

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.00pm 20 JUNE 2012

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Wakefield (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Barnett, Davey, Farrow, Jarrett, Mears, Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson), Powell (Deputy Chair), Mitchell and Phillips

Other Members present: Councillors

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A Declarations of Substitute Members

1.1 Councillor Mitchell declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Fitch.

1B Declarations of Interests

1.2 Councillor Wakefield declared a Personal and Prejudicial interest in Item 9, due to her role as a board member of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes. Councillor Wakefield said she would leave the chamber during consideration of that item and Councillor Powell would take the Chair.

1C Exclusion of the Press and Public

1.3 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.

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

2. MINUTES

- 2.1 The Chair confirmed that the Minutes were on the agenda for the Committee's information only, but asked if the Members had any comments. Councillor Farrow referred to paragraph 98 and asked if an update on the adequacy of the £80k could be provided at each meeting. Councillor Wakefield said she would pass the matter to officers and ask them to provide a report on the feasibility of providing that information.
- 2.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 18 April 2012 be approved.

3. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Housing Summit

- 3.1 The Chair advised the Committee that the Council wanted to deliver well regulated, affordable and energy efficient homes, well managed council homes and to target the services to those in need.
- 3.2 The Chair reported that the Council were holding a Housing Summit on 29th June 2012. All Housing Committee members had been invited. This high level Summit would look at the challenges the council faced in delivering affordable housing in Brighton & Hove. Key themes included:
- What are our Housing Needs and key challenges, what type of housing do we need going forward?
 - How can we maximise new housing supply in Brighton & Hove?
- 3.2 The Chair invited Members to share in the latest thinking from sector experts, including Terry Fuller, Regional Director of the HCA, explore best practice and maximise networking opportunities.

2011 – 2014 Affordable Housing Development Programme

- 3.3 The Chair reported that Registered Provider (Housing Association) programme supported by Homes & Communities Agency & Council included 515 new affordable homes on 19 sites across the City in the development pipeline 2011 – 14, including recent Planning permissions such as Brighton Station site J (53 new affordable homes) & Park House (29 new affordable homes).

Brighton & Hove Seaside & Community Homes:

- 3.4 The Chair reported that leasing of empty Council homes requiring refurbishment on a 40 year lease from the Council to Seaside was proceeding apace. The Council were ahead of schedule. The first batch of properties were leased to Seaside on the 1st November with a second batch leased on the 1st February and a third batch leased on 30th March. Batch 4 was leased on the 1st June

- A total of 186 properties including batch 4 had now been leased to Seaside as of the 1st June 2012.
- The Council was approaching its 100th refurbished home brought back into use through leasing to BHSCH.

The Chair confirmed that both she, and Councillor Fitch, were board members of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes.

4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

(a) Petitions

4.1 The Committee noted that there were no petitions from members of the public.

(b) Written Questions

4.2 The Committee noted that no written questions from members of the public had been submitted for the meeting.

(c) Deputations

4.3 The Committee noted that no deputations from members of the public had been submitted for the meeting.

5. ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

(a) Petitions

5.1 The Committee noted that there were no petitions from councillors.

(b) Written Questions

5.2 The Committee noted that no written questions from councillors had been submitted for the meeting.

(c) Deputations

5.3 The Committee noted that no deputations from councillors had been submitted for the meeting.

6. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

6.1 The Committee considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee meeting held on the 29 May 2012.

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

7. CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer which provided information on the committee's terms of reference and related matters including the appointment of its Urgency Sub-Committee. The Committee were advised that paragraph 3.9 of the report which stated '*The Constitution states that each Committee of the Council except the Audit & Standards Committee may appoint an Urgency Sub-Committee to exercise its powers..*', should read '*must appoint*' rather than '*may appoint*'.

7.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if once member of a sub committee were appointed, whether substitutions were permitted. The lawyer advised that as membership of a sub committee was based on political groups it would be acceptable.

7.3 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the committee's terms of reference, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;

(2) That the establishment of a Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee with the terms of reference as detailed in appendix B to the report be approved; and

(3) That the establishment of an Urgency Sub-Committee consisting of the Chair of the Committee and two other Members (nominated in accordance with the scheme for the allocation of seats for committees), to exercise its powers in relation to matters of urgency, on which it is necessary to make a decision before the next ordinary meeting of the Committee be approved.

8. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME & HORIZON SCAN OF ISSUES AHEAD

8.1 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Strategic Director, Place, the Lead Commissioner Housing and the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion. The presentation set out the key issues and work programme priorities for the Council. A copy of the presentation was distributed at the meeting.

8.2 Councillor Farrow noted the number of new properties which it was suggested were needed and asked if there were adequate sites on which to build the homes, and whether it would be possible to hold workshops to look at the issues being suggested. Councillor Wakefield said that the forthcoming Housing Summit would be a good opportunity to look at the issues raised and agreed with the idea of holding workshops.

8.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn said that it was important to look at what was within the Committee's control as some of the issues raised in the presentation were not. A number of dates had been given for when issues were hoped to be addressed, and suggested that it would be useful to have one date line for all the areas being covered.

8.4 Councillor Mears was concerned that the presentation made no reference to rough sleepers, families or regeneration, and had concerns over the issue of 'One Planet Living' and cited the recently built properties by the station which had no wheelchair

access. Councillor Mears suggested that loft conversions should be looked at, as providing an extra room could allow families to stay together. Councillor Powell accepted there were issues with accessibility at that site, but said that the development had met many environmental issues.

- 8.5 Councillor Wakefield thanked the Strategic Director for the presentation and reminded the Committee that this was an overview of what was being looked at, and it would be for the Committee to put any of the ideas into practice.
- 8.6 Councillor Jarrett thanked the Strategic Director for providing the overview. With regard to loft conversions, there was evidence that many homes were already being converted and asked whether it was something the council needed to be involved in.
- 8.7 Councillor Wakefield said that there would be a small programme of loft conversions in council homes, and asked for a report on that to be brought to a future meeting of the committee.

9. APPROPRIATION OF 243 AND 245 PRESTON ROAD BRIGHTON TO THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

- 9.1 Councillor Wakefield left the Chamber during consideration of the report and Councillor Powell took over as Chair.
- 9.2 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which requested approval for the Policy and Resources Committee to appropriate the properties and land at 243 and 245 Preston Road from Policy & Resources to the Housing Revenue Account. The properties had been included in the Housing Revenue Account dwellings register but had never been formally transferred.
- 9.3 Councillor Davey asked for clarification on the number of dwellings at 243 and 245 Preston Road, and was advised there currently 15 units with shared facilities in the two properties and four bungalow units in their grounds. Planned refurbishment works would create 16 self contained units in the two main properties, but the bungalows might now be beyond reasonable repair. It had been modelled for Seaside's business plan that after refurbishment works the Housing Revenue Account would lease the 16 converted units and two of the bungalow units to Seaside Homes.
- 9.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if access would be granted to the properties and was advised that both the properties and the land would be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account and individual units would then be leased to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes. The Housing Revenue Account would retain the land at the rear of the properties, where it may be possible to develop some more council housing. Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that none of the bungalow units be leased to Seaside so the whole of the rear gardens could be redeveloped. Mr Hibberd, Head of Housing and Social Inclusion said that the Committee were being asked to recommend that Policy and Resources appropriate the whole site which would not preclude future developments.
- 9.5 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the Housing Committee recommends:

- (i) That the Policy and Resources Committee agrees the appropriation of the 19 dwellings comprising 15 flats and four bungalow units and the land at 243 and 245 Preston Road, Brighton to the council's Housing Revenue Account.
- (ii) That the Policy and Resources Committee notes the earlier Cabinet and Council decisions to lease dwellings at these properties to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes as part of the LDV project in September and October 2008

