specific focus on our desire to work with the community housing sector and commits us to:

- Continue work with a range of partners including Homes & Communities Agency, housing associations and the community housing sector to develop more affordable housing;
- Support housing associations and community housing organisations with their proposals to deliver affordable homes;
- Promoting the concept of Community Housing;
- Exploring the viability of Community Land Trust and wider community housing development options when land is available with a focus on maximising the social value of new developments where appropriate;
- Exploring the use of commercial properties for co-operatives where compatible with City Plan policies;
- Sharing information on development opportunities with the Community Housing Network.

In addition, a proposed modification to the City Plan (PM064 under Policy SA4 Urban Fringe) highlights that there will be a particular emphasis on delivering housing to meet local needs through the sites identified in the 2014 Urban Fringe Assessment Study. As part of this, the City Council will consider how best to ensure that opportunities for community land trusts, community-led development, right to build, and housing co-operatives are brought forward/ safeguarded in order to maximise housing opportunities that meet local housing needs.

Subject to the draft Housing Strategy 2015 being approved, we look forward to working with the community housing sector to make our shared aspirations a reality.”

50.9 **RESOLVED** - That the deputation be noted.

50.10 The Committee considered the following deputation which had been submitted by Mr D Gibson.

### **Living Rent Campaign**

“The Living Rent Campaign was set up a year ago to campaign for rent controls, greater security, private landlord registration, voluntary ethical good practice landlord and lettings schemes. A petition signed by over 2,500 residents in support of the campaign was presented to the council in October and the council responded referring with unanimous support 6 points for the housing committee to consider. These points included “Developing a licensing scheme for all private landlords as has happened in Newham”

We applaud the progress towards wider registration on the January 2015 Housing Committee agenda. We are interested in feedback on the other points (see appendix A) and most specifically would urge the committee to hear our case concerning point 6 on the list approved “in principle” at Housing committee on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015 to look at:

**“supporting the building of homes at a living rent rate so that “affordability” is based on peoples’ incomes and not the market rate”**

The package proposed by full council prompted talk in the media about Brighton and Hove becoming Britain’s first Living Rent council. We welcome this. A big step towards this would be to adopt a policy of charging living rents for newly built council housing.

### **How much is a Living rent?**

The precise details of how much a living rent should be is open to debate and needs to be calculated by a group of experts. However basing our calculations on the accepted notion that housing costs should amount to no more than a third of income and looking at the median income of people working in Brighton and Hove we have made a provisional calculation of a living rent as being around 55 % more than a current social rents. That is an average monthly rent of around £564. We should like the council to develop a calculation of what a living rent should be for Brighton and Hove

### **Housing costs and affordability**

- For a person earning the living wage (approx £1,100 a month), social rents represent about a third of that income and so a social rent is their only truly affordable option.
- *The assessment of affordable housing need report (2012) identified 88,000 households (72%) in Brighton and Hove who cannot afford to (either buy or rent) without some kind of subsidy or spending a disproportionate level of their income on housing costs”*
- Based on £24,210 median income if working in Brighton and Hove. After tax + NI estimated as £20,316 = £1693 a month
- Proposed rents on new build council houses range approx from £670 to £969 pm

### **How much is needed in efficiency savings for BHCC to charge a living rent?**

Basing our calculations on previous housing committee reports on new build rent levels, we have made a rough estimate of the additional cost the housing revenue account of charging living rents (based on our estimates) rather than so called affordable rents on 100 new build council houses of about £280K a year. Given that in previous years (and

proposed for next year) efficiency savings in excess of 280K have been achieved for the HRA (see appendix B) we propose that:

- 1) **The housing committee agree support for the principle of charging a living rent on its new build properties funded through efficiency savings**
- 2) **The Housing committee commission a report to estimate the HRA efficiency savings needed to reduce the projected “affordable” (80% market rents) to living rent levels\* and report these estimates to the next housing committee for decision.”**

\*based on 33% of median wages of people working in Brighton and Hove

50.11 The Chair replied that he had a long response which would be sent to Mr Gibson. In the meanwhile the council would look to see how it could develop a calculation of what a living rent would be. There was an EU view that no one should pay more than a third of their income in rent, which seemed reasonable. The council would also look at how to reduce rents on the homes it was building. If there was a way to bring rents down, the Chair would like to see that happen. It was true that affordable housing in the true sense was no longer being built by housing associations. Subsidised housing could not be built without a subsidy and the subsidy had been largely removed from housing associations.

