

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.00pm 17 JUNE 2020

SKYPE MEETING

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Williams (Chair) Fowler (Deputy Chair), Gibson (Opposition Spokesperson), Mears (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Hugh-Jones, Knight, Osborne and Phillips

PART ONE

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) Declaration of Substitutes: There were none.

(b) Declarations of Interest: There were none.

(c) Exclusion of Press and Public: The Press and public were not excluded from the meeting. There were no Part Two items.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 The minutes of the Housing Committee meeting held on 29 April 2020 were accepted as a record of the meeting with the following amendment:

76.9 Councillor Hugh-Jones commented *that retrospective fitting is in general more expensive than making homes more energy efficient when they are built.*

3 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Chair made the following statement:

I would like to say a big thank you to all of our staff, including staff that transferred across to the council in April, for their fantastic work in delivering services over this most challenging period.

Repairs & Maintenance staff have been operating throughout the pandemic and carrying out essential repairs to resident's homes.

Our Estates Services teams have also been working on estates and changing how we clean and look after communal areas in our blocks.

I know that staff across housing and the council as a whole have been working around the clock to deliver services and change how we work so that we can ensure the safety of staff and residents.

I would like to thank them all for their continued hard work and commitment delivering essential services to our residents.

I would like to welcome Rachel Sharpe who has joined us as interim Executive Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities.

Rachel joins us from Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Council where as interim Director of Housing Needs & Supply she worked on Grenfell rehousing. Previously Rachel worked for London Borough of Lambeth Council where she held director roles including Commissioning Director for Housing & Communities.

We look forward to working with Rachel to push forward with the important corporate priorities for the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities services and also contribute to getting through this challenging time for the council and the community in Brighton & Hove.

4 CALL OVER

- 4.1 All agenda items were called for discussion by the Committee.

5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

(a) Petitions: There were no petitions.

(b) Written Questions: Eight Questions were submitted.

1. Dave Croydon

Question: I'd like to welcome the new Executive Director and ask if she would be willing to meet with the Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition to talk about her previous experiences and what she hopes to achieve during her stay in Brighton.

Answer: Thank you for your question.

Thank you for welcoming our new Executive Director, Rachel Sharpe and for your invite to Rachel to meet with the Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition.

Rachel would be happy to meet with members of the Housing Coalition and we will be in touch with you direct to set this up.

Supplementary Question: Dave Croydon invited all Committee Members to the meeting.

2. Barry Hughes

Question: We welcome the references to the Homeless Bill of Rights in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy before the Committee. They demand a question. The promises made in the Labour and Green manifestos more than a year ago and the Joint Housing Programme almost nine months ago relate to the adoption of the Homeless Bill of Rights, as did the petition presented to full Council on 25th July last year.

When is the City of Brighton and Hove actually going to adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights?

Answer: Thank you for your question.

The values included in the Homeless & Rough Sleeper Strategy align to the aspirations within the Homeless Bill of Rights as amended for Brighton & Hove by for Brighton & Hove by Housing Rights Watch, FEANTSA and Just Fair.

As outlined in the Strategy, the Homeless Bill of Rights should be viewed as a standard against which the Council and its partners judge our policies and practices.

Each key objectives of the Homeless & Rough Sleeper Strategy will be accompanied by an Action Plan. The Action Plan will monitor progress against each aspiration contained in the Homeless Bill of Rights amongst other areas of work Housing Committee have responsibility for. This will set out resources needed, timescales, progress and any barriers we encounter.

Progress against the Action Plan will be monitored by the Homeless Reduction Board and reported to Housing Committee on a six-monthly cycle.

Supplementary question: What will be the date? Answer: the first meeting is to be organised as soon as possible.

3. David Thomas

Question: We congratulate officers and councillors on the response to the notice of motion, and all the hard work that has gone into the tremendous response to the covid-19 pandemic.

We have a question about the aspirations of the council in the post-pandemic world. It is gestured towards in the response, but it is absent from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, perhaps understandably in this crisis still a very scanty and unambitious document.

Is the Council committed to providing in the future year-round accommodation, with individual rooms rather than shared space, available to all homeless people without precondition?

Answer: Thank you for your question and your congratulations on our response, working with our partners, to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior to Covid-19 Brighton & Hove City Council offered three services with shared sleeping space accommodation. The Nightshelter at St Patricks, No Second Night Out Hub and Somewhere Safe to Stay. All of the individuals within these services have been decanted into self-contained units of accommodation.

At present we are working with support providers and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (who fund No Second Night Out and Somewhere Safe to Stay) to develop alternative self-contained accommodation which will allow us to continue to offer these models of support.

The staff and volunteers from St Patricks Nightshelter are operating a self-contained accommodation service and have been since their service was decanted. We are hopeful that we can continue to utilise this accommodation for the foreseeable future and negotiations are ongoing with the landlord. We are extremely grateful to Downslink YMCA and the Churches Night shelter and their staff and volunteers for being so flexible and supporting this new service.

Supplementary question: Shared facilities are not good for congregate accommodation. Separate accommodation is the better way forward. Answer: The Chair agreed and stated that the Council are working towards this

4. Public Question.

Background: I became homeless after going into private rented accommodation due to moving out of hostels. I then became homeless due to a misunderstanding of universal credits and rent. I was therefore placed in to emergency accommodation. I reported on numerous occasions about disrepairs not only in my room but the whole building. I was then evicted. My whole experience in the last 9 months has been the hardest I've had to deal with in my life.

