

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 20 JANUARY 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Caulfield (Chairman); Allen, Davey, Fryer, Mears, Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson), Simson, Wells and Barnett

Tenant Representatives: Chris El-Shabba (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Beryl Snelling (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group), Sue Hansen (Tenant Disability Network) and Beverley Weaver (Foredown Estate Residents' Association)

PART ONE

48. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

48.1 Declarations of Substitutes

48a.1 Councillor Barnett for Councillor Pidgeon.
Jean Davis for Chris Kift (Central Area Panel)

48b Declarations of Interest

48b.1 There were none.

48c. Exclusion of Press and Public

48c.1 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

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

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

49.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2008 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member.

50. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 50.1 The Chairman reported that, from May 2009 the Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) would meet on Mondays rather than Tuesdays.
- 50.2 The Chairman noted that a suggestion had been made by Tom Whiting that Tenant Representatives hold a 'pre-meeting' prior to the HMCC in order to prepare. The Chairman supported the idea and noted that should Tenant Representatives wish to organise this themselves she would endeavour to offer relevant support.
- 50.3 The Chairman reported that, following the Tenant-led meeting about Communal Heating various actions had taken place; 1627 properties had been surveyed and all communal heating systems had been examined. Where practical and necessary, minor repairs had been carried out. A meeting was planned for late January with contractors to establish an Action Plan to resolve outstanding issues.
- 50.4 The communal heating system at St. James' House had been surveyed, though the Chairman noted that residents had not felt involved in the process.
- 50.5 The Chairman noted that John Melson and Tina Urquhart had stepped down from the HMCC and thanked them for their dedication and support.
- 50.6 The Chairman noted that (previous HMCC Rep) Ted Kitchen had been unwell and wished him a speedy recovery. She also noted that Stewart Gover was in hospital and wished him well.
- 50.7 The Chairman reported that information about the Local Delivery Vehicle would be provided to the Area Panels in February. The Chairman offered Members and Representatives the opportunity to be briefed in the interim by Officers should they request.
- 50.8 The Chairman recognised the amount of work that Officers, Members and Tenant Representatives undertook and the frustrations that occasionally arose. She asked that the atmosphere of mutual respect engendered over years of co-working, was remembered.

51. CALLOVER

- 51.1 All items were reserved.

52. PETITIONS

- 52.1 The Chairman acknowledged receipt of a survey style petition from the members of the North Whitehawk Tenants and Residents Association in relation to the provision of thermal cladding.
- 52.2 The Chairman requested that a report on the issue be provided to a future meeting of the HMCC.

53. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

53.1 There were none.

54. DEPUTATIONS

54.1 There were none.

55. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

55.1 There were none.

56. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

56.1 There were none.

57. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET REPORT 2009/10

57.1 The meeting considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that presented the Housing Revenue Account Forecast Outturn for 2008/09 as at month 6 and the proposed Budget for 2009/10 as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (for copy see minute book).

57.2 The Chairman accepted an amendment tabled in relation to the report. The amendment reflected recent changes to the national economy and their impact on the Housing Revenue Account.

57.3 Councillors Mears and Wells noted the 3 million Housing Subsidy that the Government collected from the council. They felt that this could be perceived as a 'tax' levied on Tenants.

57.4 Councillor Simpson noted the many years that the council had benefited from the subsidy. She also noted that Government were currently looking to review of subsidy arrangements.

57.5 Councillor Fryer noted a reduction in the gardening scheme for older people. Officers clarified that the reduction was in administration of the scheme rather than to the budget.

57.6 In response to a query from Councillor Fryer, Officers reported that the 1.6 million identified in the report would be the subject of a report to the next meeting, in consideration of the Capital Programme.

57.7 Councillor Fryer asked if there were to be reductions in the number of Community Wardens. Officers explained that of the 13 posts originally created only 12 were recruited too. Following restructuring the 13th post was redundant and had been abolished.

57.8 Councillor Allen asked about the re-alignment of rent charges in anticipation of stock transfer in 2007. Officers commented that this work was required by the Government of The South East in order to access Stock Transfer Gap Funding.

57.9 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee accepted the following recommendations:

That the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommend to the Housing Cabinet Member that Cabinet:

(1) approves the budget for 2009/10 as shown in Appendix 1

(2) approves individual rent increases and decreases in line with rent restructuring principles as determined by the Government.

(3) approves the changes to fees and charges as detailed in paragraph 3.14 to 3.20 of the report.

(4) authorises the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing to implement the new rents, fees and charges, but with delegation to make any minor amendments which may appear to be appropriate in particular cases; and

(5) authorises the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing to prepare and place on deposit the statement of proposals, estimates and other particulars as required by Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

(6) That the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommends to Housing Cabinet that the late adjustment is included in the HRA 2009/10 budget.

58. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

58.1 The meeting considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that offered recommendations on the future delivery of the support service for council sheltered housing tenants. This, following a review of the service. The report also included a review of the communal service charges in sheltered housing and details of the support charge for 2009/10 (for copy see minute book).

58.2 Tom Whiting welcomed the report and thanked those officers involved for their patience and hard work in negotiating with the Sheltered Housing Action Group.

58.3 Members welcomed the report and the close working with Tenants.

58.4 In response to concerns from Tenant Representatives about the employment of Scheme Managers, officers noted that a review of recruitment and retention had been undertaken. The results of this review would be discussed with the Sheltered Housing Action Group.

57.10 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee accepted the following recommendations:

The Housing Management Consultative Committee recommends that the Housing Cabinet Member meeting:

(1) Notes the proposal, following consultation with residents, to retain a traditional, on site, scheme manager model of service, which will continue to be managed as a non residential service.

(2) Agrees the revised communal service charges as set out in Appendix 1 with effect from 6 April 2009 and authorises the Director of Adult Social Care and Housing to implement the new service and charges, but with power to make any minor amendments which may appear to be appropriate in particular cases.

59. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 59.1 The meeting considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that provided information on current performance within Housing Management services and on general policy initiatives underway to improve performance (for copy see minute book).
- 59.2 Beryl Snelling noted that a gas pipe had been damaged during construction work near the Patching Lodge site; she asked if the council would have to pay for this. Officers replied that the council was in negotiations with contractors to recover any costs.
- 59.3 Heather Hayes and Ted Harman noted that the 'Out of Hours' emergency repair service had, at one point recently been staffed by a single contractor. This individual had worked extremely long hours in difficult circumstances and the service to those in need had been poor. The Chairman and Assistant Director understood this to be an isolated incident but would check with Managers and report back.
- 59.4 Jean Davis noted that the electric tumble dryer at Leach Court had been out of action for some time, she wondered when it would be replaced. Officers expected that a repair or replacement should be effected within a fortnight.
- 59.5 Councillor Allen noted the improvement in rent collection and that figures were recorded area by area. He suggested that it might be prudent to move to a single, 'city-wide' figure. Councillor Allen also suggested a more challenging target be set in dealing with cases where tenants were more than seven weeks in arrears. The Assistant Director noted that new targets were currently being formulated and he would take into account the comments.

59.6 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee accepted the following recommendation:

(1) That comments of the Housing Management Consultative Committee be noted.

60. DRAFT TENANCY AGREEMENT

60.1 The meeting considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing that presented further results of the tenant led Chairman's Working Group considering the development and adoption of a revised tenancy agreement for tenants living in council housing (for copy see minute book).

60.2 Councillor Mears welcomed the report and the revised Tenancy Agreement. She noted the work that had gone into producing the document and the need to consistently enforce the agreement.

60.3 Councillor Wells noted that if the relationship between Joint Tenants broke down, both parties remained responsible for the Tenancy even if one of them had moved out of the property. Officers confirmed that this was the case.

60.4 Ted was concerned that Leaseholders were at a disadvantage if they had poorly behaved neighbours. Ted understood that if a Leaseholder wished to sell their property they had to say what their neighbours were like. A poorly behaved neighbour could impact negatively on the selling of the property. Ted felt that it was important that any reported poor behaviour was acted on quickly and the Tenancy Agreement enforced thoroughly.

60.5 Sue Hansen noted that Tenancy Agreement stated that running a business from your home was not allowed. She asked what the case was if someone was running an illegal business; selling drugs for example. Officers commented that drugs and drug dealing were covered by the Tenancy Agreement and were not acceptable.

60.6 Ted noted that the Tenancy Agreement was a legal document and he felt this point should be made clear to those signing it and those enforcing it.

60.7 The Assistant Director noted that the next stages for the draft Tenancy Agreement were wider formal consultation with Tenants and then the production of a Handbook to support and expand upon the meaning of the agreement.

60.8 In response to a query from Heather, the Assistant Director explained that the new Agreement would cover all tenancies (existing and new) and that all Tenants would be affected. Not everyone was required to sign a new document as the issuing of a 'variation notice' would cover the legal requirements.

60.9 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the Housing Management Consultative Committee notes the amended draft of the Tenancy Agreement agreed by the working group attached at Appendix 1.
- (2) That the Housing Management Consultative Committee endorse the conclusions of the working group which will be taken forward as the basis for wider consultation with stakeholders and tenants on the development and adoption of a revised tenancy agreement for tenants living in council housing and forward to the housing cabinet member meeting for approval.

The meeting concluded at 4.20pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of