50.12 - **RESOLVED** - That the deputation be noted.

## **51 ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

51.1 There were no Petitions, Written Questions, Letters or Notices of Motion from Councillors.

## **52 HRA REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16**

52.1 The Committee considered the joint report of the Executive Director of Finance & Resources and the Executive Director Environment Development and Housing. The report presented the proposed budget for 2015/16 as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The report was presented by the Principal Accountant, Financial Services.

52.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn and Councillor Mears raised concerns that the Housing Revenue Account Budget would have an impact on other items on the agenda, which had yet to be agreed. The Principal Accountant stated that she was not aware that the subsequent reports would be affected by consideration of the Revenue Budget report. For example, there were no savings being proposed with regard to discretionary schemes. Meanwhile, car parking charges were not recommended in Item 63. They were contained within the current report.

52.3 Councillor Wilson asked for an explanation of paragraph 3.8. which stated that “the major works leasehold income budget has decreased by £0.409 million to reflect a



decrease in planned major works during 2014/15 to blocks containing leaseholders". The Principal Accountant replied that there would be a reduction in charges.

- 52.4 Councillor Wilson asked for an explanation of paragraph 3.11 which stated that funding from Supporting People for the sheltered housing Carelink alarm service would cease from 1 April 2015 resulting in a loss of income of £0.058m. The Principal Accountant replied that Supporting People income had ceased for the Carelink service. The budget was now contained within the existing budget.
- 52.5 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.3 which stated that housing management service was a high cost service. She noted that there was always this issue of high cost. Councillor Mears referred to Section 1, Economy and Housing on page 25 in relation to apprenticeships. She was concerned that there were only 85 apprentices and work opportunities provided. She considered that there should have been over 200.
- 52.6 Councillor Mears referred to Savings and Service Pressure under 3.10 of the report. She stated that she would like to have a head count in housing services to show how many temporary staff were employed. Councillor Mears referred to Community Engagement at paragraph 5. She was disappointed that the timing of the detailed budget considerations rendered them too late to be taken to Area Panels. Councillor Mears referred to the last paragraph of Section 5 and said she would like to see the long list tenants from the Value for Money Service Improvement Group had produced.
- 52.7 The Executive Director replied that housing management services was a high cost service. The directorate was looking to be clearer about where these costs lie. The Chair noted that figures from the last 10 years showed that there had been reduced maintenance costs. This meant there was more money for new homes. He considered that housing staff were doing a tremendous job in dealing with difficult and vulnerable tenants in mainstream housing. He agreed that there needed to be clarity on the division of labour between housing, adult social care and public health. There was also a need to develop a better relationship with the NHS.
- 52.8 Councillor Mears stated that Housing Committee had been reassured that vulnerable tenants would have a support package. She had never had a satisfactory answer as to exactly what support packages were being taken forward. The Chair replied that figures on care leavers would be reported to the next meeting. Meanwhile Adult Social Care, Public Health and the CCG would be giving a presentation to the next meeting. The aim was to provide the best services to the most vulnerable in the city.
- 52.9 The Principal Accountant stated that there were 290 members of staff in the Housing Service and there were vacancies. She would let Councillor Mears know the numbers of temporary staff.
- 52.10 The Executive Director said he would find out the information about apprentices for Councillor Mears.
- 52.11 Councillor Wilson asked if there had there been work on the cumulative effect of percentage increases across the budget, bearing in mind the financial hardship people were facing. Councillor Wilson stressed that there was an impact for tenants in

experiencing rent increases and a cumulative effect for individuals on all increases (changes in benefits and changes in rents). The Principal Accountant replied that officers had not looked at cumulative impact this year. 68% of tenants were in receipt of housing benefit. 88% of sheltered housing tenants were in receipt of housing benefit. The Executive Director suggested that officers could do some research into the impact on people's budgets.

52.12 The Chair pointed out that there had been one to one interviews with people affected by the bedroom tax. There was a great deal of information available on individuals.

