

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

3.00pm 18 DECEMBER 2012

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Jarrett (Chair), Councillor Mears (Opposition Spokes Person), Councillor Farrow (Opposition Spokesperson), Barnett, Littman, Pidgeon and Robin.

Tenant Representatives , and Valerie Paynter (Hi Rise Action Group).

PART ONE

28. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

28A Declarations of Substitute Members

28.1 Councillor Littman declared he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wakefield
Councillor Mears declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Peltzer
Dunn.
Councillor Barnett declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wells.

28.2 As Councillor Wakefield (Chair) had sent her apologies and, as there was no Deputy
Chair to the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee, nominations for Chair
were requested. Councillor Farrow nominated Councillor Jarrett and Councillor Littman
seconded the nomination.

28.3 **RESOLVED** – That Councillor Jarrett be Chair.

28B Declarations of Interests

28.4 There were none.

28C Exclusion of the Press and Public

28.5 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.

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

29. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2012

- 29.1 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 24.3 and asked for confirmation on when the requested report would be provided. Officers advised that a report would go to Housing Committee at its meeting in March 2013. Councillor Mears noted that Budget Council was being held in February and asked if a briefing note could be provided at the next HMCSC meeting. The Chair agreed.
- 29.2 Councillor Robins referred to paragraph 27.8 and the use of 'days' and 'working days' in reports. He noted that in item 34 reference was again made to 'day's and asked whether that was calendar days or working days. Officers advised that 'days' would always mean calendar days unless otherwise stated. The Chair asked officers to make that clarification in future reports.
- 29.3 **RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee held on 23 October 2012 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

30. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 30.1 The Chair welcomed Ms Rita King and Mr Robert Spacie to the meeting. Ms King and Mr Spacie had been elected to represent the North and East Area Housing Management Panel on the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee. The Chair wished everyone present a very happy Christmas.

31. CALL-OVER

- 31.1 It was agreed that all items be reserved for debate and determination

32. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 32.1 There were no petitions, written questions or deputations.

33. ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

- 33.1 There were no petitions, written questions, letters or notices of motion from councillors.

34. HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2012/13

- 34.1 The Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee considered the Housing and Social Inclusion Performance report for Quarter 2 for the financial year 2012-13.
- 34.2 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 4.3 of the report, and asked how it could ever take longer than 7 days to change a light bulb, and why although 98% of cleaning passed inspection, some residents were still unhappy with the cleaning service provided. Officers said that in the vast majority of cases light bulbs were changed quickly, but there was one occasion where a particular bulb had been hard to source

and therefore there had been a delay. With regard to cleaning, the service was regularly inspected.

- 34.3 Councillor Mears asked how many homes had been transferred to Seaside Homes. The Head of Housing said he did not have the information to hand, but believed it was in the region of 200. Mr Crowhurst confirmed it was 238 homes. Ms King said that a property near to hers had been empty and had been occupied by squatters; the property had now been transferred to Seaside Homes and re-let and she wanted to thank those involved. Councillor Mears asked if the HMCSC could receive regular update on the transfer of homes. The Chair agreed.
- 34.4 Ms V Paynter referred to paragraph 4.3 and asked how often the cleaning was inspected. Officers confirmed the cleaning was checked each week, with a full inspection every quarter. Ms Paynter referred to paragraph 4.2.3 and noted that of the 1496 repair jobs which were cancelled, 33% were due to difficulties gaining access to the property. Officers confirmed that was mostly due to people making appointments and then not being at home.
- 34.5 Ms L Bennett, Ms R King and Mr B Kent said that some tenants were unhappy with the standard of cleaning provided; there had been concerns that the same water and cloth were being used for large and different areas. A complaint had been made. Officers invited tenant reps to meet with the cleaners to discuss what they do and how they clean.
- 34.6 Mr T Worsfold said that there had been problems with the lifts being out of order and noted that the meetings were to be held with contractors. Councillor Mears said that lifts did break down and parts were sometimes hard to source, but said that it was important to look after tenants particularly those who had mobility problems when lifts were not working. Officers advised that when lifts could not be repaired the same day, they had a list of those who would be affected and contacted each resident; in extreme cases people would be re-housed. Ms King confirmed that that did happen and that officers did a very good job in those situations and ensured that everyone was looked after.
- 34.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee note the report.