10. ADDITIONAL LICENSING FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

- 10.1 Councillor Wakefield returned to the Chamber and continued to Chair the meeting. The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which outlined proposals to licence smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) in five wards in the city, as a proportionate response to proactively improving property standards and management in that type of accommodation.
- 10.2 Councillor Farrow thanked the officers for the report and said that it was very important for the residents of the city that HMO's were managed correctly.
- 10.3 Councillor Mitchell thanked officers for the report. Councillor Mitchell asked what steps would be taken if landlords did not comply with the licence, asked how noise nuisance could be addressed in some properties and said that she had some concerns that the cost implications of the scheme could be passed onto tenants. Officers advised that enforcement action would be taken against landlords when necessary, but that the council wanted to be proactive and address issues before enforcement became necessary. Noise complaints could be addressed under the current legislation, but it was hoped that proper tenancy management would limit such nuisance. The fees were proportionate and had been set at a level which would limit the risk that a landlord would pass them on their tenants.
- 10.4 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the report. Councillor Mears was concerned that paragraph 1.3, which referred to the predicted increase to the city's population, did not particularly identify students and suggested that continued discussions be held with the universities. Councillor Wakefield confirmed that the council already worked very closely with the universities and an officer from the Housing Department was currently seconded to Brighton University.
- 10.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the Financial Implications in the report and asked how the scheme would be funded if not all of the anticipated licences were applied for. Officers confirmed that it was important to be flexible and it might be necessary to front load the scheme. Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3.8 of the report and asked if a report could be provided on whether there were plans to introduce additional licensing schemes. Officers advised that any additional licenses would have to be proportionate, and at present there were no plans to extend the scheme. Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked that if in future there were plans to extend the scheme whether it would need to be agreed by the Committee. The lawyer referred to the Housing Act 2004, and confirmed that there was a clear platform for introducing this issue and it would need to come back to the Committee.

- 10.6 Councillor Davey welcomed the report and felt that residents of the city would be pleased for the scheme to be put into practice.
- 10.7 Councillor Jarrett thanked officers for the report. The current system of licences for larger HMOs had not been shown to increase the rents and so it was not expected that this scheme would impact on rents.
- 10.8 Councillor Mears noted that some financial front loading might be necessary and was concerned that that could impact on an already restricted budget.
- 10.9 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the results of the consultation and evidence gathering exercise undertaken in relation to the proposed additional HMO Licensing Scheme as set out in this report and in Appendix 1, be noted.
- (2) That the wards of Hanover and Elm Grove, Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, St Peters and North Laine, Hollingdean & Stanmer and Queen's Park be designated as subject to additional licensing under S56(1) of the Housing Act 2004 in relation to smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation of two or more storeys and three or more occupiers. The designation comes into force from 5 November 2012 and will last for 5 years.
- (3) That the council's revised HMO standards (as set out in Appendix 2) be approved.
- (4) That the fee structure (as set out in sections 3.11-3.14) that will apply to additional HMO Licensing schemes for Houses in Multiple Occupation be approved.

11. DECENT HOMES & ADAPTATIONS

- 11.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which set out proposed changes to the delivery of the council's Housing Investment Programme and the Brighton & Hove Standard in relation to properties where disabled adaptations had been carried out for the current tenant.
- 11.2 Councillor Farrow thanked officers for the report, and was pleased that the Notice of Motion which has been agreed at Council in March 2012 was being implemented.
- 11.3 Councillor Mears asked if a list of all the properties which had had a new kitchen or bathroom installed could be provided, and said that it would be helpful if the Committee could be provided with a brief update on what was expected in the Mears contract. Councillor Mears was aware that tenants in Essex Place had been informed that they would get new kitchens and had now been told that that would take place until 2016. Officers agreed to provide a list of those properties which had had work undertaken. Properties in Essex Place had been surveyed and some were found to pass the Decent Home standard.

- 11.4 Councillor Jarrett thanked officers for the report and was pleased that an anomaly had been resolved.
- 11.5 **RESOLVED** - (1) That a change be agreed to the Brighton & Hove Standard and the surveying process for Decent Homes whereby adaptations to the kitchen or bathroom carried out for the current tenant do not affect the eligibility of the property to have a replacement kitchen or bathroom installed.
- (2) That it is agreed that the HRA capital budget will fund this change by carrying out any additional installations through the existing kitchens and bathrooms budgets in 2012/13.
- (3) That it is agreed that that refurbishment works to those properties that have already been surveyed are phased over the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- (4) That it is agreed that a review of the Brighton & Hove Standard will be started in 2012/13 for implementation after the planned achievement of decency in December 2013.

The meeting concluded at 5.50pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of