52.13 Members agreed that they wished to have a report on the cumulative impact of charges.

52.14 **RESOLVED -**

(1) That the Policy & Resources Committee:

- (a) Approves and recommends to Council the budget for 2015/16 as shown in Appendix 1.
- (b) Approves a rent increase of 2.2% in line with government guidance.
- (c) Approves the changes to fees and charges as detailed in Appendix 2.
- (d) Notes the Medium Term Financial Strategy shown in Appendix 3.

(2) That a further report be submitted on the cumulative impact of charges.

### **53 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015-2018**

53.1 The Committee considered the joint report of the Executive Director Environment Development and Housing and the Executive Director of Finance & Resources, which sought approval for the 2015/16 capital programme and provided a provisional capital programme for 2016/17 and 2017/18 for the Housing Revenue Account. The report was presented by the Head of Property & Investment (Housing).

53.2 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.1. This stated that "The HRA capital strategy aims to ensure that every pound invested reaches beyond the housing service and contributes to regeneration, tackling inequality, creating training and employment opportunities and improving sustainability." This concerned her as the HRA was ring fenced. She felt that the HRA was being used as a 'cash cow' to supplement the general fund.

53.3 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 5.7 in relation to the development of extra care housing at Brooke Mead. She wanted to know the true costs of this project. Her view was that there should be another tendering process and that there should be a proper procurement on this scheme.

53.4 Councillor Mears referred to Appendix 1 of the report. She stated that a more detailed list used to be provided. She considered that there was a need to see costs on the

Regeneration Team. Councillor Mears also asked how much grant was required for cladding.

53.5 The Chair reported that lists were published this year for the lift and the cladding programme. The Regeneration Team had provided many new homes. (By May over 200 new homes). The Chair felt the team functioned very well. Meanwhile, building costs and labour costs had gone up tremendously on the Brooke Mead scheme. The Chair felt that the council was now better at procurement than in the past. The Homes and Community Agency were happy with the work being carried out. The Executive Director of Environment Development and Housing confirmed that a report on costs would be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee.

53.6 Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that he appreciated that costs could increase but there had been a 20% increase since the last meeting. Councillor Peltzer Dunn expressed concern about paragraph 5.7 which read “A further financial appraisal of this scheme shows that the increased costs *may be* met through shared ownership sales.....” The Executive Director stressed that this issue would be addressed by the Policy and Resources Committee. The information could be reported back to Housing Committee. He confirmed that the Policy & Resources Committee would be receiving a specific report on Brooke Mead. The Executive Director stressed that the scheme costs could change until work began on site. Even when work commenced there could be variations in costs. Contingency costs would be built into the Policy & Resources Committee report.

53.7 **RESOLVED:**

That the Policy & Resources Committee be recommended to approve the HRA capital programme budget of £41.034 million and financing for 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

**54 CHARGING REGISTERED PROVIDERS FOR CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SERVICE**

54.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which sought to introduce charges to registered providers. The Council operated a joint Housing Register rather than individual Registered Providers (RPs) having to keep their own registers. Social housing that was available for letting was advertised through Choice Based Lettings. Most other councils charged RPs for this work carried out on their behalf. Charging RPs would lead to General Fund savings next year of £140K. The report was presented by the Head of Temporary Accommodation & Allocation.

54.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to recommendation 1.3 in the report. (“By charging RPs this will enable us to deliver savings to the General Fund next year of £140k and forms part of our saving strategy and modernising services”). However, paragraph 7.1 seemed to imply that the income was coming into the housing general fund and the housing revenue account. This seemed a contradiction in terms.