Question: Can the council provide a detailed overview of what day to day support people like myself receive from when we are placed into unsupported emergency accommodation?

Answer: Thank you for your question.

Becoming homeless and being housed in emergency accommodation is a very challenging time for anyone and I am sorry to hear that, in the circumstances, your experience has not been positive.

I have asked senior officers to look into the issues you have raised about disrepair and eviction, contact you direct to review what occurred in your case and keep me updated.

Reports of disrepair should in the first instance be dealt with by the accommodation provider in line with their contractual obligations. If the repair is not attended to, the matter is taken up by council officers who will contact the provider direct in order to ensure any outstanding works are completed.

I am sorry to hear that this was not your experience and that the disrepair that you reported was not resolved in the way that it should have been.

Officers also review evictions from Temporary Accommodation and we can discuss what happened in your case with you direct.

In terms of support, everyone that is provided with emergency accommodation is linked in with the council's welfare officer team who conduct regular visits to the properties as well as maintain contact as often as possible by phone.

Where it is identified that additional support is required, a referral to the appropriate support provider is completed.

Where the person is already linked in with a support service we liaise between services to coordinate the support required.

If it is identified that the person is unable to live independently then based on the level of support required a referral will be made to the supported accommodation team.

Supplementary question: None. The Chair stated that the issues will be investigated and they would take a personal interest.

5. Charles Harrison

Question: **Item 8 Solar PV programme.** Item 4.20 mentions a major risk of **Grid Capacity** in Brighton and Hove, which may result in refusal of some grid connection agreements. I also note the statement that "*the Council has no control over this*".

Our commitment to be Carbon Zero by 2030 will make us more dependent on electrical power as we phase out fossil fuels.

Does the Committee agree that this serious constraint on our Climate Emergency Action Plan is a risk that must be properly and regularly monitored for likelihood and impact and mitigated effectively?

Has the Council considered escalating this to UK Power Networks and Central Government?

Answer: Thank you for your question.

For this specific project we will be working with UK Power Networks (UKPN) to assess capacity issues in the city in order to effectively plan the delivery of a significant amount of new renewable generation capacity (up to 2.4 Megawatt peak) on HRA assets. This will make a considerable contribution towards our carbon reduction targets.

The council will continue to review how best to appropriately invest in light of any grid reinforcement requirements identified through grid connection requests, for example potential investment alongside new housing developments.

The council facilitates the Greater Brighton Energy Group, a multi-stakeholder working group seeking to identify ways to deliver the region's carbon reduction ambitions through the Greater Brighton Energy Plan.

UKPN hold the vice-chair position on this group and help to shape the Plan and provide useful insights into their forward planning through stakeholder engagement days.

Grid capacity is identified as a risk to a decarbonised energy supply within the Greater Brighton Energy Plan, as well as other sub regional plans. The council remains committed to working with UKPN to deliver a more resilient, low carbon grid for the future.

Supplementary question: The questioner thanked the Chair and the officers for the work on sustainable housing.

6. Public Question – Redacted (Daniel Harris speaking on behalf of resident)

Background: Our family have been placed into emergency accommodation hostels in Brighton and Eastbourne. We were placed into unaffordable Temporary Accommodation, that's 8 times in 4 years. My neighbours have security and an affordable council home. I am Seaside Community Homes. This month we have £79 to live off.

Question: you define this as suitable placement under homelessness policy, can you explain how you expect us to live and survive on £79 a month?

Answer: Thank you for your question.

I am sorry to hear of the situation you describe.

I understand your household are currently being supported by council officers. I have asked senior officers to review your case and advise me on progress and of any more general lessons we can learn to improve our service to vulnerable households in our emergency and temporary housing.

It would not be appropriate to go into the details of your case in a public meeting.

In more general terms the rents for Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes are aligned within the Local Housing Allowance rates. The benefit cap was introduced by Government and is administered by the Department of Work and Pensions.

We support households with rent, Universal Credit and related issues through our Credit Control Service and our Family Coach in our Welfare Support Team.

Supplementary question: None.

7. Daniel Harris

Background: Can I welcome the new plans for extra in-house services such as pier place, campaigners had originally identified this building four years ago. I've had a lot of issues reported to me from residents living in privately run emergency accommodation's in and out of the city, incidents such as; serious assaults, security concerns, reports of drug dealing and county lines, death in WCH and a revenge eviction; the feedback from residents is they feel isolated, neglected and alone.

Question: The Feedback from the Kendal Court health watch report is clear, better facilities, more support and faster pathways into more secure and settled are needed. Can the council tell me what they have learned from that and similar reports into private sector run emergency accommodation?

Answer: Thank you for your question and for welcoming our development of in-house services. I share your concerns around any negative feedback from residents.

By way of update on our future approach to provision of emergency accommodation. With regard to contracted emergency accommodation.

Prior to the Covid emergency we were about to go out to procure new contracts as our current contracts were coming to an end.

Following feedback and member concerns, our specifications have been greatly enhanced to provide for more self-contained accommodation and to ensure that additional services such as free Wi-Fi, crockery and cutlery and access to laundry facilities are provided as standard.

New investment funding of £300k was agreed from this financial year to support this new service level. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic procurement has been delayed but as soon as we are able we will continue with this re-tender process.

I am also pleased to tell you that the council are proceeding with purchasing accommodation that it will run and manage itself as short term and emergency accommodation.

