

HOUSING COMMITTEE ADDENDUM 1 Public Questions Deputations

4.00PM, WEDNESDAY, 23 JUNE 2021

HOVE TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBER

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ADDENDUM

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HOUSING COMMITTEE	Agenda Item 5(b)
	Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Questions	
Date of Meeting:	23 June 2021	
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law	
Contact Officer: Name:	Shaun Hughes	Tel: 01273 293059
	E-mail: shaun.hughes@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Wards Affected:	All	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 To receive any questions submitted to Democratic Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.2 That the Committee responds to the questions.

3. Questions:

3.1 Jim Deans: Question to Housing Committee.

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2020/somewhere-safe-stay-rough-sleepers>

Press release stated on 6th April 2020... 200 meals a day were distributed by a group coordinated by BHCC to the street, this was completely untrue, a mere read at the press release shows it to be silly at best, 200 meals on the street to 50 rough sleepers? I would ask Cllr Williams who signed this off to have it retracted. These meals were "distributed to accommodation". As a voluntary group Sussex Homeless Support worked tirelessly through the last 18 months unfunded by BHCC but FAKE credit to others is not what the volunteers wish to read.

*Jim Deans (Founder)
Sussex Homeless Support*

3.2 Beki Turner: Question to Housing Committee

Are there any plans for BHCC to reinstate the sanctuary scheme in the near future?

Designed to prevent some survivors of domestic abuse from becoming homeless through the provision of security works, local authorities nationally are currently able to increase security in homes through a range of measures.

This includes lock changes, fire safety measures and security maintenance.

I am aware that BHCC's sanctuary scheme has not been running for over two years now, meaning that for those who wish to stay in their home, there is often no option but to flee.

This can sometimes be extremely detrimental in terms of leaving behind informal/formal support networks, for example.

Additionally, the cost of emergency accommodation or alternative accommodation can be potentially very costly for BHCC in comparison to funding these safety measures.

3.3 Lara Hockman: Question to Housing Committee

I understand that since October 2020 four individuals, who have been moved by BHCC Housing to accommodation in Eastbourne, have died.

Can the council confirm that a mortality review of these deaths has, or will, take place in line with Point 13 of the Homeless Bill of Rights (recently adopted within the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25), quoted as: "The right to life requires public authorities to take measures to preserve life. When people who are homeless (including people in emergency accommodation) die, the Council is committed to ensuring that their deaths are recorded as such, and that in each case there is a reasonably public investigation in order to understand the causes of death and what might have prevented it", and in line with the council's previous commitments to mortality reviews of homeless deaths as outlined by Cllr Brennan in 2019 "We [BHCC] are one of the first local authorities to set up a mortality review process which began in April this year. An investigation is now carried out following the death of anyone who rough sleeping, accommodated in emergency or temporary accommodation or living in supported housing designed to meet the needs of single homeless and previously rough sleeping people. We will make sure the findings are used to develop help for those in need."

If reviews have not taken place or not intended to take place can you explain why?

3.4 Sally Duffy: Question to Housing Committee

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a duty on the council to develop and agree with all persons which are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, a personalised plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness. It is our understanding there are

individuals housed in temporary or emergency accommodation since March 2020 who still have not received a personalised plan.

Can the council tell us how many people are currently regarded homeless or at risk of homelessness in Brighton & Hove, and of those people how many have been provided and supported with a personalised support plan. Could the council outline the current process of putting these plans together (e.g. what contact is there between 'client' and local authority, particularly in cases of vulnerable people with multiple and complex needs) and what the turnaround time for implementing these personalised plans is?

Does the council feel that the current process and turnaround time is appropriate to fulfil their statutory duty, if not, what is being done to address this?