- 54.3 Councillor Daniel suggested that there had been a typographical error in paragraph 7.1. She asked if this should read General Fund rather than Housing general fund. Officers confirmed this was correct. Paragraph 7.1 should have referred to the general fund.
- 54.4 Councillor Mears asked if registered providers had to comply with the recommendations. The Head of Temporary Accommodation & Allocation replied that if registered providers opted out and did not pay the council money, it would mean that they would have to operate their own housing registers. This was likely to cost them more and they would still have to provide nominations as this was an obligation under planning consent.
- 54.5 Councillor Meadows queried whether all the temporary accommodation the council had through private landlords had to go through Choice Based Lettings. She suggested that they could be charged as well. Some people were in temporary accommodation for up to 15 years. The Chair replied that there were different arrangements for these properties. Councillor Meadows stressed that she would like to see some remuneration in these cases.
- 54.6 Councillor Meadows referred to paragraph 3.6 and asked if there were two registers for housing and adult social care. It was confirmed that there was now only one register.
- 54.7 Councillor Meadows referred to the pro rata breakdown for registered providers in Appendix 1. She asked for clarification about the number of shortlists. The Head of Temporary Accommodation & Allocation confirmed that this referred to nominations not shortlists.
- 54.8 **RESOLVED** – (1) That it is agreed to introduce charges to Registered providers that will pro rata cover the costs of managing the Joint Housing Register and verifying the shortlist of applicants who have bid for RP properties.

## 55 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2014/15

- 55.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which set out the performance for the second quarter of the financial year 2014/15. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement.
- 55.2 The Chair asked for an explanation of the final column in the table at paragraph 4.4.2 (Reports of ASB incidents by ward during the quarter). The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that this column showed the total number of cases per 1000 tenancies. There were some wards where there were no tenants at all.
- 55.3 Councillor Daniel referred to the table in paragraph 4.41 (Reports of ASB incidents by type). She was concerned that the intimidation being experienced was not recorded in the Crime and Disorder Implications. This matter was relevant to crime and disorder. Councillor Daniel noted that the table showing ward incidents under paragraph 4.4.2 showed an increase in incidents in Queen's Park. She asked if there was any reason for this and what could be done to address the problem.

- 55.4 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that she did not have the detail on the nature of cases. However, over the past year officers had taken special steps to encourage people to report Anti-Social behaviour. There had been a significant increase in Queen's Park. Out of 98 cases in the city involving drugs and alcohol, 56 cases were in Queens Park Ward.
- 55.5 The Chair stressed that the problem was being tackled. He had attended a meeting of all the organisations involved. There had been a great deal of trouble in one or two blocks.
- 55.6 The Head of Tenancy Services informed Members that a report was going to be submitted to the Area Panels and the next Housing Committee looking at this issue and putting options forward to tackle the problem. Pilot work was being carried out in Warwick Mount. A more detailed action plan was being developed after the recent murder.
- 55.7 Councillor Wilson referred to paragraph 4.2, in relation to emergency repairs. A previous Housing Committee report had approved £480,000 for the cost of fire safety and asbestos. There had been a recent incident at Kebbell Lodge where a fire alarm went off for eight hours. She asked how this was going to impact the emergency repair report. Councillor Wilson referred to paragraph 4.0.2 – Tenants in arrears by amount. It looked like 25% of tenants were in some level of arrears. It would be good to see if this was fluctuating over a period of time. Could this information be added on a quarterly basis.
- 55.8 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that there was an increase in arrears. She could provide information on this subject to Councillor Wilson. She was not aware why the fire alarm at Kebbell Lodge had rung for 8 hours.
- 55.9 Councillor Wilson stated that it would be useful to have this information provided to the next meeting. She suggested that there should be contact with the tenants by way of apology.
- 55.10 Councillor Meadows was alarmed to see the figures on tenants' arrears. Tenants needed to be given advice on budgeting. Money had been allocated to help tenants deal with arrears in the past. She asked if that money was still available.
- 55.11 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that funding was still available to provide support to tenants. 100 tenants had received help or had received discretionary housing payments. These were short term measures. Officers were trying to arrange for people to pay a proportion in arrears each week. There were many people who were not in receipt of full housing benefit. They had to be reassessed regularly. People were finding it difficult to keep up with payments.
- 55.12 The Chair stressed that there was a programme of support for tenants.
- 55.13 Councillor Mears referred to the table in paragraph 4.0.1, relating to the percentage of rent collected as proportion of rent due each year by area. She had checked the figures from 4 years ago and East was in the lowest position. Councillor Mears suggested that there should be a concentrated piece of work to investigate this problem which was

historic. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that officers did carry out targeted work in East Brighton.

