

# BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

## HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.00pm 17 NOVEMBER 2021

### HOVE TOWN HALL

#### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Gibson (Joint Chair), Hugh-Jones (Joint Chair), Hills (Deputy Chair), Williams (Opposition Spokesperson), Mears (Group Spokesperson), Barnett, Fowler, Meadows, Platts and Phillips

#### PART ONE

### 32 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

**(a) Declaration of Substitutes:** Councillor Philips substituted for Council Osbourne.

**(b) Declarations of Interest:** Councillor Williams declared she was a member of ACORN.

**(c) Exclusion of Press and Public:** To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

The Press and public would be excluded from the meeting when the committee discussed appendix 2 of item 42.

### 33 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

33.1 The minutes from the 22 September 2021 were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Councillor Meadows requested that councillor questions be given more detail.

### 34 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

34.1 Welcome to November's Housing Committee. It's good to be in person again, even if we are still wearing masks and socially distanced!

Though the pandemic is still very much with us, still having the largest number of new daily cases and total recorded deaths than anywhere in Europe, it does feel that with vaccinations there are opportunities to recover from some of the impact of the lockdowns and the need to adjust our service delivery. It feels like this is beginning to happen in several areas some of which are covered by reports on today's agenda. I will touch first on some of the areas not covered:

Firstly, there is a senior management restructure. It is hoped that this will in the fullness of time enable housing staff to deliver improvements such as housing repairs, homeless prevention and assessment. At this stage 2 assistant director of housing posts have been created and I am pleased to be able to congratulate Martin Reid in being successfully appointed as Assistant Director, Housing Management. Martin will continue to lead the Housing service to ensure continuity of management in the department at a senior level while we recruit to the other vacant posts. Would also like to congratulate Sylvia Peckham and Ododo Dafe on their appointment to the restructured posts of Head of Temporary and Supported Accommodation and Head of Strategy and Supply respectively.

Secondly, as questions on today's agenda indicate we are being challenged by ACORN to provide a target date for the achievement of Landlord selective licensing. Assuming sufficient officer capacity for all the stages to proceed on schedule and an absence of hitches, we commit to bringing a report for decision on implementation of a licensing scheme at Housing Committee in November 2022. The evidence will determine the type of scheme chosen. After this Housing Committee decision, it will take an estimated 4 months before a selective licensing scheme will be able to begin, taking us to Feb 2023 as the earliest possible start date. All going to plan, we commit to Feb 2023 as our target date for implementation of a selective licensing scheme, but it will take longer for a more full, city-wide scheme to become fully operational as this would require secretary of state approval. We will work to get the resources and evidence to meet the earliest possible target date but need to be clear that many obstacles will need to be overcome currently officers do not believe we have enough evidence to apply for licensing. If we are to succeed, we need to:

- Improve our evidence of poor property condition or ASB need
- Gather evidence to the standard required by legislation to support any scheme
- Demonstrate evidence of the difference made by existing HMO licensing schemes
- Monitor evidence that existing enhanced enforcement approaches and other tools at the council's disposal have been insufficient and licensing is necessary

Labour and Greens are committed in our joint programme to achieving licencing and as a first step in September we agreed to find the resources to research where and why licensing has been achieved successfully over the last couple of years. We have been successful in finding the money for this and researchers are being recruited. We are also committed in our joint programme to create a dedicated private rented sector enforcement team to proactively enforce housing and energy efficiency standards, including:

- fixed penalties and action against landlords guilty of criminal breaches of environmental health and safety regulations
- tackling hazardous housing conditions by increasing capacity for 'HHSRS' hazard inspection and taking the initiative in identifying properties for inspection.

We have already invested £195,000 on expanding enforcement capacity. Staff will be in post this month so we hope we can help support renters much better now. There is also capacity to enforce on hard-to-heat homes. To develop our work, we are convening a PRS members working group meeting, jointly with Labour representatives on the 29<sup>th</sup> November. The purpose of that meeting would be to agree monitoring of enforcement such as the number of requests for assistance/enforcement cases opened, how many closed satisfactorily and the resulting actions. In time, this monitoring will be reported quarterly to housing committee. This group can also firm up effective monitoring and reporting of the impact achieved with the existing HMO licensing schemes. Once we have sufficient monitoring data, we will be able to review our PRS Enforcement Strategy. With greater capacity and a more proactive commitment, we will be in a position to act faster, and where landlord actions render this appropriate, we will pursue early action within the existing, jointly agreed PRS Enforcement Strategy. This should achieve more prosecutions than in the past and, where these occur, we will publicise them. This enhanced enforcement will reflect our stance of zero-tolerance towards rogue landlords, and we are happy to support the motion on this at today's housing committee

Thirdly we are striving to prevent homelessness and end the need for rough sleeping. Our work has been recognised by government and we have been awarded funds to expand our capacity to house both entrenched and new rough sleepers to around 80 places through the No second Night Out and Off street Offer services. We are also delighted to be awarded funding to help support private tenants in rent arrears and at risk of homelessness and prevent eviction where the landlord is willing to keep them accommodated.