We are aiming to complete the purchase of the first such development, a sizable block of flats, in late summer. It will then be refurbished and furnished so it can be used as short-term emergency accommodation from the autumn. This will be our first such acquisition. We have more options under consideration, including buildings owned by the council that could be re-purposed. Some units will be longer term temporary accommodation, and some used as emergency housing. This will not replace the need to contract private accommodation at this time as the scale of homes required is still high.

Supplementary question: The questioner welcomed the Homeless Reduction Board and informed the Committee that Southwark Council are building accommodation for women with children. The Assistant Director of Housing informed the committee that the purchase of 38 units for short term accommodation was being looked at in Gladstone Court. The Head of Housing Needs stated that moving forward accommodation will be self-contained units for either male or females.

8. John Hadman (Charles Harrison to speak on behalf of John Hadman)

Question: Gladstone Court. I am pleased that BHCC approved the purchase of Gladstone Court at the HC Meeting on 15 Jan 2020, agenda item 52.

I understand these 80's flats were refurbished in 2013 and improvements are recommended to fire compartmentation, windows, pumped FW drainage, communal heating system, PV installations, lift, etc, as report item numbers 3.07 to 3.12.

I note that a total investment of £1.4m is estimated for the refurbishment of these 38 flats, or £750k to bring them to a lettable standard (report item 3.12).

Would you please confirm the scope of these improvement works, indicative cost breakdowns, procurement approach and timescale, currently planned?

Answer: Thank you for your question.

The council is in the process of completing its purchase of Gladstone Court but do not yet own or have possession of the building.

As you outline from the January Committee report, we have identified that some refurbishment works are required.

We will be prioritising and procuring these works as we complete the property transaction and would be happy to provide you with more information as our plans develop.

Supplementary question: The questioner asked that the authority get going as soon as possible to minimise the burden on the tax payer.

(c) Deputations: There were no deputations.

6 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

(a) Petitions: None.

(b) Written Questions: Twenty four (24) written questions were received from Members.

From Cllr Alex Phillips

- 1) For the last week, 7-14 June, how many new verified rough sleepers were found and housed and how many other homeless households were housed by housing options?

Answer: Verified Rough Sleepers 15 – this is an increase from 6-7 per week in previous weeks 60 individual households were accommodated by Housing Options.

- 2) For the week 7-14 June, how many rough sleepers and how many other homeless households lacking a local connection were safely reconnected?

Answer: During that week no homeless households were reconnected. We have made 10 referrals under section 198 of the Homeless legislation since 18 March 2020 but none of these was during 7-14 June.

Councillor Phillips felt that this was not quick enough.

Councillor Williams stated that officers could not have worked harder. The Head of Housing Needs stated 150 people had been moved and officers were working flat out. Talks are underway with the Ministry of Housing relating to grant funding. It was also noted that the lack of responses from other authorities was an issue.

- 3) As of 15 June, how many rough sleepers and other homeless are living in hotels, student halls and other emergency accommodation?

Answer:

- There were 162 rough sleepers in the Care & Protect accommodation.
- In accommodation provided for people where there is no apparent housing duty there are 125 households.
- As of 15th June, there is a total of 562 other homeless households (we are unable to report on the number of individual people) accommodated under a housing duty in emergency accommodation.

- 4) As of 15 May, how many rough sleepers and other homeless had been accommodated in hotels, student halls and other emergency accommodation?

Answer:

- There were 163 rough sleepers accommodated.
- There were 98 households where there was no apparent housing duty were accommodated.
- There were 518 homeless households accommodated under a housing duty in emergency accommodation

- 5) As of 15 June, what was the room capacity of symptomatic, hotel, guesthouse and student accommodation acquired and what is the occupancy of these rooms?

Answer: Care & Protect model:

| | Capacity | Occupancy |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Symptomatic hub: | 51 rooms (46 usable) | 2 |
| High health risk: | 90} | 160 {total} |
| Low health risk: | 51} | |
| Complex needs: | 39} | |
| <hr/> | | |
| Others: | | |
| Phoenix halls | 222 | 125 |

Other hotels and guest houses have been decanted to the University of Brighton Halls and returned for commercial business to resume.

From Cllr David Gibson

- 6) As of 14 June, how many Personal Housing Plans had housing options completed since beginning of April for: a) Verified rough sleepers; b) other homeless people housed in the lockdown.

Answer:

- (a) 24 Personal Housing Plans have been completed for verified rough sleepers;
- (b) As the PHP is kept under review and updated and MHCLG do not require this information, it is not a field that our IT records. We therefore aren't able to provide this figure without manual counting for each of the cases taken on since 18 March which would be quite onerous. The information required by MHCLG which is reported is the number of cases of which how many have been prevented; relieved or we have a full homeless application or duty. We cannot separate out those who might otherwise be rough sleeping from all other homeless cases.
- 7) How many of 10 additional Housing First group taken on for the year 19/20 have secured settled accommodation and how many are still waiting to be housed through the Council Interest Queue under the allocations policy?

Answer: All 10 have been actively bidding on general needs properties since last year (Oct/Nov/Dec) and prior to Covid lockdown the expectation was that we would begin to

see offers being made at around this point in time given that the average length of time spent bidding on Band A is around 6-8 months.

All 10 are currently accommodated and all 10 have been intensively supported as Housing First Service Users since the point of offer despite the wait for a general needs tenancy.

