

Meeting action minutes

Meeting	<b>Seniors Housing (Independent Community Living) Action Group</b>		
Attendees	<p><b>Residents:</b> Roy Crowhurst - Chair (Woods House), Bob Spacie, Elisabeth Tinkler (Laburnum Grove), Walter Sargison, Kath Davis (Broadfields), Jean Davis (Leach Court), Joyce Bean, Ray Goble, Eunice Goble (Elwyn Jones Court), Tony Brown (Evelyn Court), Allan Davies (Rosehill Court), Steve Nye (Elisabeth Court), Tomm Nyhuus (Somerset Point)</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Colin Vincent (Older Peoples Council)</p> <p><b>Staff:</b> Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer), Peter Huntbach (Older Persons Housing Manager)</p> <p><b>Mears staff:</b> Delia Hills (Resident Liaison Manager), James Taylor (Site Manager), A Shaw (Project Manager), Steven Thompson, Dan Scott (Site Manager)</p>		
Apologies	Charles Penrose (Sloane Court), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services) Rob Nayan		
Location	Leach Court	Produced by	Hannah Barker
Date Time	09/03/16	completed	09/03/16

**Section 1 – Update on actions from previous meeting**

	Description
1	5.2 Re Fairness Commission evening <b>Older People and Well-being on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at Portslade Town Hall</b> . Nothing has changed regarding timing of event (last meeting flagged as inappropriate for attracting older people.)
2	6.2 Peter Huntbach flagged up the paper on service charges that had been circulated
3	Intensive Housing Management charges breakdown will be made available soon following request.

**Section 2 – Agenda items, agreements and future action**

<b>Agenda item 4 - Mears any questions – Delia Hills (Mears)</b>	
Agreement / Decision	Delia not present at the meeting
<b>Agenda item 5 – Scheme Managers cover</b>	
Agreement / Decision	<p>Peter asked group; what should Scheme Managers (SM) do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They should be there and available – doing calls only doesn't do anything for community building.</li> <li>• Residents might not know that a SM has been in the building</li> <li>• E.g. in far end of Evelyn Court, far away from the board, don't know if SM has been. 'I feel it's a waste for me to pay'</li> <li>• We are hampered by not having any spare SMs</li> </ul> <p>Peter: It seems to be about visibility of SM – should we think about lengthening the time of cover? To include more time than just the daily calls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laburnum Grove has a white board – would like to see it say a defined</li> </ul>

	<p>time about when SM will be around.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also board should show if SM on sick or annual leave or training.</li> <li>• Problem if person has disability can't get to see whiteboard.</li> <li>• Do we call or get a letter around to those who can't get to board?</li> </ul> <p>Peter: We use 'text anywhere' service (to landline and mobile) – should we use that more?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elisabeth Court has a new alarm system being trialled</li> <li>• We have 25 SM over 22 Schemes (some have 2 SM due to size)</li> <li>• Suggestion to have at least one more SM whose sole responsibility is full time cover</li> <li>• Some residents unhappy at there being no cover at bank holidays &amp; weekends.</li> <li>• We don't want to loose sight of 'Independent living' nor right to say do or don't want a call.</li> </ul> <p>Peter: We are not nursing home/ residential care – service would be a different more expensive service to provide this. Some models of Sheltered housing nationally have automated button (for resident to notify they are well).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps do daily call in afternoon sometimes?</li> <li>• Monday morning call is important – after the wk/end</li> </ul> <p>Peter: Basic premise is that the SM accounts for everyone during the week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human contact each day is important – sometimes needs to be more time for contact to be meaningful (over and above simple checking in)</li> <li>• Evelyn court some residents are trialling a buddy system to help get some residents out of isolation with help.</li> </ul> <p>Peter: Very keen to offer support with initiatives like this. How can we help? What is a reasonable level of service as we can't afford to provide the full time cover you would like, but what is a better level of service?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most people don't care if the SM is there until they want them.</li> </ul>		
<p>Action(s) 4.1</p>	<p>Chair proposed to carry on this conversation with Area Reps and come back again to the group. Could trial at one scheme with the groups consent.</p>	<p>By Who Roy</p>	<p>Deadline Next meeting</p>
<p><b>Agenda item 7 - Update on welfare reform – Nick Kitson (Performance &amp; Improvement Officer)</b></p>			
<p>Agreement /Decision</p>	<p>Nick talked through the handout (appendix1)</p> <p>These changes are made at a National level, not by Nick, nor the council.</p> <p>Welfare Reform means changes to amount (usually a reduction) or method of payment.</p> <p>Universal Credit will indirectly affect Seniors Housing residents as there is a threat to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) . £14million over 4 years from rent being reduced.</p> <p>One positive is that we are in a position to help residents. People in private housing do not have this support.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p><b>Q:</b> how much is predicted that HRA will lose through rent arrears?</p> <p><b>A:</b> Nationally 85% of people getting benefits are in arrears by some sort. At</p>		

	<p>the moment, most vulnerable people are not getting universal credit. (UC) so arrears levels are not too bad, However, when they do and next year when many more people will be moved to UC this will change.</p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> Re. recent Policy &amp; Resources Committee. Nick Hibberd had recommended that the council utilize the National Governments offer to freeze rents for supported housing for next year. The conservative councilors put forward an amendment that it should be the same for everyone, which was passed. Thus, Seniors Housing tenants will have their rents reduced by 1% in the next financial year.</p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Excellent description of upcoming changes – a document with clarity – thank you for putting together.</p>
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**Agenda item 8 - Potential changes to laundry system – Rob Nayan (Projects Manager, Housing Programme Team)**