Turning to areas covered today's agenda I am keen to highlight the Moulsecoomb hub. This report progresses the biggest and most exciting council led housing regeneration project the council has embarked upon this century. It promises 211 new council homes at a relatively high eco specification (adopting circular economy principles) as well a community hub, a skate park and new football pitches. This project has already obtained nearly £1.7m funding from the government to progress. Sadly, the pandemic has delayed the timetable by around a year so these homes are not expected now until 23/24 meaning that the achievement of our joint programme target of 800 additional council homes currently looks like it will be a year late. Nevertheless, we are still on course to more than double the number of additional council homes that were delivered by the previous administration under our joint programme despite the challenges of the pandemic

Last week I visited new council homes on the Bristol Estate. These homes are part of the Hidden Homes programme. Not only are these homes incorporating low carbon eco features such as air source heat pumps, but the rents are regular social council rents and so affordable for all, which is a source of great pride. Thank you to Councillor Meadows as she started the Hidden Homes programme that delivers social rents.

It is vital that we strive to increase the number of additional council houses at social or at living rents (otherwise known as 27.5% Living Wage Rents and at levels similar to the Government's latest formula social rents) I have long argued that some of the rents on new council homes are too high and we are committed in our joint programme to achieving more truly affordable rents within our additional council homes programme.

Elsewhere on the agenda, the expansion of the Warm Safe Homes scheme detailed in the Carbon Reduction report could be a potential game changer for those in private accommodation suffering fuel poverty. This could also be a way of starting to develop a local supply chain for this work, given the sector has been stunted by the failure of the government's Green Homes Grant scheme. We will also be looking at working with the community and voluntary sector to raise awareness of this scheme across the city.

The Housing Repairs report is there to keep members updated. As members will be aware from previous committee reports, we have been keeping up with emergency and essential repairs. However, a backlog of routine repairs has built up. The report sets out the recruitment being undertaken to address this, as well as the anticipated time line for eradicating the backlog. Given the high demand for social housing, a key focus has been to reduce the number of empty properties known as voids. Following the worst of the pandemic in March there were 311 voids this has now reduced to 266 but we need to bring this number down as fast as possible to the pre pandemic average of around 200.

The leaseholder report provides detail to the proposals outlined in the September report. The intention is to provide flexibility for leaseholders who own a single property and who can struggle to pay their share for large major works bills.

Overall, I hope it is clear we are beginning to bounce back from the pandemic, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank staff for all their hard work getting us to where we are now.

## **35 CALL OVER**

35.1 All agenda items were called for discussion by the committee.

## **36 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

(a) Petitions – None

(b) Written Questions – Six Questions have been submitted:

36.1 Ellen Musgrove of Acorn (Sam Skelt to speak on behalf of Ellen Musgrove)

Question:

*"After several meetings with ACORN over the past year, councillors and officers said they were committed to landlord licensing. Then before September's housing committee*

*meeting the Private Sector Housing Update Report did not recommend pursuing landlord licensing schemes without anyone contacting ACORN to say the strategy had changed. Then bizarrely the administration voted to amend its own report to say the council was still committed to landlord licensing. Can the committee explain why this happened, who is responsible for this failure, and how can renters trust the council when they backtrack on commitments like this?"*

Response: Thank you for your question.

Improving the quality and management of homes in the private rented sector is a key area of focus in the Housing Committee Work Plan. This includes the pledge in our joint programme with Labour to implement landlord licensing. This commitment has not changed. However, officers in September advised that we did not have sufficient evidence to recommend we proceed to the next stage.

Our commitment to landlord licensing has never wavered - we believe it works and this has been backed up by independent research carried out for the government back in 2019 and more recent research carried out by the Centre for Public Data. To be clear, the recommendation in the report in September was referring to not being able to move on to the next stage of the process i.e., going out for consultation, and it was never an intention to stop working towards a licensing scheme. So, the amendment to the report was just clarifying this rather than reversing a previous decision we had made.

With regard to selective licensing of private rented homes, our current legal advice is that there is a large deficit in evidence required to demonstrate that there is a significant problem which can only be addressed by way of a selective licensing scheme.

