

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING
4.00pm 17 JULY 2009
COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL
MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson – Labour)

Apologies: Councillor Wrighton (Opposition Spokesperson – Green)

PART ONE

14. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

14 (a) Declarations of Interests

14.1 There were none.

14 (b) Exclusion of Press and Public

14.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(I) of the Act).

14.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

15.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 3 June 2009 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

16. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Repairs Contract

16.1 The Cabinet Member reported that she was pleased to announce that Cabinet had agreed the appointment of Mears to the new Housing Repairs, Refurbishment and

Improvement Strategic Partnership. Mears had promised that Brighton & Hove would be their flagship partnership providing an excellent level of quality and customer service.

- 16.2 As well as bringing an improved service and value for money the contract would bring a number of other benefits to the city including 200 apprenticeships.
- 16.3 The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the Asset management Panel for their hard work in supporting the procurement and participating in the evaluation of bids. The Cabinet Member also thanked the officers who had help in the setting up of the partnership.

Audit Commission

- 16.4 The Cabinet Member reported a letter had been sent to the Audit Commission regarding the number of acronyms and abbreviations contained in their report on the advice and assistance visit. Meanwhile, a glossary was contained in the report to this meeting. The glossary would also be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

17. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 17.1 **RESOLVED** – That with the exception of the items reserved (and marked with an asterisk), the recommendations and resolutions contained therein be approved and adopted without debate.

18. PETITIONS

- 18.1 There were none.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 19.1 There were none.

20. DEPUTATIONS

- 20.1 There were none.

21. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 21.1 There were none.

22. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 22.1 There were none.

23. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

- 23.1 There were none.

24. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 7 May 2009 (for copy see minute book).

24.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

24 .1 MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

24a.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee held on the 22 June 2009 (for copy see minute book).

24b.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

25. LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN - GENERAL NEEDS HOUSING

25.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which reported that the Council had to regularly review and adopt Local Lettings Plans in order to be legally compliant and ensure that the plans met the council's objectives. Current arrangements had been reviewed and new proposals considered as set out in the report. There had been extensive stakeholder consultation, the outcome of which was included in the report (for copy see minute book).

25.2 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the restrictions favouring households without young children are removed. Where problems associated with child density exist in a specific block or estate, then temporary Local Letting Plans of up to 12 months may be agreed by the Cabinet Member for Housing. The impact of this will be reviewed after 12 months operation.
- (2) That all restrictions preventing letting of one bedroom property to single people are removed. This policy, no longer implemented, still formally applies to a few blocks and therefore should be formally revoked.
- (3) That a pilot Local Lettings Plan of 12 months duration be agreed whereby up to 25% of property with two bedrooms or more in nine key deprived areas are designated for households where at least one adult has been in paid employment for a minimum of 16 hours a week for at least three months. Mobility standard flats are excluded. The eight areas are: South Whitehawk, Central Whitehawk, North Whitehawk, Central Moulsecoomb, East Moulsecoomb, Knoll, Hangleton, Hollingdean and Tarnar. This will help increase economic balance within the most deprived communities where few people work and benefit dependency is viewed as the norm.

- (4) That a pilot Local Lettings Plan over a 12 month period be agreed whereby up to 20 ground and first floor flats are identified as lets where preference will be given to tenants in the same block who need to move to a lower floor to meet needs associated with lessening mobility and/or for personal safety as part of a Personal Evacuation Plan. Mobility standard flats are excluded unless the transferring tenant has a specific need for that type of property. This will be reviewed after 12 months.

26. LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN FOR SHELTERED HOUSING

- 26.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that set out the Proposed Local Lettings Plan for council sheltered housing. The proposed Local Lettings Plan had been requested by tenants through the Chairman's Focus Group (2008) and Sheltered Housing Action Group.
- 26.2 It was envisaged that the Proposed Local Lettings Plan would help make more efficient use of the councils' sheltered housing stock, and improve support for vulnerable older people who needed to move within sheltered housing (for copy see minute book).
- 26.3 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That when allocating vacant Brighton and Hove City Council sheltered housing units, priority is firstly given to BHCC sheltered housing tenants who need to move within the same scheme and secondly to existing BHCC sheltered housing tenants who need to move to another scheme. Where a flat has significant disabled adaptations, the incoming tenant must be in need of these.
- (2) That where there are no bids for two bedroom sheltered housing from eligible households assessed as needing two bedrooms then the unit can be offered to qualifying two person households with an assessed need for one bedroom. Where no such households bid, then the unit may be offered to a single person eligible for sheltered housing.
- (3) That the restriction preventing letting of sheltered flats to people with a partner or carer aged under 60 is removed. A sole tenancy would be offered to the person who is over 60.
- (4) That a new process of assessment to better ensure risk is appropriately managed, that support needs of new residents can be met fully and promote greater balance of support need within and between schemes, is introduced in September 2009.