- 8) What have been the maximum and minimum symptomatic facility occupancy rates during May and up to week commencing Monday 8 June expressed as a percentage of the capacity for the building? What was the average occupancy rate in this period?

Answer: There are a total of 46 rooms accessible within the symptomatic (care) hub for self-isolating symptomatic clients.

- Maximum client occupancy = 7 clients (15 %)
- Minimum client occupancy = 1 client (2 %)
- Average client occupancy for date range = 5 clients 10 %
- 11 New symptomatic clients in May 2020
- 4 New symptomatic clients in June (1st – 8th)

A new symptomatic hub is currently in development and we aim to have this ready for occupancy before the end of June. This new hub has 15 units of accommodation and will replace the current facility.

- 9) Please provide the number of evictions from emergency accommodation for 1 April 2018- 31 March 2019 and for 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 and for each year please indicate the percentage that were re-accommodated following eviction.

Answer:

| Period | Number of evictions | % re-accommodated |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 2018/19 | 39 | 56.4 (22) |
| 2019/20 | 156 | 74.4 (116) |

- 10) Please provide as a table the number of evictions in emergency accommodation for 18/19 and 19/20 (requested above) broken down for each of the following accommodation providers (Baron Homes, Helgor trading (and new owner of Helgor properties), Moretons, Colgate and Gray, and spot purchase) expressed as a percentage of the number of units provided by each of the providers.

Answer:

2018/19 * For 18/19 spot purchase evictions weren't recorded in a way that we can now report on them. Moretons and Baron Homes were counted together (as shown in the column) because at that time they were not independent of one another as they are now.

| Provider | Baron Homes/Moretons | Helgor Trading | Colgate & Gray |
|--|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of evictions | 16 | 15 | 8 |
| % of total number of evictions | 41 | 38 | 20 |
| % of total number of accommodation units | 58 | 29 | 12 |

2019/20

| Provider | Baron Homes | Helgor Trading | Moretons | Colgate & Gray | Spot purchase |
|--|-------------|----------------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| Number of evictions | 38 | 44 | 4 | 25 | 46 |
| % of total number of evictions | 24 | 28 | 2 | 16 | 29 |
| % of total number of accommodation units | 34 | 21 | 13 | 9 | 23 |

Councillor Gibson felt there was an alarming increase in eviction rates and noted that Baron Homes scored highly. The Head of Housing Needs stated that the way issues were reported had changed to a more robust system and this may have affected the numbers.

- 11) How many allocations under the Council Interest Queue were made to Families Children and Learning and to Adult Social care between 1 August 2017 and 1 March 2020*? (and what was the total number of allocations for this period?)

Answer:

Below are the figures for April 2017 to March 2020 as it would be too complex to work out the part year figures for 2017 as we would have to look at the numbers advertised, and numbers let and it may distort the overall picture. The figures for 2017 to 2020 are:

Lets over period = 2059

Target lets to CIQ = 205

Target Achieved in period = 176 (8.54%)

Under performance in whole period = 29 units (1.4%) – (attributed to the 2017/18 financial year as the other two years exceeded the target). However, this is still within the 5% tolerance for each group in the plan.

Due to Covid-19 the total number of lets for 2019/20 are not yet completed. There were an expected 606 lets for 2019/20 but this figure may come down if any properties are withdrawn and then re-advertised in the future as these will then count in 2020/21 reporting year. The percentage lets for CIQ for this year are over performing at this point in time.

There is no provision in the Allocations Policy to “roll over” on the Allocations Plan. The percentages are stated as annual figures and therefore introducing the concept of a roll over may be considered that we are allocating outside of our published scheme and open to a legal challenge. This may be something that members would like to consider in the up-coming review.

12) How many verified Rough Sleeper benefit claims are completed for:

- a) Verified rough sleepers
- b) Other homeless people housed since lockdown?

Answer: 191 forms have been completed for both verified rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping who have been accommodated. This does not include those homeless people placed under statutory duties.

From Cllr Martin Osborne

13) Between 1 May 2019 and 1 June 2020 how many:

- homes were sold under the right to buy?
- additional council homes provided?
- additional council homes provided at LHA rents?
- additional council homes provided at 37.5% Living wage rents?
- additional council homes provided at 27.5% Living wage rents (i.e. Living rents)?
- additional council homes provided at social rents?

* If data not known to the 1st of March 2020 then as late as possible

Answer: The responses below are provided for 1 May 2019 to 1 June 2020. There have been limited additional sales since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Between 1 May 2019 and 1 June 2020 how many:

- homes were sold under the right to buy? 37.
- additional council homes provided? 89 (including council owned temporary accommodation and lease backs).
- additional council homes provided at LHA rents? 38 (12 at Kensington Street, 15 at Tilbury Place and 11 for temporary accommodation (home purchase)).
- additional council homes provided at 37.5% Living wage rents? 35 (23 for home purchase and 12 Buckley Close).
- additional council homes provided at 27.5% Living wage rents (i.e. Living rents)? 8 (home purchase).
- additional council homes provided at social rents? 8 (6 Hidden Homes, 1 home purchase and 1 lease back).

Councillor Osborne requested a comparison from previous years against the 37 stated. The Assistant Director of Housing stated they would give a written answer to the question.

14) What provision is being made in anticipation of demand from those likely to be evicted from private rented sector accommodation when the embargo is lifted?

Answer: We know the existing homeless application cases where there is a threat of homelessness due to possession proceedings either started or in progress when the restrictions on evictions came into place.