In the absence of robust evidence to support the need for a scheme Legal advice does not currently support any recommendation to proceed with consultation on any proposed scheme. The council would also be at significant risk of Judicial Review by landlords or agents should any scheme proceed without robust evidence.

Housing Committee was updated on this issue on 22 September and agreed to request resources for a review of the national position with regard to selective licensing designations to better understand the circumstances in which any approvals are currently being given.

Resources have been identified to fund this research which is currently being commissioned to enable a report back to Housing Committee.

The council currently license over 4,000 houses in multiple occupation and has invested an additional £195,000 to support our Private Sector Housing enforcement work.

There were no supplementary questions.

36.2 Daniel Harris

Question:

*How much revenue in rent do you get from the government for Housing Benefit payments for those listed in emergency and Temporary Accommodation? of that payment how much does the council keep? & how much goes to other sources? can you let us know where: private sector etc. (All sources of income).*

*Finally, can you list all of the Grants and funding bids the council has received in the last 5 years including a figure for each year? (All sources of income).*

Response: Thank you for your question.

I am really sorry, but officers do not have the resources to research, collate information, complete and sign off a response to this detailed two-part question within the four full working days between receipt (10 November) and Housing Committee (17 November).

A written response will be prepared to the first part and circulated to committee and yourself as soon as possible senior Housing officers will contact you to clarify exactly what information is being requested in the more time consuming 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the question and depending what is wanted will then agree a reasonable period to complete a response which we will also share with members of Housing Committee.

Supplementary question: Following the items in the local press relating to empty homes and the cut in Universal Credit many are at risk. Please review the allocations policy.

The speaker was informed that the numbers on the housing register have decreased due to more restrictions. The allocations policy will be reviewed in the future, as well as Home Move.

36.3 David Thomas (Charles Harrison will ask this question at committee)

Question:

*SWEP. Emergency should never be a secret. Please advise how SWEP is meant to work this year now there is no public involved and no public notifications.*

Response: Thank you for your question.

In addition to referring Mr Thomas to our responses to previous public questions and supplementary questions on 'secret' SWEP at Housing Committee on 18 November 2020, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and 17 March 2021, I can advise as follows:

Following the pandemic, we, along with other councils have had to change the way SWEP is delivered as we have moved away from shared space type of provision, due to measures required to control infections and outbreak.

Our commissioned Outreach Street Service who will be working on the streets 7 days a week is aware of people who are sleeping rough and direct them to the provision we have available. In addition, we ensure our other providers, including First Base Day Centre are aware when SWEP triggers and can link people to SWEP.

If members of the public see people rough sleeping, we would ask them to report to 'Streetlink' to ensure that they can be found and offered shelter.

As advised in previous reports to Housing Committee, the council will continue to offer accommodation to all verified rough sleepers where this is permissible within the Council's powers. In line with the Homeless Bill of Rights, our aim is to offer accommodation to all verified rough sleepers whatever the weather where this is permissible within the council's powers. Our approach has been successful so far with Brighton achieving the greatest reduction in rough sleeper numbers of any council outside London last year. Partly in recognition of our achievement we have been awarded additional funds to expand our no second night out and off the street offer, to accommodate 80 verified rough sleepers which we hope will help us to sustain our progress despite the ending of everyone in funding from September last year.

Supplementary question: Rough sleepers increased from 16 to 39 in September 2021 – what actions are being taken?

The speaker was informed that spotlight counts show seasonal variations. Months in different years should be compared. The council are seeking to be inline with the Homeless Bill of Rights. In November a comprehensive count will be undertaken, and this will show if progress has been achieved. 'No second night out' and 'Streetlink' are still in action, as are the Homeless Reduction Board.

#### 36.4 Charles Harrison

Question:

*"The recent Kerslake report highlighted that poor housing has wide-ranging impacts, making significant demands on many Council Departments and Support Organisations. It also called for an increase in the supply of Social Housing.*

*However, the national supply of suitable social housing falls well short of the 90,000 new homes at social rent needed every year, as called for in the UK Government "Building More Social Housing" Report.*

*What progress has the Council made in achieving its target to build more new Council homes and in reducing the unit build cost towards the £167k average cost per unit for the SE region, as identified in the UK Government Consultation "Use of receipts from Right to Buy sales?"*

Response: Thank you for your question.

There have been 271 additional council homes delivered through the New Homes for Neighbourhoods, Hidden Homes and Home Purchase programme since May 2019. There are a further 246 new council homes currently on site and targeted through the Home Purchase programme to be delivered by May 2023.

