

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

NORTH AREA HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL

7.00pm 8 DECEMBER 2014

LABURNUM GROVE, BURSTEAD CLOSE, HOLLINGDEAN, BRIGHTON, BN1 7HX

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Farrow (Chair)

Representatives: Heather Hayes (Coldean), John Marchant (East Central Moulsecoomb), Tracey Cox (North Moulsecoomb), Barry L'Armie (Four C's), Kath Davis (Broadfields), Bob Spacie (Laburnum Grove)

Non-Voting Delegates: Paul Wright (Coldean), Jenny Simmonds (Coldean), Ray Metcalfe (East Central Moulsecoomb), Peter Hartley (East Central Moulsecoomb), Barbara Castleton (North Moulsecoomb), Walter Sargisson (Broadfields)

Officers: Jane White (Performance & Improvement Officer), Lucie Royall (Housing Service Operations Manager), Keith Dadswell (Project Manager- Mears), Janine Healey (Performance Manager), Simon Pickles (Housing Stock Review Manager), Keely McDonald (Resident Involvement Officer), Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement), John Peel (Democratic Services Officer)

23 APOLOGIES

23.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Marsh, Mary Marchant, Hannah Barker and James Cryer.

24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

24.1 Tenant representatives noted that many attendees were not included in the record of those present.

24.2 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 September 2014 be approved and signed as the correct record subject to the above amendments.

25 PERFORMANCE REPORT Q2 2014/15

25.1 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement presented a report that covered Housing Management Performance during Quarter 2 of the 2014/15 financial year. The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement stated that the table provided figures and a RAG rating system against key performance indicators adding that the intention of the report was to provide Area Panels with information on Housing services performance and, as with previous versions of the report, comments and feedback on its presentation was welcomed to improve future versions.

- 25.2 Bob Spacie noted that there were currently rent arrears amounting to £1 million and asked if this level was expected to remain the same.
- 25.3 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement stated that she sincerely hoped this would not be the case. She explained that the recent changes to benefit payments had contributed to the current level and that Housing were ensuring that support and financial advice was available for tenants.
- 25.4 John Marchant asked how many properties were available for those that may want to downsize.
- 25.5 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement clarified that there was a good match between over and under occupied properties where there was a willingness to move. She added that the primary issue was that there was not a strong enough demand for bungalow properties.
- 25.6 Ray Metcalfe asked if rent arrears were ever written off.
- 25.7 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement clarified that whilst she was not sure on a precise figure, some debt was written off usually if the cost of recovering the debt was greater than the original debt.
- 25.8 Tracey Cox stated that she felt location was the primary issue in people's unwillingness to downsize as they did not want to move to an area they were unfamiliar with or away from their current location.
- 25.9 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

26 STAR SURVEY RESULTS

- 26.1 The Panel considered a report that provided feedback from a satisfaction survey carried out by Housemark of a selection of council tenants in June 2014. The results provided an up-to-date and statistically significant indication of customer satisfaction on a range of council services.
- 26.2 John Marchant commented that he had not received a survey in in any year they were undertaken.
- 26.3 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement clarified that the research company that undertook the survey on behalf of the council chose 3,000 people at random from the council's 12,000 tenants.
- 26.4 Bob Spacie as if the comparative authorities that the council were benchmarked against were similar in social comparators and not just on the basis of stock condition.
- 26.5 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement clarified that the benchmarked authorities were a similar across the board as possible but it was often very difficult to find true comparators.
- 26.6 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

27 DISCRETIONARY SCHEMES

- 27.1 The Panel considered a report that provided the findings of the recent review of the Discretionary Decorating and Gardening Scheme and set out the recommended changes for comment.
- 27.2 The Chair asked for the reasons behind why the qualifying age had been increased to 75 rather than any other age.
- 27.3 The Performance & Improvement Officer clarified that this was on the basis of research into other authorities requirements.
- 27.4 The Chair asked if Age UK had been consulted about the proposals.
- 27.5 The Performance & Improvement Officer answered that whilst Age UK had not been consulted, those that had been included tenants who had recently used the scheme and members of the Home Group. The basis of the proposals was to allocate limited funds to those most in need.
- 27.6 The Chair asked why there had been a reduction in the budget available for the scheme.
- 27.7 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement clarified that the reduction was on the basis of a similar reduction in those who would be eligible for the scheme if the age limit was increased but primarily due to budget pressures as part of a wider consideration of all budgets. She added that the scheme would also be more cost-effective if the proposals were agreed.
- 27.8 The Chair asked why the materials would be purchased from Brewers rather than Mears.
- 27.9 The Performance & Improvement Officer clarified that a better saving could be achieved through purchasing from Brewers.
- 27.10 Bob Spacie noted that the labour cost of undertaking the work were quite high at £656.
- 27.11 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement clarified that this was the price set within the original contract that had already been tendered and agreed.
- 27.12 Tracey Cox stated that the dust sheet that would be provided with the pack was not of sufficient quality.
- 27.13 The Performance & Improvement Officer stated that the pack at the meeting was just an example and the materials could be reviewed.
- 27.14 The Panel put the proposals to raise the qualifying age for the scheme to 75 to a vote and were unanimously against.
- 27.15 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

