

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
NORTH AREA HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL

7.00pm 3 AUGUST 2015

LABURNUM GROVE, BURSTEAD CLOSE, HOLLINGDEAN, BRIGHTON, BN1 7HX

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Hill (Chair), Meadows, Penn, Yates

Representatives: Dave Eve (Nettleton & Dudeney), Peter O'Connor (Bates Estate), Heather Hayes (Coldean), Bob Spacie (Laburnum Grove), Tracy Cox (North Moulsecoomb), John Marchant (East Central Moulsecoomb)

Non-Voting Delegates: Paul Wright (Coldean), Terrence Hill (Bates Estate), Elizabeth Tinkler (Laburnum Grove), Gloria Woolvern (North Moulsecoomb), Barbara Castleton (North Moulsecoomb), Mary Marchant (North Moulsecoomb), Peter Hartley (East Central Moulsecoomb), Ray Metcalfe (East Central Moulsecoomb)

Officers: Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Keely McDonald (Resident Involvement Officer), James Cryer (Mears), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement), John Peel (democratic Services Officer), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services)

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Marsh, Jane Hunter, Kath Davis and Walter Sargisson.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

2.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 2 February and 14 May 2015 be approved and signed as the correct record.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair introduced Councillor Meadows, the new Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee to the Panel. In her introduction, Councillor Meadows stated that she would be seeking to increase resident engagement and proposals on how to do so would be forthcoming.

4 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

4.1 (item 1- Oxford Street Housing Office) Bob Spacie asked if a decision had been made on a facility for cash payments but residents in the city centre.

- 4.2 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvements clarified that that Housing Committee had made a decision to close cash desks earlier in the year and this had been reported to Area Panels. The decision was made on the basis that cash desks were expensive to operate; less people were using them, the high cost of security to transit cash deposits and the introduction of Universal Credit. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement added that residents could still use the Paypoint facility and telephone the council to make payments.
- 4.3 Bob Spacie stated that Housing Offices were useful not only to make payments but also to report issues and make complaints.
- 4.4 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that only Oxford Street Housing Office had closed due to emergency structural risk. Manor Street Housing Office had moved to the Whitehawk Hub, Victoria Street Housing Office was now based in Portslade Town Hall and services from Oxford Street Housing Office were now based at Bartholomew House. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement supplemented that across its services the council now received many more enquires via telephone than in person.
- 4.5 Heather Hayes stated that she had found that elderly residents were increasing using tenant representatives to resolve issues due to Housing Office closures and because they didn't have internet access.
- 4.6 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that she was sorry to hear tenant representatives time was increasingly pressured and asked that residents be reminded that Housing to arrange to visit residents to discuss any problems and the customer service team via telephone.
- 4.7 **RESOLVED-** That the responses provided to the items raised at the Tenant Only meeting be noted.

5 PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement presented a report that covered Housing Management Performance during Quarter 2 of the 2015/16 financial year. The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement stated that the table provided figures and a RAG rating system against key performance indicators adding that the intention of the report was to provide Area Panels with information on Housing services performance and, as with previous versions of the report, comments and feedback on its presentation was welcomed to improve future versions.
- 5.2 John Marchant stated that he had emailed the council to report fly-tipping and had been asked for more details including the postcode of the site that he felt the council should already know and was unnecessary if the road name was provided.
- 5.3 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that she unfortunately could not provide a response to an issue she was unaware of.
- 5.4 Ray Metcalfe asked if the rise in rent arrears related to the bedroom tax.
- 5.5 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that some of the increase in arrears was related to the Spare Bedroom Subsidy. The council had made every effort

it possibly could to address this issue including a tenant incentive scheme, mutual exchange and other support.

- 5.6 Ray Metcalfe asked what action was taken with tenants in rent arrears.
- 5.7 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that the council undertook every possible action to prevent eviction and worked with the individual tenant to ensure any case did not reach court. The council employed money advice officers and promoted the work of Money Advice Plus. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement urged representatives to refer any resident they knew to be in financial difficulty to the council.
- 5.8 Tracey Cox added that the introduction of Universal Credit would pose a significant challenge to residents and the council. Tracey asked if the council were working with banks to help those with a bad credit rating that could not open a bank account.
- 5.9 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the council were taking preventative and preparation work for the change to Universal Credit. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement supplemented that the council were working closely with banks and had reached an agreement whereby some conditions of opening a bank account would be reduced.
- 5.10 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

6 FEEDBACK FROM TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS ON THEIR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- 6.1 Tenant and Resident Associations presented provided the following updates on events and functions they had recently undertaken:
- Bates Estate had recently held a jumble sale and were currently surveying residents on the associations communication methods
 - Coldean had established a knitting group and a lunch club.
 - Laburnum Grove had an active garden club, had several day trips arranged and were planning a street party.
 - North Moulsecoomb had held a community day in St George's Hall to raise funds in memory of a young resident who had recently passed away that had gathered £5,000.
 - East Central Moulsecoomb had recently raised money to clear the local their local wood

7 CITY WIDE REPORTS

- 7.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes and reports of the various Citywide Groups be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of