A number of additional homes are currently being progressed including Homes for Brighton & Hove projects which are on site in Portslade and Coldean with 346 affordable homes (over half of which will be council rented), and the proposals for 211 new homes in Moulsecoomb that are being considered by committee today. Taken together this represents another 387 council homes to add to the 246 suggesting that another 633 additional council homes on site and hopefully completed over the next 2 and a half

years. This is an impressive prospect considering the previous administration averaged 51 additional council homes a year

The council ensures that all new build costs are reviewed by independent specialist to ensure value for money. There are a number of issues that affect costs including:

- General issues with the supply of materials and labour creating volatility in the construction market
- A high specification for new council homes to ensure they are robust and of high quality
- High sustainability standards including low carbon and bio-diversity measures. Whilst these measures add to upfront cost it is much cheaper to install them in the new home rather than wait until we are faced with expensive retrofitting bills to comply with higher environmental standards in the future
- The inclusion of high quality public space in many schemes
- The constrained nature of sites within the city resulting in high enabling and abnormal costs
- Higher construction costs within the city than the wider area.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging period for the council's new build programme, with a particular impact on the pipeline of new projects. Officers are working to ensure all housing supply programmes effectively recover from this difficult period.

In order to meaningfully compare build costs a whole life assessment is needed.

Supplementary question: It is appreciated that the city has made progress in costs and climate issues. What measures are BHCC looking at to modernise builds? What are the build costs per square metre for the Portslade development?

The speaker was informed that modern building methods are being explored and the build costs for Portslade are not available at this time.

### 36.5 Jim Deans

Question:

*“Recent commissioned reports and guidance from government are showing the need for Social Housing, the lack of it featuring high as a cause of many physical and mental illness. Can the Health and Well-being Board support a plan to build Social Homes and reduce the burden on local services including the NHS?”*

Response: Thank you for your question.

Thank you for your question which appears to have been addressed by the H&WB board on 2 November 2021, however I can respond.

The council is committed to providing additional affordable homes, both through our Corporate Plan and the Housing Committee Work Plan. The council's priority is delivery of additional council homes as well as other affordable homes, usually via Registered Providers (housing associations).



- We have a total of 466 additional council homes projected for delivery for 2019 to 2023. We will look to see if we can increase this number in this year's budget due to committee in January 2022 144 additional council homes were provided last year (2020/21).
- We have a total of 1,100 additional affordable homes (usually via registered providers) projected for delivery between 2019 to 2023 (379 homes for rent and 721 for shared ownership). 48 additional affordable homes were delivered last year 2021/22 by registered providers.

Updates on progress with delivery of new council homes and other affordable homes are reported to resident Area Panels and Housing Committee on a quarterly basis.

We have also reported to Housing Committee on successful bids for Government funding for accommodation and support for rough sleepers, including significant expansion of Housing First homes offering accommodation and support to clients with multiple & complex needs. We have purchased 30 Housing First homes and have funding to purchase a further 30 homes for Housing Led Support. We also have funding for an additional 30 homes to be leased for a Rapid Re-Housing Scheme.

Your question mentions 'a plan to build Social Homes'.

We are approached with many such initiatives and would suggest you share any business case with Housing colleagues in order that we can assess the commissioning needs the proposal seeks to meet, alignment to City Plan in terms of any proposed sites and the proposed management and support arrangements for any homes. The Housing Committee is responsible not the HWB for increasing the supply of affordable housing in the city, but as a key corporate priority it is a policy supported by all corporate decision-making bodies including the HWB."

It is worth noting that the way government defines social rents has changed and the new social rent formula leads to considerably higher rents than traditional council social rents.

Supplementary question: Please line up to council policy with regard to social rents. Are rents at Moulsecoomb hub to be social?

The speaker was informed that the social rents are a commitment for the council and are reviewed at Housing committee. Moulsecoomb hub rents will be looked at by the Housing Supply Board, it is hoped they will be lower than other new developments.

#### 36.6 Jackie Strube & Ian Macintyre (Hanover Action)

Question:

*Having just completed our B&H Carbon Reduction Fund supported **Hanover Action** project on Greening Hanover Homes, together with the Low Carbon Trust, see <https://hanover-action.org.uk/home/taking-action/greening-hanover-homes/> we would like to submit the following question for next week's Housing Committee please:*

*"Hanover Action welcomed the budget amendment in 2020 to create a £2.6 million warmer homes budget and its subsequent doubling to an investment of £5.2 million in 2021/22 for support towards the councils' ambitious carbon neutral 2030 goal. We are concerned to read in the report "carbon reduction in housing" at housing committee that only "up to £400,000" of this budget is likely to be spent in 21/22. Given we are facing a climate emergency we believe that using this resource to help provide warmer homes with a lower carbon footprint should be a priority and we ask that the committee explain the delay and provide members of the public with a timetable setting the expected stages up to an estimated date by which the budget will be fully spent?"*

Response: Thank you for your question.