- 55.14 Councillor Peltzer Dunn commented that there appeared to be a technical issue with regard to 40% of tenants in arrears. He had asked for a quarterly update. The figures presented were historic not current figures. Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the table on page 80 of the agenda in relation to general needs and sheltered long term empty properties (6 weeks or more). He pointed out that a property in South Portslade had been ready to let for almost a year.
- 55.15 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that she could provide more information to the next meeting.
- 55.16 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the report, which was submitted to Area Panels in December 2014, be noted along with the above comments made by the Committee.

## 56 HOUSING STRATEGY 2015

- 56.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which explained that the city's current Housing Strategy expired in 2014. The report summarised the development of the new Housing Strategy 2015 and presented the strategy for approval. The report was presented by the Head of Housing Strategy & Development – Private Sector Housing and the Housing Strategy Manager.
- 56.2 Members were informed that there had been an additional four week consultation for the draft strategy in addition to the consultation in the scoping period which had resulted in 40 responses. This had led to a number of changes in the strategy. More financial implications had been added. Changes included modifications to the City Plan, and the Community Land Trust section had been expanded. More work had been carried out on the Empty Properties section. The strategy had been published on the council's website.
- 56.3 Councillor Meadows referred to the performance indicator chart at paragraph 3.28 on page 90 of the agenda. She asked why CP 1.2.2 'People using housing related support services to help them to live more independently' showed a down arrow for the direction of travel. The Head of Housing Strategy & Development – Private Sector Housing stated that the result was well above target. He would investigate this query for Councillor Meadows.
- 56.4 Councillor Meadows commented that the section on student housing was still vague. She felt that the strategy should demonstrate what the council were proposing to do with regard to working with the universities. There appeared to be no planning for action with regard the amount of student accommodation.
- 56.5 The Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing reported that he had raised this issue with both universities in order to work with them. Discussions were at

an early stage and more work would be carried out in the coming year. The Head of Housing Strategy & Development – Private Sector Housing explained that a joint piece of work was being carried out with Development Control. There was a need to revisit figures when more information was received from the universities.

- 56.6 The Executive Director mentioned that the work being carried out on the Preston Barracks site would reduce housing pressures. A planning application would be submitted in due course.
- 56.7 Councillor Mears thanked the Head of Housing Strategy and Development for the report. She stressed that prime sites, such as the Co-op site in London Road were being allocated to student housing. She believed this could have been allocated to older people's accommodation. Meanwhile, no affordable rented housing was being delivered in the city. Proposals on the urban fringe would not address the lack of housing. Councillor Mears reported that she had met with the planning minister the previous week and that she was aware that there was funding for brownfield site regeneration. Brighton & Hove had not applied for funding.
- 56.8 The Executive Director explained that the qualifying criteria for this funding had been difficult to meet. A large brownfield site was needed. It also required a private developer to be on board.
- 56.9 Councillor Daniel expressed some frustration that where there were areas of concern such in the bullet points in paragraph 3.28, these were not front and centre of the strategy, whereas, good performance was noted all the way through the document. There was mention of supporting people, preventing homelessness and supporting people to live independently without meeting the social care thresholds. Pages 86 & 88 spoke about aligning supporting people with social care budgets. Councillor Daniel stressed that Supporting People was never meant to be an aligned budget in that way. It was always meant to prevent people hitting the threshold for social care. Councillor Daniel asked that a report be prepared on the spending on the Supporting People budget. Councillor Daniel felt that the alignment was a mistake.
- 56.10 The Chair explained that supporting people replaced a previous system. It was originally planned for people with special needs. The nature of tenants had changed. The Supporting People budget had gone and the general budget had been cut back.
- 56.11 Councillor Daniel referred to paragraph 3.28 – Measuring Progress – Key performance indicators. She requested a report on how concerns expressed in the bullet points would be addressed. The Head of Housing Strategy & Development replied that the strategy had tried to explain where there were issues. These issues would be addressed. Action plans needed to be brought back to the Housing Committee. This would address some of Councillor Daniel's concerns.
- 56.12 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Housing Strategy 2015, as detailed in appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (2) That the Strategic Housing Partnership be recommended that it:
  - (i) Approves the Housing Strategy 2015; and
  - (ii) Recommends approval of the Housing Strategy 2015 to Brighton & Hove Connected as part of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- (3) That Housing Committee further explore through the Strategic Housing Partnership and the Health & Wellbeing Board how the housing sector can work in partnership with health, social care and voluntary sector providers to improve health and wellbeing of local people.