We have extensive intelligence through the HMO licensing scheme relating to who landlords are and the addresses of all registered HMOs.

We also have developed relationships with large numbers of landlords and most letting agents within the City.

In the council's response to the Parliamentary Select Committee investigating the MHCLG response to the pandemic, we highlight the considerable impact that lifting a ban on evictions will have if the Courts are then dealing with large numbers of possession proceedings simultaneously. We requested that time and careful planning is applied to the lifting of these proceedings to limit the number of households that become at risk as far as possible. The ban on evictions has been extended to the end of August and government is issuing guidance to the Private Rented Sector in which it is intended that tenancies at risk are only ended as a last resort and that all options should be explored by landlords before issues possession proceedings.

Using the contacts and intelligence referred to above, we are putting together communications and an information pack targeted at landlords, agents and tenants based on the governmental guidance and suggesting local solutions and the kind of options that can be followed within the Private Rented Sector to mitigate against an influx of possession proceedings.

- 15) What was the rent collection rate in a) emergency and b) temporary housing c) council owned housing for the months: 1) Jan and Feb 2020 and for months; 2) April and May 2020?

Answer: The council owned temporary accommodation for Feb 2020 were included with the leased due to the very small number of properties at that time. Figures are financial year to date.

Please note the collection rate figures are calculated differently between the HRA and Temporary Accommodation. Temporary accommodation calculation is based on total collected of rent charged in year, whilst the HRA is based on total collected of current tenants total debt.

We have included an asterisk for the TA calculations along with the calculation description below (Collected of in year rents).

| | A* | B* | B* | C |
|--------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | Emergency accommodation (nightly placements) | Leased temporary accommodation | Seaside Homes | Council housing |
| Jan | 89.18% | 90.42% | 86.19% | 96.86% |
| Feb | 89.20% | 90.67% | 86.42% | 97.01% |
| April | 80.33% | 93.53% | 86.42% | 96.55% |
| May | 79.49% | 94.90% | 91.80% | 96.31% |

*Collected of in year rents

Leased

| | Jan-20 | Feb-20 | Mar-20 | Apr-20 | May-20 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Leased Target | 88% | 88% | 88% | 88% | 88% |
| Collection of available rent roll % | 96.05% | 96.15% | 102.44 | 98.84% | 100.21% |
| Including Voids % | 90.42% | 90.67% | 96.10 | 93.53% | 94.90% |
| Void % | 5.74% | 5.71% | 6.19 | 5.36% | 5.36% |
| Rent Roll | £6,595,964.08 | £7,178,214.58 | £7,276,909.05 | £548,210.57 | £1,099,830.51 |
| Voids | £401,927.70 | £434,367.63 | £479,908.57 | £31,075.31 | £61,531.15 |
| Total RR | £6,997,891.78 | £7,612,582.21 | £7,756,817.62 | £579,285.88 | £1,161,361.66 |
| Collected | £6,335,635.93 | £6,902,046.78 | £7,454,647.93 | £541,825.82 | £1,102,136.54 |
| | | | | | |
| Emergency | Jan | Feb | Mar | April (up to 19.4.20) | May- up to 17.5.20 |
| Emergency Target | 90% | 90% | 90% | 90% | 90% |
| Collection of available rent roll % | 96.06% | 96.17% | 96.34% | 84.18% | 84.41% |
| Including Voids % | 89.18% | 89.20% | 89.21% | 80.33% | 79.49% |
| Void % | 7.17% | 7.25% | 7.40% | 4.57% | 5.84% |
| Rent Roll | £2,580,508.55 | £2,831,142.68 | £3,078,176.32 | £292,926.65 | £656,211.41 |
| Voids | £199,157.89 | £221,353.62 | £246,040.65 | £14,033.33 | £40,665.48 |
| Total RR | £2,779,666.44 | £3,052,496.30 | £3,324,216.97 | £306,959.98 | £696,876.89 |
| Collected | £2,478,872.17 | £2,722,799.22 | £2,965,414.21 | £246,579.88 | £553,934.00 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Council owned TA | June | July | Aug | April | May |
| TACC | 98% | 98% | 98% | 98% | 98% |
| Collection of available rent roll % | | | | 99.28% | 99.55% |
| Voids % | | | | 6.25% | 6.20% |
| With Void % | | | | 93.01% | 93.37% |
| Rent Roll | | | | £ 25,014.88 | £ 50,434.76 |
| Voids | | | | £ 1,667.20 | £ 3,334.40 |
| Total RR | | | | £ 26,682.08 | £53,769.16 |
| Collected | | | | £24,834.44 | £502,206.34 |

From Cllr Siriol Hugh-Jones

- 16) How many rough sleepers have been identified with no recourse to public funds and what steps have been taken to put them in touch with voluntary organisations that could provide support?

Answer: This is a very difficult question to answer due to the complexities of people's circumstances. Assessments are ongoing for the 34 EU/non-EU nationals placed in our Care and Protect Hotels. We do not have an accurate figure of No Recourse to Public Funds as yet, however 6 of those 34 have been determined to have NRPF.

Case-workers are working with clients who are EU nationals to determine their entitlement to benefits. This includes:

- acquiring ID,
- setting up bank account
- Setting up HRT – Habitual residency test
- Supporting with EUSS applications where appropriate

Several people with irregular immigration status or under immigration bail are in the hotels and all have been linked in with relevant agencies.