Thank you for your question and the update on the 'Greening Hanover Homes' project. The recommended allocation of £400,000 of Warm Homes funding to support the Warm Safe Homes Grants is a direct and timely response to the current pressure on energy bills caused by rising wholesale energy prices and support for vulnerable households over the winter months.

This funding represents the first phase of the wider Warm Homes programme that will be planned over the coming months with external support to design the scheme and outline delivery options, as this capacity and expertise does not exist in the Council. Resources to buy in the expertise were provided in a previous budget and it is a priority to get on with this work. The timetable for delivery will be based on the recommendations of this advice, taking into account both policy decisions for Council and any required procurement of delivery partners. We recognise the urgent need to deliver on the warmer homes spend and we will provide a detailed timetable early next year.

Supplementary question: Have consultants been appointed or is this part of the procurement process?

The speaker was informed that consultants have not been appointed and funding is in place for Warm Safe Homes. The council has a priority to invest in carbon neutral.

(c) Deputations – One deputation has been received from Jim Deans and five signatories.

#### 36.7 Deputation: Urgent Rent Review

Speaker: Jim Deans

*With property rental costs soaring and rapidly growing Councils are forced to spend millions with private landlords to accommodate the growing population. Millions of people trapped in emergency and temporary accommodation this is set to hit 2 million people by 2030 if we do not act.*

*Malnutrition, drink and drug abuse, domestic abuse and violence, child poverty, and plain old trapped in debt these are all part of the same crisis. Council setting its own rents at Local Housing Allowance or near trap people in debt, it makes the transition*

*from unemployment to work very difficult, people with disabilities have no option but to live their lives on benefits trapped by the high rents.*

*The Kerslake Commission report spells out the implications of privatisation, we are having to buy back previously sold council homes which were sold at a great loss (I have an example of a flat sold under the RTB for £15k and recently bought back for £250k). Under the RTB we still lose a social rent home and the people living there could either be students exploited, we have a lot of families living in overcrowded positions, essentially hidden homeless, living from one room. Because the standards in private sector housing is worse than the overcrowding. Include those stuck in high rents and benefit capped. Genuine working families are left with £70 to live off each month or a single working woman only £10 better off while working a 40 hour week due to high rents, 3rd child rule drives families and single parents further into debt. We are exploiting the most vulnerable when the system needs to be fairer to keep children above the poverty line.*

*There needs to be fairness in council rents, some people have rents set at Social Level yet are high earners. Some council homes have multiple people in the home working yet still paying one social rent, meanwhile some people are on minimum wage but paying Local Housing Allowance level of rent leaving them trapped in debt or having to use Discretionary Funds or Universal credit to live, they are trapped.*

*We need a rent review of the Council Owned and managed and even Council Owned but leased out to Private Landlords or Trusts/Charities. A fairness Rent Policy and scale to match people's earnings.*

*We the signed hereby formally request an Urgent Rent review we would also like transparency and a community involvement in this review.*

Response: Thank you for your Deputation.

You raise a crucial question of providing truly affordable housing and rightly point out that so called affordable rents at Local Housing Allowance levels make work unattractive for low paid workers.

Part of the housing and homelessness joint programme pledges to maximise new rents at social and living rent levels and this approach seeking greater affordability will be considered as part of a review into how the additional council homes programme addresses need and is funded. This is a complex piece of work; it will take some time and will look at the points you raise. It is worth noting that we are heavily constrained by the governments subsidy system on making changes to existing rents. However, there is more scope for rent choices on the additional council homes achieved in the future. While we are waiting for this review to be done and reported to committee, we can, in the meantime, in the HRA capital budget for 2022/23 explore increasing the rent reserve provision which is used to maximise the numbers of additional social rented and 27.5% Living Wage Rented (i.e., at living rents) that are achieved under the existing rent policy.

Any reports back to a future Housing Committee will set out community involvement and I am personally happy to discuss approaches to maximising affordability with the Housing coalition.

The speaker requested that the council access the government funding and was informed that the council will be submitting requests and the Joint Venture Homes are doing a good job at reducing rents.

### **37 ITEMS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL**

37.1 There were none.

### **38 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS**

**(a) Petitions:** None

**(b) Written Questions:** None

**(c) Letters:** None

**(d) Notices of Motion:** One.

38.1 Labour Group: Notice of motion

It is recognised that the majority of private sector landlords in the city make a positive contribution to housing in our city and this is valued. However, a recent report revealed that almost half of private renters in South East were victims of illegal acts by landlords. We have provided much needed extra funding for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) enforcement team and have recruited more staff to tackle this problem in our city. We are now in a position to do more to deter rogue landlord activity.