**56.13 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

- (1) That the Council adopts the Housing Strategy 2015;
- (2) That the Council recommends approval of the Housing Strategy 2015 to Brighton & Hove Connected as part of the Sustainable Communities Strategy; and
- (3) That the Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing be authorised to take all steps necessary and incidental to implement the Strategy.

**57 PERMISSION TO CONSULT ON DISCRETIONARY LICENSING SCHEME**

- 57.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which provided an update on the evidence and options that may support a possible extension of discretionary licensing to further wards in the City and sought approval to consult on the designation of a further scheme in the areas identified: Brunswick & Adelaide; Central Hove; East Brighton; Goldsmid; Preston Park; Regency and Westbourne. The report also recommended the wider availability of the existing register of licensed HMOs through publication on the council website. The report was presented by the Head of Housing Strategy & Development – Private Sector Housing.
- 57.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for clarity with regard to the table in paragraph 7.1 of the report. He asked why the first two columns in the table (3 and 4 occupiers) did not state 2 storey above them. The Chair agreed that the table was inconsistent.
- 57.3 The Head of Housing Strategy & Development agreed to review the table to make it clearer.
- 57.4 Councillor Wilson asked if it was theoretically possible for the scheme to include single storey buildings occupied by 3 or 4 people. The Head of Housing Strategy & Development replied that if there was evidence that these properties caused a problem, they could be included in the future, subject to consultation and approval.



- 57.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if it was possible for a converted or purpose built flat to be included as a single storey HMO. The Head of Housing Strategy & Development confirmed that this was possible.
- 57.6 Councillor Meadows welcomed the report and said she supported the publication of landlords' names online. This would help residents to find out details of their landlord, if they were experiencing problems. Councillor Meadows noted that officers had said that they were only looking at student accommodation to start with in relation to the registration of existing wards of Moulsecoomb and Bevendean and Hanover and Elm Grove. This did not include HMOs where people paid council tax. She understood that more accurate figures were now being sought. Councillor Meadows stated that she would be interested to see an updated report at a future meeting showing figures for the new wards.
- 57.7 The Chair noted that Brunswick and Adelaide Ward had the highest percentage of rented housing in the city and also had the lowest life expectancy. He confirmed that he had asked for a register of licences granted, including the names and addresses of licence holders and managing agents, to be published online.
- 57.8 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for clarification with regard to recommendation 2.1 which mentioned 2 or more storeys. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development explained that the recommendations reflected what had been agreed for the previous scheme. Officers could report back if Members wished to widen the scheme. It was confirmed that the proposals covered the numbers of people in a property as well as the number of storeys.
- 57.9 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the evidence available to support the possible extension of additional HMO licensing designation to more wards in the city be noted, and that consultation be approved on designation of a further discretionary licensing scheme in relation to HMOs consisting of two or more storeys and with three or more occupiers, other than those that are HMOs by virtue of Section 257 of the Housing Act 2004.
- (2) That the existing register of licensed HMOs is placed and regularly updated on the council website.

## **58 HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT OPTIONS – SOLAR PV, UPDATE ON 'YOUR ENERGY SUSSEX' & HEAT NETWORKER CONSULTANCY**

- 58.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which provided an update on the current solar PV scheme on HRA properties. The report also offered an updates on progress with the West Sussex County Council led 'Your Energy Sussex' energy programme (previously known as the 'Sussex Energy Saving Programme') and on the successful bid for Department for Energy and Climate Change Heat Network Delivery Unit funding and progress with procuring a consultant to carry out these studies and the annual Warm Homes Healthy Peoples programme. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement and Improvement.

58.2 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the progress of the current solar PV scheme on HRA properties is noted.

(2) That the progress of Your Energy Sussex; the ongoing discussions on the partnership agreement and potential option this may provide for delivery of a large scale solar PV scheme across all feasible HRA stock, is noted.

(3) That the appointment of Ove Arup & Partners as consultants to carry out options appraisals/feasibility studies for Heat Networks at two HRA sites in the city, is noted.