- Those with irregular immigration need specialist legal immigration advice from a specialist Immigration worker and it is against the law for case-workers from generic homeless support services to give any such advice.
- Locally this means linking in with organisations like Voices in Exile and MigrantHelpUK. Several people have been supported to access these agencies.

- 17) What provision has been put in place for rough sleepers with dogs?

Answer: Health & Adult Social Care Commissions a range of supported accommodation all of which is accessible to the rough sleepers with dogs. Unfortunately, most of the hotel accommodation has been unwilling to accept dogs but kennelling has been offered.

One of the previous hotels used would accommodate some dogs if well looked after. Having procured the University of Brighton student accommodation, provision has been made to accommodate people with dogs.

- 18) As the lockdown measures have relaxed, what has been the incidence of former rough sleepers leaving their interim accommodation? What follow up measures are taken when this occurs?

Answer: By providing staffing and support in hotels and ensuring 24-hour security is in place the number of abandonments has been kept to a low level. Support has been provided throughout to help people maintain their accommodation and people who abandon accommodation continue to be worked with to try and get them back into accommodation. The outreach team will seek out people on the streets and BHT First Base is still open to small numbers of people offering support to try and help people to take up an offer of accommodation.

6 individuals are known to have left the hotels, 1 is now in accommodation and another has accommodation open to them.

19) How many have left and are known to be rough sleeping again?

Answer: A recent count which took place in June found 36 rough sleepers, this is likely to consist of people who have refused accommodation, left accommodation provided and / or new rough sleepers.

A number of people have refused accommodation this includes several people in tents/encampments counted in the count who have refused offers of accommodation because they felt safer from COVID-19 risks there than in hotels with multiple residents.

We are seeing increasing numbers of new rough sleepers, on average 6- 7 a week over the last few weeks rising to 15 last week who when found are offered accommodation.

A small number of people have abandoned accommodation and a small number will have been evicted from accommodation. Services have worked very hard to keep people inside however in cases of violence against staff or service users' evictions are sometimes impossible to avoid. Outreach continue to work with these individuals to find accommodation solutions.

20) How many verified rough sleepers refused the offer of accommodation?

Answer: We do not collect this information but anecdotally are aware of a handful of cases. In response we have worked jointly with St Mungo's to issue a letter setting out a single service offer and urging people to accept it.

21) What was the expenditure on responsive repairs of council accommodation for: a) Jan and Feb 2020 and; b) April and May 2020?

Answer: The responsive repairs expenditure for January and February 2020 was £400,300 and £472,300 respectively. The spend during April and May are more difficult to quantify at this time due to the following changes/issues:

- As the responsive repairs service is now in-house, some staff and resources are spread across the whole repairs service (responsive repairs, empty homes works, planned works etc.). Therefore, in order to isolate the cost of responsive repairs there will need to be a number of recharges and apportionments of staff time and costs. However, as the service is only just up and running, and given that the first two months of operation have been during the Covid-19 lockdown (see next bullet point), we will require more time during which we can gather the data needed to be able to apportion these costs accurately.
- With the current COVID-19 restrictions and the service attending to emergency repairs only during April and May, like for like comparisons are not possible at this time.

Councillor Hugh-Jones requested when the information would be available. The Assistant Director of Housing stated they would talk to Finance and update the Members.

From Cllr Mary Mears:

- 22) How many people who were verified rough sleepers have been accommodated between 27 March (as the date local authorities were instructed to bring everyone in) and the 14.06.2020 and how this compares to the same period last year?

Answer: The number of verified rough sleepers who have been placed in accommodation is difficult to identify because the figures also include those who were in shared sleeping space accommodation in addition to those who were squatting or sofa surfing. Overall 400 people have been accommodated across the Care and Protect model and via Housing Options. Of these 245 have been placed in Care and Protect model accommodation, 56 from shared sleeping spaces leaving 189 which are a combination of verified rough sleepers, people who had been living in squats and sofa surfing.

In the same period last year there were 149 rough sleepers found and worked with.

From Cllr Dawn Barnett:

- 23) How will the chair of housing address council tenants' concerns after the change from estate inspections to work undertaken by Field Officers, despite funding for the service from the HRA towards their posts. Tenants feel that the service has deteriorated under Field Officers and their estates are being neglected.

Answer: The Field Officer Team has not been asked to carry out estate inspections. The responsibility for the management of housing estates remains with the Tenancy Management team. The Field Officer Team have assisted in the delivery the Environmental Improvement Programme, which has been seeking to identify improvements to the estates rather than carry out ongoing maintenance.

The Housing Team would be happy to work with tenants who feel their estates are being neglected in order to consider what we may be able to do to improve matters.

From Cllr Dawn Barnett:

- 24) Can the Chair of Housing provide details as to (i) the total number of Field Officers, (ii) the number actually working on housing-related issues, an (iii) the approximate percentage of overall Field Officer time that is spent on housing-related issues?

Answer: Recent staff losses have reduced the strength of the team to 4.5 full time officers. Recruitment has been delayed due to Covid 19 restrictions.

In the financial year 2019/2020, 24% of the all of the service requests dealt with by the Field Officers were related to Housing Revenue Account property. All Field Officers take an equal share of work across all service boundaries. The Housing Revenue Account contributed 17.1% of the costs of the Field Officer service.

(c) Letters: None.

(d) Notices of Motion: None.