The National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) chief executive states that rogue and criminal landlords puts tenants at risk and undermines the reputation of decent landlords. It is essential that Brighton and Hove send out a strong message that rogue landlords will not be tolerated in our city. Many council across the country have adopted a zero tolerance approach to rogue and criminal landlords. It is high time we do the same.

This motion moves that:

1. This housing committee declares an intention to adopt a zero tolerance approach to rogue landlords
2. This housing committee agrees that a database of rogue landlords where action has been successfully taken should be made available on Brighton & Hove council website in accordance with s 4.5 of Rogue Landlord Enforcement Guidance for Local Authorities

Proposer Councillor Gill Williams, Seconder Councillor Theresa Fowler

Sources:

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/homes/property/news/19582869.almost-half-private-renters-south-east-victim-illegal-acts-landlords/>

<https://www.nrla.org.uk/news/chronic-failure-to-tackle-rogue-landlords-puts-tenants-at-risk>

- 38.2 Councillor Williams proposed the motion to the committee and asked for a data base of convicted landlords and noted that many are good and valued in the city. The NRLA have urged councils to use powers to stop rogue and criminal landlords and the council needs to send a strong message to landlords.
- 38.3 Councillor Fowler seconded the motion and stated that rogue and illegal landlords will not be tolerated, and the council needs to set a standard and support the request for a data base for rogue and criminal landlords.
- 38.4 Councillor Hugh-Jones thanked the Members for the motion and stated they had supported such actions before and the national package of reforms. There is zero tolerance of rogue and criminal landlords, a strong message followed by enforcement action is needed. Monitoring is ongoing; however, enforcement cannot reach everyone, and the council needs to be pro-active. It was hoped the committee would support the motion.
- 38.5 Councillor Mears requested that only rogue landlords be on the data base and noted that the enforcement officers 'on the beat' were the best way forward. The councillor requested that the data would be on the council website.
- 38.6 Councillor Gibson commented that only prosecuted landlords would be on the data base.
- 38.7 Councillor Williams noted that the national data base had been successful and that only prosecuted landlords were on that list. It was hoped that Brighton and Hove City Council would share a link to the national data base.
- 38.8 Councillor Mears thanked the councillor and stated they wanted assurance that the criteria was correct, and they did not want any good landlords to be put off.
- 38.9 Councillor Meadows commented that the word 'legal' could be added to the second recommendation: '...where *legal* action has been...'
- 38.10 Councillors Gibson, Williams and Fowler agreed the change to the wording.

Vote

- 38.11 A vote was taken, and the committee agreed unanimously to accept the notice of motion. (Councillor Philips was not present at the vote).

## 39 CARBON REDUCTION IN HOUSING

- 39.1 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager introduced the report to the committee.

Answers to Questions from Committee Members

- 39.2 Councillor Mears raised a question relating to Outreach funding and was informed that there was no exact figure at this time, however, a figure below £10,000 is expected. The council are working with local partners on warm houses and outcomes will be reported back to the committee.
- 39.3 Councillor Hills raised a question relating to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings and was informed that the lower rates are required by 2030. The previous energy strategy was set at a national standard. It is possible to increase a EPC from lower to higher, however, different properties have various challenges, and the council are looking at the best use of money. The data for EPC across housing stock is not good and the use of local people for repairs and maintenance has become a key priority.
- 39.4 Councillor Platts raised questions relating to communal blocks of flats and communications to residents and was informed that all leaseholders in a block would be contacted and agreements requested. It was noted that residents need to be onboard with the changes, some are very engaged, and communications is ongoing. On site talks and letter drops are in place and a return to face to face meetings is being assessed.
- 39.5 Councillor Meadows raised a question relating to EPC data and was informed that the homes at F rating were a priority and future committees will be updated on progress. Councillor Meadows asked if tenants would be moved out and was informed that some properties have challenges that prevent upgrading however, if tenants needed moving this would be looked at on a case by case basis.
- 39.6 Councillor Hugh-Jones proposed an amendment to the recommendations, which was seconded by Councillor Gibson. Amendment: That 2.2 of the recommendations should read as follows: Housing Committee is mindful of the need to give the sector confidence in the continued funding of this work.

Housing Committee agree that the Disabled Facilities Grant Housing Policy be brought back to Committee before the end of March 2022 to enable the extension of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Housing Policy (Appendix 1) beyond 31st March 2022.

That in the meantime the DFG be extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and that Housing Committee agree the expansion of the Warm Safe Homes Grant as detailed in the report at 3.11.

- 39.7 Councillor Meadows raised a question relating to cost and was informed that the money was available, and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) would be agreed by the committee.