## 59 SHELTERED HOUSING STOCK REVIEW

59.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which reported on the outcome of the Sheltered Housing Stock Review and made property based recommendations to ensure the council's sheltered housing remains fit for purpose into the future and continued to support the City housing strategy in meeting the housing needs of older people. The report was presented by the Housing Stock Review Manager.

59.2 Councillor Mears stated that she wanted to highlight conversations that had taken place in the defunct Adult Social Care Committee around the conversion of 30 sheltered housing units to extra care units. This cost 1.6m in the first year and 4K in the second year, totalling 2m. This was a deficit within Adult Social Care carried forward as the work was not carried out. Councillor Mears felt that the current report was trying to address the deficit in Adult Social Care.

59.3 Councillor Meadows suggested that recommendation 2.1 be amended to say agreed in principle. She was concerned about what agreement would mean at a later date, for example in June 2015. Councillor Meadows agreed and supported the comments of tenants expressed in section 6 of the report.

59.4 **RESOLVED** - (1) That it be agreed in principle to convert up to 235 studios into one bedroom flats, wherever possible, subject to the required budget approvals, at the same time meeting the Lifetime Homes standard as far as possible. This proposal is included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Investment programme 2015-2018 proposals also presented to this Committee.

(2) That the principle of de-commissioning (closing) a small number of sheltered schemes which cannot be made fit for purpose be agreed, re-designating them for alternative clients groups, or agreeing to redevelop the sites (subject to 2.3).

(3) That it is noted that business case reports will be brought to Housing Committee on a case by case basis, where recommendations will be made on specific schemes which should be de-commissioned. Each report will include plans for tenant consultation and for the sensitive rehousing of tenants, requesting Housing Committee's agreement for officers to consult the affected tenants. The results of the consultation will be fed back to a subsequent Housing Committee for a decision on the future of the scheme.

- (4) That it be noted that a 10 year cyclical programme for upgrading internal communal and external decoration will be created from 2015/16.
- (5) That it is noted that a budget to address access issues in communal areas (e.g. ramps and stair lifts) is created.

## 60 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - KENSINGTON STREET DEVELOPMENT

- 60.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which informed Members that Housing Committee gave delegated authority in September 2012 to award a contract following completion of a procurement process for a delivery partner to take forward final feasibility design and development of new council homes to rent on four former garage and parking sites in the city. The Guinness Partnership was selected to take four sites forward including the car parking site at Kensington Street, Brighton.  
The report was presented by the Project Manager, Estate Regeneration Team.
- 60.2 Councillor Mears commented that the units looked very small. The Housing Programme Manager replied that the scheme complied with national space standards.
- 60.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for clarification around the financial implications in Section 6 the report. The Housing Programme Manager explained that the project commenced with an indicative budget. Full costs would not be known until a contractor was procured. The project was in budget.
- 60.4 Councillor Phillips stated that she was not comfortable with approving an 80% market rent. She asked if a working group could be established to consider alternative financial proposals to try to achieve a lower market rent level.
- 60.5 The Principal Accountant stressed that the proposals in the report were based on the rent model being set at 80% market rent capped at LHA rate.
- 60.6 Councillors Meadows and Wilson agreed that they did not want the scheme to be delayed.
- 60.7 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if the development would be endangered if 80% market rent was not agreed. The Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing replied that under those circumstances, the scheme would not be viable unless there was a subsidy.
- 60.8 The Housing Programme Manager emphasised that the report was recommending approval of the rent model set at 80% market rent capped at LHA rate. This was below the market rent level.
- 60.9 **RESOLVED** – (1) That Option One be agreed for the scheme as set out in Table 1.
- (2) That the design be noted.

- (3) That the rent model set at 80% market rent capped at LHA rate be approved.
- (4) That the estimated levels of subsidy required from the HRA for the chosen rent model be approved and that delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Environment, Development and Housing and the Executive Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Estate Regeneration Member Board to agree reasonable amendments to that subsidy if changes arise.
- (5) That the Policy & Resources Committee be recommended to agree that the site is appropriated to the Housing Revenue Account for a capital receipt of up to £225,000 for the development of new housing.