Agreement /Decision	<p>Rob Nayan not at meeting. Apology received at end of meeting.</p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are elected representatives, we voted clearly against the proposals</li> <li>• The council then conducted a ‘sham’ and expensive consultation, which again gave 90% against changes.</li> <li>• Then letters went out at further expense which are unclear, don not give costs and is bias.</li> <li>• We have had no report or communications with us.</li> <li>• If they want to push through this card system then nothing can stop them.</li> <li>• They have treated SHAG reps and Tenants Associations with disrespect when they didn’t get the result they wanted.</li> <li>• This could open up a can of worms; if people who don’t have washing machines don’t pay for the service, what about people that don’t use a lift service?</li> <li>• Many people who have wash machines don’t have dryers so still use laundry.</li> <li>• More personal washing machines in the buildings could cause noise issues.</li> <li>• They could have simply put up the prices and no one would have complained</li> <li>• Tower blocks have had the card system for years. Cllr Anne Meadows wanted to have the same system across the city, but without an understanding of senior housing resident’s needs.</li> </ul>		
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Action	Chair will put together an official complaint about the Project Management team over the laundry communications and handling and will let tenants association reps know the response.	By Who	Deadline
8.1		Roy	Next meeting

**Agenda item 9- Election to Tenant disability network**

Agreement /Decision	Jean Davis put herself forward as the rep and the group agreed.		
Action	Hannah to let Resident Involvement Officer, Becca Mann know.	HB	This week

Agenda item 10 - Any other business			
Agreement /Decision	Tomm Nyhuus has raised scaffolding issue with Mears Ian Stone. Scaffolding appeared in Area Panel papers last blue pages.		
Actions		PH	Next few weeks
10.1	Peter will inform Laburnum Grove reps about lift replacement program		
10.2	Peter will let P&I know about scaffolding attending to repair leaking roof since before Xmas, still to be done at Rose Hill court and Evelyn Jones court.		
10.3	Hannah to send Reps Repairs Reporting process to Ray Goble, Allan Davis & Steve Nye.		

### Section 3 – Agenda for next meeting 11<sup>th</sup> May 10am Leach Court

1	No suggestions made
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### Future Meeting dates – all Wednesdays 10am – 12.30pm at Leach Court

13<sup>th</sup> July, 14<sup>th</sup> September (AGM) 9<sup>th</sup> November, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 8<sup>th</sup> March , 10<sup>th</sup> May, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (AGM)

### Appendix 1

# Welfare Reform & Austerity Measures

## Update for Seniors Housing Action Group

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“Welfare reform” means changes to the amount of benefits that are paid (usually cuts) or changes to the way benefits are paid. “Austerity measures” are other ways the government reduces spending that don’t directly affect benefits, such as changing rent levels.

**Pensioners will not be directly affected by any of these changes.**

### Under-Occupancy Deduction

- Sometimes called “**Bedroom Tax**” – since 2013 Housing Benefit has been reduced for people the government believes have “spare” rooms
- We have substantially reduced arrears for people affected in the last year
- We’ve held six **mutual exchange events**, with over 350 visitors since December 2014
- Incentive payments are available to most under-occupying tenants if they want to transfer or exchange

## Universal Credit

- Combines several benefits into one, including Housing Benefit
- Benefits are now paid directly to the tenant instead of onto the rent account
- Active in Brighton & Hove since 2015, starting with single Jobseeker's Allowance claimants
- **21 tenants are now claiming the new combined benefit**, with new cases being added each week
- We expect to have around 100 by the end of the year, with a surge of new cases in 2017
- Arrears are expected to increase, because there is a 6 week delay in tenants receiving payment
- All new claimants are contacted by officers as soon as we know they are claiming, to offer support and make sure that they make a plan to pay their rent

## Benefit Cap

- Benefits are capped at £500 per week but this **will soon reduce to £385 per week**
- Any money above this is taken from the Housing Benefit, which means tenants are expected to pay their rent from any other benefits they receive
- Disability benefits aren't affected and there are some exceptions
- The council is visiting all tenants who are capped to try to stop them being affected, or help them budget if this is not possible

## Pay to Stay

- Pay to Stay is a proposal that any household where the top two earners together earn more than £30k will have to pay "market rent"
- The latest news is that it looks like this will now be raised to £50k with a "taper"
- Based on local market rents, families could pay up to £13k more per year
- The council has written to the Government to raise our concerns about how this change could affect our tenants
- These concerns include: the low threshold; very big rent increases; reduction in work incentives; increase in rent arrears and tenancy action; effects on communities and the cost to administer the scheme

## Other changes

- All working age benefits are frozen for four years
- Tax Credits are being slightly reduced and the main rates frozen for four years
- Rent is being reduced over four years
- Benefits will not be paid for any children after the first two children, for anyone born after 1 April 2017
- From 1 April 2018 Housing Benefit is being limited to local private rent levels, which means there could be problems for sheltered housing schemes in parts of the country where rents are low, although this does not affect Brighton & Hove

## Older People

- Although pensioners aren't affected, people approaching pension age still are, some of whom will live in seniors housing
- Friends and relatives will be affected, which could mean that older people are being asked for money more often
- The service as a whole will have less money if we collect less rent, which means there will be less to spend on all housing services including seniors housing

## Available Help

### Moneyworks

[www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks](http://www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks)

Tel: 01273 809288

### Brighton & Hove City Council

[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/benefit-changes](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/benefit-changes)

Tel: 01273 293030

### Department of Work and Pensions

[www.gov.uk/government/policies/welfare-reform](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/welfare-reform)