- 39.8 Councillor Hugh-Jones noted that the Green Group had not proceeded with a roll out of solar panels as the government changed the feed-in tariff. An information hub for carbon reduction was suggested to give residents advice. An energy plan is key to moving forward and it was noted that any plan needs to dovetail with works being done under the auspices of the Greater Brighton Economic Board. The feedback from the installation of air source heat pumps on the Bristol estate is awaited for indicators on the way forward.
- 39.9 Councillor Meadows raised a question relating to DFG and was informed that the grant followed the tax year, and the funding is constant, however the policy needs updating.
- 39.10 Councillor Hugh-Jones clarified that the DFG is supported by the Green administration.

Vote

- 39.11 A vote was taken, and the committee agreed the amendments by 7 to 3.
- 39.12 A vote was taken on the recommendations as amended and the committee agreed by 7 to 1 (two Members did not vote).

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note progress and planned action with regard to carbon reductions in housing.
- 2.2 Housing Committee is mindful of the need to give the sector confidence in the continued funding of this work.

Housing Committee agree that the Disabled Facilities Grant Housing Policy be brought back to Committee before the end of March 2022 to enable the extension of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Housing Policy (Appendix 1) beyond 31st March 2022.

That in the meantime the DFG be extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and that Housing Committee agree the expansion of the Warm Safe Homes Grant as detailed in the report at 3.11.

**40 PROCUREMENT OF CONTRACT FOR DOOR ENTRY SYSTEMS AND CCTV (HRA)**

- 40.1 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager introduced the report to the committee.

Answers to Committee Member Questions

- 40.2 Councillor Mears stated they would support 2.1 (i) of the recommendations, however they would not support 2.1 (ii) as they did not want the committee to be bypassed.
- 40.3 Councillor Platts raised questions relating to anti-social behaviour, damaged doors, entry and access buttons and perceived unnecessary works and was informed that the only council approved works will take place by a dedicated engineer. All residents would be spoken to before any works are commenced. Those blocks most in need will be

prioritised, with lighting being looked at the same time, however, lighting has a different funding stream. The state of doors will be looked at when entry systems are installed. CCTV can help to prevent anti-social behaviour and there have been many requests across the city for installations. In certain circumstances the trade button can be removed to prevent anti-social behaviour, however, some residents have preferred to keep the buttons.

- 40.4 Councillor Fowler raised a question relating to CCTV and was informed that the use of CCTV will be assessed for each location or site. There are a range of options available, and CCTV is not always the best, installations are taken on a case by case basis.
- 40.5 Councillor Williams raised a question relating consultations and was informed that ward councillors are being consulted on individual properties and this is ongoing.
- 40.6 Councillor Meadows raised questions relating to apprenticeships and diversity and was informed that the social value outcome was the target with apprenticeships and when submitting under the procurement process, local businesses with apprentices score higher. Diversity is hard to measure when inviting businesses to tender, there is not a key performance indicator, however, businesses are required to indicate their approach to diversity.
- 40.7 Councillor Hugh-Jones requested that committee be updated more often than every 3 years. This was agreed by the Executive Director - Housing Neighbourhoods & Communities.
- 40.8 Councillor Mears commented that the committee should see documents and make decisions as delegated decisions could not be supported.

Vote

- 40.9 A vote was taken, and the committee agreed unanimously to accept recommendation 2.1 (i) and 2.1 (ii) by 7 to 3.

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee delegate authority to the Executive Director for Housing Neighbourhoods and Communities to:
- (i) Procure and award contracts for Door Entry and CCTV systems services described below for a term of 3 years.
  - (ii) Approve an extension(s) to this contract for a period of up to two years following the initial three year term, subject to satisfactory performance by the provider.

**41 LEASEHOLDER PAYMENT OPTIONS - UPDATE**

- 41.1 The Assistant Director of Housing introduced the report to the committee.

Answers to Committee Member Questions



- 41.2 Councillor Fowler raised questions relating to costs to tenants and was informed that the costs are being looked at and will be agreed with the residents, following more information on the cost to each home. It was noted that the council need to keep properties in good condition and materials are costing more. The councillor expressed concerns relating to the replacement of the roof at Mimosa Court and was informed that the roof was being investigated.
- 41.3 Councillor Mears expressed concerns relating to leaseholders who don't live in properties and using the HRA was an issue, and they did not support the report.
- 41.4 Councillor Hugh-Jones stated that the aim of the report was to help leaseholders who are in genuine hardship. Leaseholders who do not live in the property may have moved to find work and rent at a below market rent to friends or family. Leaseholders will be supported on a case by case basis.
- 41.5 Councillor Meadows stated that the HRA is tenant's money and sub-letting is defrauding and they did not support the report.
- 41.6 Councillor Williams raised questions relating to selling properties whilst undergoing repair works, costs and lease extensions and was informed that the council has purchased 256 properties, the costs will be modelled to project total sum and the extension of leases is not covered by this report.
- 41.7 Councillor Gibson commented that loans, equity shares etc are not subsidised by the HRA and the offer is to extend residential leaseholders who have moved out.
- 41.8 Councillor Meadows considered that this was not accurate and the HRA is not a loan.
- 41.9 Councillor Gibson did not consider this to be the same.