## **61 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS – SELSFIELD DRIVE**

- 61.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which informed Members that in September 2012 the Housing Committee agreed the procurement of initial feasibility and design of identified case studies for housing opportunities on appropriate HRA land, including stakeholder engagement and consultation. Since then the Estate Regeneration Team had commissioned business cases for a number of potential infill sites to establish the financial viability and design feasibility of developing new council homes in these locations. The report included the findings of the business case for the former Housing Office site at Selsfield Drive, Brighton. The report was presented by the Project Manager, Estate Regeneration Team.
- 61.2 Councillor Meadows noted that the development would be a five storey block and asked if there would be a lift. The Project Manager replied that the development would have lifts.
- 61.3 The Chair confirmed that there would be a further report which would provide details of the final design of the development.
- 61.4 **RESOLVED** – (1) That it is agreed that the Estate Regeneration team in conjunction with the council's Sustainable Futures strategic construction partnership undertake final feasibility studies, design and development of new council housing on the site of the former Housing Office in Selsfield Drive under the New Homes for Neighbourhoods Programme.

## **62 DISCRETIONARY DECORATING AND GARDENING SCHEMES**

- 62.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which provided the findings of the recent review of the Discretionary Decorating and Gardening Scheme and set out the recommended changes for consideration. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement.
- 62.2 Councillor Mears did not agree to the criteria being changed to age 75. The Chair concurred.

- 62.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn opposed the proposal to increase the age eligibility. He stressed that tenants were not in favour of this recommendation.
- 62.4 Councillor Barnett stressed that many older people were on their own with no-one to help them. The scheme could make a difference to people who were less able.
- 62.5 Councillor Wilson asked what motivated the recommendation about the age eligibility. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that there were currently no criteria around whether people could afford to decorate or whether they were capable of decorating themselves. The report was recommending an age and financial cap. The initial idea was to ensure that more people who really needed assistance were given help. Tenants were in favour of the decorating pack as it saved them money.
- 62.6 Councillor Wilson asked if the scheme would fail if the age eligibility was set at 70 rather than 75. The Housing Customer Service Team Leader replied that officers were happy to revise the age eligibility to age 70 if members requested this. This would still give officers leeway and ensure that help was being targeted more effectively.
- 62.7 Councillor Wilson asked if the age eligibility was raised to 70, would the saving made still be available for hardship fund. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement confirmed this was the case.
- 62.8 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that there were different decorating packs for each room.
- 62.9 Councillor Wilson moved that recommendation 2.1 (i) be changed to state that the criteria, for those applying to both the discretionary schemes, be changed to age 70 etc. This motion was seconded by Councillor Peltzer Dunn. The motion was voted on and carried.
- 62.10 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the following recommendations be approved to come into effect on 1 April 2015:
- i) That the criteria, for those applying to both the discretionary schemes, be changed to age 70+ **and** in receipt of Housing Benefit, **or** on Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance **and** in receipt of Housing Benefit.  
  
Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) are non means tested benefits for people under 65 years of age who have personal care and/or mobility needs as a result of a mental or physical disability. PIP is gradually replacing DLA. Attendance Allowance (AA) is a non means tested benefit for people aged 65 and over that helps with the extra costs of long-term illness or disability, which can be either physical and/or mental.
  - ii) That the decorating vouchers are removed and replaced with decorating packs.
  - iii) That, for the discretionary decorating scheme, successful applicants are restricted to applying every other year.

**63 CITYWIDE PARKING ENFORCEMENT ON HOUSING LAND**

- 63.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which set out information about parking enforcement in car parks on Housing land and proposed extending the scope of enforcement to cover a wider range of car parks and garages. The report took account of the overall context of budget reductions and set out changes to parking enforcement that would offer a more consistent and fairer service to car park and garage licensees, and would also increase revenue. The report was presented by the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement.
- 63.2 Councillor Meadows supported the recommendations. She was aware that a number of garages were sublet by tenants and asked what enforcement was carried out to ensure the garages were let to the tenants who needed them. The Housing Customer Service Team Leader replied that officers were looking to address this issue over the next year when garages as a whole were reviewed. Reports of subletting would be investigated.
- 63.3 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the proposal to extend the parking enforcement to cover all car parks and garage sites on Housing land be approved.
- (2) That the Executive Director for Environment, Development & Housing be authorised to give a notice of variation under the contract to add the additional 24 sites.

**64 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL**

- 64.1 No items were referred to the next Council meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.48pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of