28 CITYWIDE PARKING ENFORCEMENT ON HRA LAND

- 28.1 The Panel considered a report that proposed that parking areas that have enforcement are increased to include all council HRA land (with some exceptions) and to the 99 Housing garage sites to provide residents with preferred parking and provide consistent arrangements.
- 28.2 Peter Hartley noted the severe problems experienced with event day parking in Moulsecoomb.
- 28.3 The Housing Service Operations Manager clarified that event day parking did not cover the proposals in the report.
- 28.4 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

29 SHELTERED HOUSING STOCK REVIEW

- 29.1 The Panel considered a report that outlined the result of the Sheltered Housing Stock Review and requested comment on various recommendations.
- 29.2 Bob Spacie stated that many residents at Laburnum Grove were concerned about the proposals and at £3,000 per flat; the scheme also appeared a costly process.
- 29.3 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that he would be happy to speak to residents to reassure their concerns and also arrange visits to show flats.
- 29.4 The Chair asked if Mears had been approach to discuss costs.
- 29.5 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that he would certainly approach Mears for their view.
- 29.6 Bob Spacie stated that many residents were worried about being moved whilst the work was undertaken.
- 29.7 The Chair stated that this was a large project and unfortunately people would have to be decanted.
- 29.8 The Housing Stock Review Manager acknowledged the difficulty for residents. He added that residents would be decanted within their current scheme and not moved elsewhere. Furthermore, residents had a choice if they wanted to move in with relatives or friends temporarily.
- 29.9 Barry L'Armie asked if it would be mandatory for residents to be decanted.
- 29.10 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that the council would be assertive in its position but decanting would not be mandatory.
- 29.11 Bob Spacie stated that residents at Laburnum Grove were adamant that they did not want to move.

- 29.12 The Chair stated that the council wanted to ensure the best circumstances for tenants but also to future proof and improve its stock.
- 29.13 Bob Spacie stated that he did not think it was correct to mention flagship schemes in the committee report as it may create uncertainty for residents.
- 29.14 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that he was in agreement and this would be removed from the committee report when it was submitted.
- 29.15 Heather Hayes asked if sheltered schemes were the last to be brought in line with Decent Homes Standards.
- 29.16 The Housing Stock Review Manager confirmed this was correct and the proposals would be beneficial in a number of ways.
- 29.17 The Chair stated that he believed wet rooms should be installed in the properties to be renovated.
- 29.18 Bob Spacie asked if new kitchen and bathrooms were being installed in properties due to be converted under the proposals.
- 29.19 The Performance Manager clarified that Decent Homes was applicable to all council stock.
- 29.20 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

30 EDB REVIEW

- 30.1 The Panel considered a report that consulted on proposals to improve the delivery of the Estate Development Budget (EDB) projects and to inform representatives of changes to EDB processes.
- 30.2 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

31 EDB OUTSTANDING WORK

- 31.1 The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the EDB programme provided by the Mears EDB Project Team.
- 31.2 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

32 ITEMS FROM TENANT ONLY MEETING

- 32.1 (Item 4- Pigeons) Bob Spacie asked for further clarification that the council had no formal policy on pigeons.
- 32.2 The Resident Involvement Manager confirmed that the council only advised residents not to feed pigeons.

- 32.3 (Item 6- water fountains in sheltered housing schemes) Bob Spacie stated that this issue required better communication as he and other residents had received no update.
- 32.4 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that he would investigate this matter for Bob.
- 32.5 **RESOLVED-** That the responses provided to the issues raised at the Tenant Only meeting be noted.

33 CITY WIDE REPORTS

- 33.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes and reports of the various Citywide groups be noted.

34 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 34.1 John Marchant stated that there was a great deal of concern about and inconvenience caused by the sudden closure of Oxford Street Housing Office and that the closure of Selsfield Drive Housing Office had compounded the problems.
- 34.2 The Chair stated that Oxford Street had to be closed at short notice as it had been found that the building posed a structural danger. He had been informed that Bartholomew House could be used by residents temporarily.
- 34.3 Bob Spacie stated that many were dissatisfied with Bartholomew House as residents could not pay with cash. Furthermore, Lavender Street which was now the closest office took two bus journeys to get to which was too much for vulnerable residents.

The meeting concluded at 9.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of