3.5 David Thomas: Public Question to Housing Committee

*At a national level, the number of people found by local authorities to be homeless **increased** slightly in April 2020-March 2021 compared to the same period before the pandemic¹, despite the eviction ban and other pandemic protections for renters. It is disappointing therefore to note that homelessness preventions in Brighton & Hove decreased over the same period from 791 in the previous year to 598 (item 57 3.8). With the end of these protections and of furlough predicted to produce a massive increase in numbers becoming homeless, can you assure us that prevention is now the priority?*

¹ Observer 13 June <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/13/at-least-130000-households-in-england-made-homeless-in-pandemic>

3.6 Daniel Harris: Public Question to Housing Committee

In agenda item 13 the council quote Covid 1 and Covid 2 verified rough sleepers assisted, from the everyone in and the extension of this provision.

Could the council please provide full details of all grants the council has received?

**please note: These should include the name of the fund, how much was provided and from where and a brief summary of what the money is provided for, please can you be clear and brake the figures down into the two categories mentioned above.*

Subject:	Deputations	
Date of Meeting:	23 June 2021	
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law	
Contact Officer: Name:	Shaun Hughes	Tel: 01273 293059
	E-mail: shaun.hughes@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Wards Affected:	All	

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Notification of one Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

(1) Female Experience of Housing

Spokesperson: Rebecca Rieley

Supported by:

R. Rieley

G. Harfleet

J. Rogers

A. Wallace

S. Sylvester

Topic: Female Experience of Housing

Presenters: Rebecca Rieley (Systems Change Lead, Fulfilling Lives South East Partnership), Gemma Harfleet

“I need my own front door”

Lived Experience from female living in supported accommodation, her voice shared.

I was placed in a large mixed hostel in Brighton after leaving rehab, at the time I was grateful to not be rough sleeping but after 3 years hostel living ruined my life. I am writing this from prison after feeling the only way out was to commit crime. I had been on a waiting list for lower support housing for over a year but had had enough and no longer felt able to cope living in a hostel.

As a female I was often surrounded by men that scared me and had to share living space, bathrooms and dining rooms with. I was scared to show feminine side of myself as this would have drawn more attention to me and felt

unsafe. I constantly felt on edge and this is exhausting, the only way I knew to survive was to use drugs to block this out, but this would lead to more danger.

I felt conditioned, it took my identity and privacy. I lost my living skills as I didn't need to cook and had little responsibility so felt all I had was drugs and it is detrimental to people. I was a young carer for my mum and brother as a child and had my own accommodation after, so I have always had responsibility until placed in hostel. Living in a hostel took away my belief that I could be independent again and institutionalized me.

My drug use really increased in hostel and this become barrier to moving on but the only way to survive hostel living is to block it out. I witnessed regular fights and violence, self-harm, deaths, overdoses and severe mental health which was a trigger for me. There is so much sadness, grief and trauma felt by everyone and we are all pit together and its chaos. I am very triggered by anger and violence so at times would hide in my room for days as it felt so unsafe to go out. I felt like I lost my voice as no one was listening to my struggles or had quick solution to situation as there are few options. Housing ask people to be stable and reduce/stop drug use before they can move on but have you ever tried to live in this nightmare. At night you can hear shouting, crying and people in distress just like in the day and you feel vulnerable at the time and can't sleep or relax so you take something to help you sleep. I hate confrontation but was surrounded by it all the time and people changing in and out of hostel with their own struggles and agendas. I did things I never thought I would in order to stay safe and survive hostel, since being in prison I have had time to reflect and think about what I want. I have been able to re-connect with family with support and am re-locating out of Brighton for my recovery. I never want to go back to hostel living, I have got my life back on track. I am now re-gaining my identity and able to be feminine again as I am not around lots of males. I am not using drugs and starting to think about future volunteering and supporting other women with similar experience.

What I feel would have worked better is housing first model, where I would have had a home and own front door. This would have given me privacy and ability to say who comes in, I would have kept my living skills and receive support. Its so sad that I felt my only way out was prison, but it has worked for me but have added to criminal record. If I had my own place sooner, I could have got my recovery so much sooner and re-connected with family, who have also witnessed my addiction and struggles.

Please consider this experience, which I know is shared by most women living in hostels when housing women and their safety. I would love to see the end of large hostels as they ruin lives not support them as people end up stuck for years giving up hope of a better life.

Thank you for giving me a voice.