35. HOUSING FINANCIAL INCLUSION COMMUNITY BANKING PROJECT - INTERIM REPORT

- 35.1 The Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which provided an update on the progress of the Housing Financial Inclusion Community Banking Project.
- 35.2 Mr Crowhurst asked how those who would benefit from the service would be identified. Officers said that there would be a publicity campaign to encourage people to self refer, and those households who could be affected by the benefit changes or those who were in arrears with their rent etc would be encouraged to use the service.

- 35.3 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 5.2 and asked if the 'one off funding' would be a revenue cost. It was confirmed it would, and that £150,000 had identified to cover the cost for two financial years.
- 35.4 Councillor Robins suggested that a more appropriate name for the 'Loan Shark Advocates' could be used. Officers said that that was the title of the training provided by Trading Standards.
- 35.5 Ms Bennett said that residents found the service very helpful.
- 35.5 **RESOLVED** – That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee note the interim report.

36. INNOVATION GROUP ON RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

- 36.1 The Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Place which provided the final report for the Innovation Group.
- 36.2 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.6 and asked how many staff there would be. Officers confirmed there would be 9 staff.
- 36.3 Councillor Mears asked why the true cost of Area Panels was not known. Officers said it would be necessary to look at attendance for both panel members and staff. The cost of staff was inbuilt, but if looking at cost would need to apportion the amount of time spent. Other costs such as hire of the venue, paper, printing, taxis, childcare for tenants and the cost of other council employees such as Cityclean who might attend a meeting would need to be considered.
- 36.4 Councillor Farrow was pleased to note how dedicated the officers were in looking after tenants, and asked that when arranging training sessions that some be held out of work hours to enable as many people to attend as possible.
- 36.5 Mr Kent asked if it were possible to have a breakdown of money spent such as taxis together with a sample cost of having officers attend etc. The Chair agreed.
- 36.6 Mr Crowhurst questioned the use of 'neighbourhoods'. Officers advised that neighbourhood was used to include a whole area rather than just one tower block or development. Mr Crowhurst asked if tenants would be able to vote on the Action Plan as he felt there were some points his Area Panel would agree to and some they wouldn't. Officers advised that agreement to the Action Plan was sought at this meeting.
- 36.7 Ms Paynter was concerned that Area Panels had not voted on the Plan, and suggested that an Extraordinary meeting of the Area Panels be held.
- 36.8 Councillor Robins said that the last time the HMCSC considered the report, it had been discussed line by line and so had been fully reviewed, and recommended that the report now be endorsed.
- 36.9 Councillor Mears asked what would happen if Area Panels did not like the Action Plan. Officers said the issue could be looked at. Councillor Mears asked when tenants would

have any involvement with the Action Plan. Officers advised that the proposed Action Plan had already been discussed with tenant reps and with Area Panels.