27. AUDIT COMMISSION - ADVICE & ASSISTANCE VISIT

- 27.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which provided the results of the advice and support work provided by the Audit Commission during March 2009 (for copy see minute book). The report further provided an action plan to take forward the recommendations made by the Audit Commission following their visit in March 2009.

27.2 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation:

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted and that the action plan be agreed to meet the recommendations from the visit.

28. 25 YEAR MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS - TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION *

28.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which sought a general authority for the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing to enter into Management Agreements of up to 25 years for the purposes of providing accommodation for households who would otherwise be homeless or overcrowded (for copy see minute book). The scheme would provide an alternative to the existing medium-term arrangements that the Council used for leasing property thereby providing more settled and secure accommodation.

28.2 Councillor Simpson stated that she could see the benefit for tenants of moving into accommodation for a longer period. However, she was surprised if many private landlords would be interested in such a long term let. The Assistant Director of Housing replied that the landlords' preference was for 25 years leases. This would be an opportunity of gaining family sized units. There would be a break clause on both sides.

28.3 Councillor Simpson asked what happened in relation to housing benefit when a family had lived in a house for a long time and the children left home. The Assistant Director of Housing replied that the allocations policy had changed. Families who worked would have a higher priority for alternative housing.

28.4 The Cabinet Member stated that the proposals were an advancement on the 10 year management arrangements. She had spoken to tenants who considered that 10 years was not long enough for their security.

28.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the Council be authorised to enter into Management Agreements for up to 25 years in accordance with the terms of the report.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing to negotiate the final Heads of Terms with each landlord in consultation with the council's Valuer, the Head of Law and Finance and Property.

29. EXPENDITURE OF THE 2009/10 PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL GRANT ALLOCATION AND DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT ALLOCATION *

29.1 The Cabinet Member considered an information report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which reported that Brighton & Hove Council was the lead authority for the delivery of the 2008-2011 Private Housing Renewal Programme for Brighton and Hove and East Sussex (The BEST consortium). The consortium

received funding from the Regional Housing Board (RHB) and received the largest allocation of funding across the South East for 2009/10 (£8m).

- 29.2 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was individual government grants towards capital spending on providing disabled adaptations to housing. The DFG grant covered 60% of the DFG expenditure and Local Authorities had to meet 40% from their own resources. Brighton & Hove City Council used monies from RHB grant to “top up” this 40% contribution.
- 29.3 Councillor Simpson stated that the additional funding was good news. It was excellent that the number of grants had doubled since 2005/06. However, she had a concern about how long it took for people to get disabled facilities provided after an assessment. It sometimes took two years before work was carried out. She asked how this process could this be speeded up.
- 29.4 The Cabinet Member replied to explain that a paper would be submitted to the next Cabinet Member Meeting to see if the process could be more streamlined. The Adult Social Care & Housing Overview and Scrutiny would also be looking at this matter.
- 29.5 The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing explained that the situation had improved however there was always scope for improvement. There was now an integrated approach. Housing Options would look at the different ways of dealing with this matter.
- 29.6 Councillor Simpson asked why people had to wait so long for level access showers when it was obvious that people needed them. It sometimes took two years for the showers to be installed.
- 29.7 The Cabinet Member explained that the new repairs contract would be able to concentrate on more complex matters. The Assistant Director of Housing stressed that some cases could be extremely complicated with very specific medical needs. There were issues about how officers liaised with the Children & Young People Department. The aim was to give people long term security with 25 year leases.
- 29.8 Councillor Simpson appreciated some cases were complex but stressed that there were more straightforward cases, such as older people who could not get into a bath. The Director of Adult Social Care & Housing explained that officers were looking at a more holistic approach to meeting people’s needs. Officers had to deal with more complex cases such as people with motor neurone disease and these applications could take several years to process. Meanwhile, people in Brighton & Hove did have access to level access showers. Members of the public in many other parts of the country did not have the same access. The Director reported that the Care Quality Commission was pleased that the waiting times had gone down. The Cabinet Member was pressing to get work done on getting level access showers and the council still wanted to provide them.
- 29.10 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That it is noted that the council received £4,209,600 Private Housing Renewal Grant from the Regional Housing Board for 2009/10, through the BEST consortium. This will be spent in accordance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 following Cabinet approval.
- (2) That it is noted that the remaining grant money, £3,790,400 will be allocated to the council's BEST partner authorities in East Sussex according to an agreed split of funds following Cabinet approval.
- (3) That the development of the use of affordable home improvement loans for some owner-occupiers with the council's South Coast Money Line be noted.
- (4) That it is noted that the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation for 2009-10 is £660K.

The meeting concluded at 4.25pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of