**Vote**

- 41.10 A recorded vote was taken, and councillors Hugh-Jones, Hills, Williams, Fowler, Philips, Platts and Gibson voted for the recommendations and councillors Mears, Meadows and Barnett voted against.

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee approve extension of payment options for non-resident leaseholders as set out in the report for whom this is the only property they own where it has been demonstrated that all other options to meet the cost of the works have failed.

**42 HOUSING REPAIRS UPDATE**

- 42.1 The Head of Housing Repairs & Maintenance introduced the report to the committee.

**Answers to Committee Members Questions**

- 42.2 Councillor Williams raised a question relating to progress and was informed that feedback will be given to the committee and updates were being given to residents via

the Home-In magazine along with talking to residents directly. Contact will be improved when the new IT system is installed next year.

- 42.3 Councillor Platts raised a question relating to dates for kitchen and bathroom improvement works and was informed that the council are working on dates, following delays from the pandemic, no dates can be given at the moment, however, officers are working together to move this forward.
- 42.4 Councillor Barnett raised questions relating to number of pre visits to properties prior to works being carried out and was informed that depending on the job, usually only one visit would be required, however, it may be more.
- 42.5 Councillor Mears raised questions relating to the number of additional services, increase in costs. The councillor stated they were concerned and was informed that less staff transferred from 'Mears' than expected and the additional staff recruitment was the resource service and increase in costs.
- 42.6 Councillor Hugh-Jones stated that there were problems with 'Mears' before the contract was moved in-house and the back log was due to the pandemic.
- 42.7 Councillor Mears considered the management of the contract to be an issue and noted that the monitoring officer had support the councillor's previous comments and the TPC contract was a light touch contract.
- 42.8 A vote was taken, and the committee unanimously agreed the recommendations.

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note progress and next steps with regard to addressing the backlog of housing repairs.

**43 MOULSECOOMB NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB & HOUSING SCHEMES: UPDATE REPORT**

- 43.1 The Regeneration Programme Manager (Housing Supply) introduced the report to the committee.

**Answers to Questions from Committee Members**

- 43.2 Councillor Williams raised concerns regarding social housing rents and was informed by Sam Smith that the rents have not yet been decided and this was being currently being looked into.
- 43.3 Councillor Mears raised concerns regarding accessibility and was informed by Sam Smith that a programme was in place looking at mobility across the city and was looking at this site, which has a challenging topography. The councillor requested that the finances be carefully watched and not allowed to run away.
- 43.4 Councillor Platts raised concerns regarding carbon neutrality and was informed by Laura Webster that the air and ground heat source pumps were being investigated for the

development, along with local materials and an increase in public realm elements of the site. A report on Carbon predictions is currently being awaited. It is noted that zero carbon emissions will not be possible, however all aspects are being looked at for the whole project including concrete mix. The councillor requested that residents be updated and was informed that the local action group were being constantly updated on the development and the communications team would be uploading information to the council website.

#### Debate

- 43.5 Councillor Hills commented that they felt the development was a good use of the site and would be an asset to the wider community. It was considered that a model of the design would be good for public engagement.
- 43.6 Councillor Gibson stated that they were excited about this big housing regeneration scheme, which was complex. It was noted that the council would need to be mindful of the finances.

#### Part Two

- 43.7 The committee discussed appendix two in the confidential section of the meeting.

#### Vote

- 43.8 A vote was taken, and the committee unanimously agreed the recommendations.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That the Housing Committee recommends to Policy & Resource Committee that Policy & Resources Committee:
- 2.1.1 Authorises officers to progress the submission of a planning application for the Moulsecoomb Hub and Housing development.
- 2.1.2 Agrees the anticipated budget for this stage of £2.1m to be funded by HRA Borrowing and included as part of the 2021/22 HRA Capital Programme.

#### **44 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL**

#### **45 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS**

#### **46 MOULSECOOMB NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB & HOUSING SCHEMES: UPDATE REPORT**

#### Part Two minutes

- 46.1 The committee discussed appendix two in the confidential section of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.49pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of