- 36.10 Mr Worsfold suggested that the word 'proposed' be removed from the Action Plan, and officers be allowed to implement the proposals now.
- 36.11 Mr Crowhurst said the matter had been considered by Area Panels, but they had not seen the report and Action Plan which was before the HMCSC today.
- 36.12 Ms Paynter said she had concerns over the word 'endorse' and that if the HMCSC endorsed the Action Plan, tenants would think that all tenant reps agreed with it.
- 36.13 Councillor Farrow said he wanted tenants to be able to represent themselves, and although there had been different views on the matter it was important that the matter move forward. If anyone didn't agree with it they should put forward alternative suggestions.
- 36.14 Councillor Mears said that she couldn't endorse the report unless it was seen by Area Panels.
- 36.15 Mr Murtagh said that the Area Panels had seen the document, and the only changes made had been those suggested by councillors. Mr Crowhurst said that the Area Panels had discussed the issues, but they had not seen the final Action Plan. Officers said that Area Panels had seen the document before it was considered at the HMCSC meeting in September 2012 and their thoughts had been incorporated. Officers reminded everyone that staff had worked with residents, different tenant groups, City Assembly etc and the matter had been fully consulted on and people's view taken into account. Ms Paynter said that Area Panels should see the report.
- 36.16 Councillor Robins said the Action Plan had been fully discussed and it was time to move the matter on. Ms King agreed.
- 36.17 Councillor Farrow noted the comments made and proposed that as a way of moving the matter on, the following recommendation be considered:
- (i) That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee endorse the final report of the Innovation Group.
 - (ii) That the suggested action plan for broadening the reach and outcomes of resident involvement be passed to Area Panels for consideration.
- The proposal was seconded by the Chair. All councillors agreed.
- 36.18 An indicative vote was taken from the tenant reps, and they agreed with both recommendations.
- 36.19 **RESOLVED:**
- (i) That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee endorse the final report of the Innovation Group.
 - (ii) That the suggested action plan for broadening the reach and outcomes of resident involvement be passed to Area Panels for consideration.

37. HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013-16

37.1 The Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2013-2016

37.2 Councillor Farrow suggested that more money be put into loft conversions; it was a good way to provide an additional bedroom which could enable an adult child to remain in the family home.

37.3 Councillor Mears noted that at the last HMCSC meeting reference was made to a report which had gone to an earlier Policy & Resources Committee concerning cladding, and was told that a briefing note would be provided for HMCSC members but none had been provided. Officers said that a briefing note had been distributed, but it would be resent. Councillor Mears asked for clarity on the replacement of doors, as some tenants had advised her that they had had new door/s fitted when new ones weren't required. Officers said doors and handles were replaced when necessary but not otherwise, and asked her to provide details of who had had new ones fitted. Councillor Mears said she would abstain from voting on the recommendation as the report had been received late and councillors had not received a briefing.

37.4 Councillor Robins referred to the issue of loft conversion and suggested that the level of insulation would be lower as there had to be a certain height between floor and ceiling. Officers advised that any insulation would be put in the eaves, and that the thickness would be around 150mm which was less than the thickness which would be used if a loft were not being converted.

37.5 Councillor Farrow said that he was not happy with the report and felt that it wasn't good enough for tenants, and suggested that a summit be held to discuss how things could be moved forward. Officers advised that the matter had been discussed at Area Panels and at City Assembly. Councillor Farrow was unhappy that there had been insufficient time to fully consider the report, and said that he would therefore not be voting for the proposed recommendation.

37.6 **RESOLVED** That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee declined to agree with the recommendation that the report be noted.

38. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2013/14

38.1 The Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which provided information on the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2013/14.

38.2 Councillor Farrow noted that when the level of rent was set a prescribed calculation was used. This calculation included an element for the average manual wage for Sussex, and suggested that an average wage for Brighton & Hove be used instead. Officers noted the suggestion.

38.3 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.8 and asked who had taken the decision to move money from the Capital Fund to the Revenue Fund. Officers advised that Mears had now provided improved information for all their overhead costs, and that had now been more accurately divided between the two funds. The change was a more accurate

way of recording the amount spent, but the overall costs remained the same. Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.12 regarding additional staff needed to support the future HRA housing development and regeneration projects and asked who had authorised it. Officers confirmed that a new position had been created to oversee the developments. The Chair said that clarification would be obtained on who had taken that decision. Councillor Mears was concerned that the report had been provided late and she had not had time to fully consider the issues.

38.4 Councillor Robins asked why the report had been late, and was advised that the report was due to go to the next Housing Committee but it had been 'early' to HMCSC for information.

38.2 **RESOLVED** That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee declined to agree with the recommendation that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.50pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of