7 NOTION OF MOTION - NEXT STEPS FOR HOMELESS FOLLOWING COVID-19 RESPONSE

7.1 The Head of Housing Needs introduced the response to the Notice of Motion presented at the previous Housing Committee and stated that in summary the Council is intending to provide appropriate move on support and accommodation for all rough sleepers currently accommodated. However, we currently do not have sufficient resources to meet all of the needs, and therefore have requested additional support from Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) if we are to avoid people returning to the streets.

Questions for Officer

- 7.2 Councillor Fowler thanked the officers for the report and noted that Brighton & Hove currently has no access to residential rehab (the rehab service we access has closed its doors due to the pandemic) for clients who now wish to engage in treatment. The Head of Housing Needs informed the Councillor that officers were working hard to deal with the issues arising from substance miss use and prescriptions have been given for those asking for De-Tox. It was noted that some Rough Sleepers beg on the street as part of the street community culture.
- 7.3 Councillor Gibson welcomed the report and noted that since lockdown started the physical and mental health of Rough Sleepers appears to have improved and expressed concerns that the rehousing seemed to be slow. The Head of Housing Needs informed the Councillor that the rehousing will be monitored through the Homeless Reduction Board. Student accommodation is being used help house the 400 Rough Sleepers until September 2020. Other authorities are looking to see how Brighton and Hove City Council move forward on this matter. The Councillor commented that the Homeless Reduction Board will need to meet often. Councillor Gibson was then informed that some hotels will be closing to Rough Sleepers in the next two weeks. The St Mungo's charity has helped to move Rough Sleepers out of hotels and into other accommodation such as the YMCA.
- 7.4 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the report and noted that the Argus newspaper reported that Brighton Housing Trust have continued accepting residents throughout the Pandemic.
- 7.5 Councillor Osborne thanked officers for the report and the timescale for Personal Health Plans (PHP) need to be undertaken by mid/late August 2020. Extra Homeless Persons officers have been taken on the deal with 400 PHPs. The Move on Plans will need to know where the person is being moved to. Figures for the plans will be circulated to the Committee Members before the next committee meeting in September 2020.
- 7.6 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that 6 new members of staff have been employed and the Ministry of Housing are hopefully responding soon on funding support.

8 SOLAR PV PROGRAMME FOR HRA HOUSING STOCK

- 8.1 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager introduced the report that seeks approval for the council to commence a new Solar Photovoltaic (PV) installation programme on domestic council houses, for the period 2020-2023. The proposed

programme cost is £1.875m. An initial budget allocation of £100k was approved at Budget Council on 27 February 2020. This will be used to initiate the programme with the majority of installations to be carried out in the financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23 if approved. As part of the above budget allocation 1.2 full time equivalent (FTE) posts will be appointed in order to deliver the work to a high quality.

- 8.2 Councillor Atkinson expressed support for Solar Panels was informed that the installation would be alongside other energy efficient programmes.
- 8.3 The Chair of the Committee invited Councillor Hugh-Jones, the proposer of the amendments to the report recommendations, to address the Committee.
- 8.4 Councillor Hugh-Jones stated that the Council cutting emissions was good as this could be up to 300 tons per year. The Councillor felt the recommendations needed to go further quicker. Concerns were expressed regarding fuel poverty with talks to power networks being suggested. The increase in Green jobs was welcomed, especially as employment had been affected and jobs lost due to the Pandemic.
- 8.5 Councillor Fowler Seconded the amendment and welcomed the report. The Councillor felt this would add to the reduction of Carbon emissions by 2030.
- 8.6 Councillor Mears noted that this matter had been looked at 10 years. The Councillor thanked the proposer for the amendment to the recommendations and felt the proposed increases were good. The Councillor wanted to ensure that tenants costs were not increased as they did not rent the roof of each property. The Councillor supported the report.
- 8.7 Councillor Osborne noted that the Procurement Advisory Board had made comments on the report. The Councillor felt the demand needed to be created and driven forwards. Support from the Committee for the report and recommendations was requested.
- 8.8 Councillor Knight agreed with other Members and felt the scheme would be good for the Carbon reduction and Green jobs in the city. The Councillor expressed delight with the report.
- 8.9 Councillor Gibson welcomed the report and the proposed amendments to the recommendations. The Councillor felt that the scheme was good for the creation of Green jobs, good for the planet, good for people's fuel bills and good for employment generally. The Councillor noted that Carbon reduction targets were very important.
- 8.10 The Assistant Housing Director noted that amendments to the recommendations had been seen by Finance and Legal teams.
- 8.11 The Chair put the proposed amendments to the recommendations to the vote and they were agreed unanimously. (Councillor Phillips was not able to cast a vote due to technical difficulties).
- 8.12 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote and they were agreed unanimously. (Councillor Phillips was not able to cast a vote due to technical difficulties).

Resolved: That Housing Committee:

- 2.1 Delegates authority to the Executive Director, Housing Neighbourhoods & Communities to take all steps necessary to:
 - 2.1.1 procure and award a contract for the installation of a minimum of 500 and a maximum of 1000 domestic solar PV arrays for the period 2020-2023, the budget for the first 500 to be allocated as set out in 2.2. below, with the additional 500 to be commissioned subject to grid and contractor capacity as referred to in paragraphs 4.18-4.20 below and to the necessary additional budget approval from Policy & Resources Committee;
 - 2.1.2 increase this to at least 2500 installations by 2026 subject to further Committee approval of budget allocation and the constraints set out in paragraphs 4.18-4.20 in the report but mindful of the council having approximately 4000 domestic properties suitable for such arrays.
- 2.2 Recommends Policy & Resources Committee allocate the following additional budget to allow for the delivery of the initial 500 domestic solar PV arrays for the period 2020-23:
 - 2021/22: £875k;
 - 2022/23: £875k;
- 2.3 Requests that a report covering the scope to expand the solar PV programme be brought to Committee no later than the fourth quarter of 2021 i.e. ahead of 2022 Budget Council.

9 INTERIM PLANNED WORKS AND MAJOR PROJECTS 2020

- 9.1 The Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement introduced the report that seeks authority from Housing Committee to procure and award contracts for interim major capital projects.
- 9.2 Councillor Mears was informed that the replacement of balconies at Essex Place was under Government guidance to proactively improve balcony panels. Councillor Mears felt that the works to Palace Place were being carried out the wrong way around and the costs seemed high. It was noted by the Head of Housing Repairs & Improvements that further approvals were required and no works had started yet. The business case and planning approval were still needed. Councillor Mears expressed deep concerns regarding the recommendations and requested that Palace Place be removed.
- 9.3 The Assistant Director of Housing noted that the way forward and procurement was still being looked at. The recommendations were for 'if' the requisition takes place and are outline only.
- 9.4 Councillor Mears expressed concerns that a professional approach had not been taken and requested that their concerns be minuted regarding support for the recommendations.
- 9.5 Councillor Gibson requested reassurance on acquiring a building before expenditure takes place.

- 9.6 The Assistant Director of Housing informed the Committee that the works in the report were subject to Planning Permission being granted and once that has been granted a report will be brought back to the Housing Committee.
- 9.7 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote which were agreed unanimously. (Councillor Mears stated that they wanted their comments to be noted subject to voting for the recommendations). (Councillor Phillips was unable to vote due to technical difficulties).

Resolved: That Committee:

- 2.1 Delegates authority to the Executive Director, Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities to procure and award the contracts for the major capital projects which are set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

10 HOMELESS & ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

- 10.1 The Head of Tenancy Services introduced the report for the adoption of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020 – 2025 following the final consultation in the city. It was noted that the consultation had received a good response.
- 10.2 Councillor Atkinson commented that they felt the report was very important and congratulated the Housing team, the Committee Chair and St Mungo's. The report covers a huge issue and progress has been made. The Homeless Reduction Board is welcomed, as is the rise in Housing Allowance. It was noted that Universal Credit may still have an impact on the allowance. The Councillor expressed concerns regarding funding and felt that reconnecting Rough Sleepers should be a focus. The meetings between the authority and landlords was a positive step, along with Housing First initiative. The financial fall out from COVID-19 Pandemic may lead to Government lobbying. The support for substance abuse should continue through the Pandemic with alcohol needs being met by the National Health Service (NHS). The Councillor also noted that were Rough Sleepers had been accommodated in student accommodation may require more support than others and they needed to be good neighbours to the local community. The Councillor felt the report was good and thanked the officers.
- 10.3 Councillor Mears thanked the officers for the report and expressed concerns that the Homeless Reduction Board would be a 'talking shop' and officers could have got on with the issues. It was noted that the connection with local prison had been a benefit to prevent those leaving prison becoming homeless. It was also a concern that all Rough Sleepers will be moved by September 2020.
- 10.4 Councillor Gibson thanked the officers for the report, the consultation and welcomed the strategy. The Councillor hoped the Homeless Reduction Board will focus on action with this huge task ahead and work with the community. The opportunity to work with Rough Sleepers needs to be seized. Lobbying the Government will be needed and to make the best use of resources. It was noted that Housing First are good at solving needs and that the number of Housing First placements has increased to 12. The Green Group and Labour Party are committed to moving towards removing Rough Sleeping in the city. Councillor Gibson agreed that the reconnecting Rough Sleepers was a matter of urgency and they supported the report.

- 10.5 Councillor Hugh-Jones welcomed the focus on prevention of homelessness and noted the Select Committee's questions to the Minister for Housing regarding the process for procurement. The Councillor was informed that the operational board will include activists. The strategy can be reviewed at any time and changes need to be agreed at Committee.
- 10.6 Councillor Knight thanked the officers for the report and stated the importance of the focus on evictions. The rise in Housing Allowance may put some residents above the Benefit Cap and this was a concern. Support should be given to those in temporary accommodation with any homelessness being pre-empted. The Councillor commented that hearing that people had been housed during the Pandemic was interesting and a good argument for Housing First. The Councillor also cautioned against thinking that all homeless are the same as this was not true and that people needed a 'warp around' service to cover all aspects of being homeless. It was noted that Government funding will be needed.
- 10.7 The Chair put the recommendations to the vote and they were agreed unanimously. (Councillor Phillips was not able to hear the entire debate or cast a vote due to technical difficulties).

Resolved:

- 2.1 That the work in developing the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020 – 2025, including, Homelessness Review and Consultation Feedback Report be noted.
- 2.2 That the Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020 - 2025 be adopted.
- 2.3 That the formation of a Member led Homelessness Reduction Board as outlined with terms of reference detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be recommended to the Policy & Resources Committee along with the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy being referred for information.

11 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

- 11.1 There were none.

12 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

- 12.1 There were none.

The meeting concluded at 6.51pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this _____ day of _____