



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# Housing Management Panel

Title:	<b>North Area Housing Management Panel</b>
Date:	<b>3 August 2015</b>
Time:	<b>7.00pm</b>
Venue	<b>Laburnum Grove, Burstead Close, Hollingdean, Brighton, BN1 7HX</b>
Members:	<b>Councillors:</b>  Hill (Chair) ; <b>Ward Councillors for the Area, Delegates of Tenants Association in the area.</b>
Contact:	<b>John Peel</b> Democratic Services Officer 01273 29-1058 <a href="mailto:john.peel@brighton-hove.gov.uk">john.peel@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>



**AGENDA**

<b>Part One</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1 APOLOGIES</b>	
<b>2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS</b>	<b>1 - 18</b>
Minutes of the meetings held on 2 February and 14 May 2015 (copies attached).	
<b>3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS</b>	
<b>4 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME</b>	<b>19 - 26</b>
Responses to items raised at the Tenant Only Meeting held on 24 March 2015 (copy attached as 'blue pages').	
<b>5 PERFORMANCE REPORT</b>	
(copy to follow).	
<i>Contact Officer: Ododo Dafe Tel: 29-3201</i>	
<b>6 FEEDBACK FROM TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS ON THEIR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>7 CITY WIDE REPORTS</b>	<b>27 - 62</b>
To <u>note</u> the minutes and reports of the following Committees and City Wide groups (copies attached):	
A. Housing Committee Decision Record;	
B. Leaseholder Action Group;	
C. Senior Housing Action Group;	
D. Tenant Disability Network;	
E. Service Improvement Groups;	
F. New Homes for Neighbourhoods Update;	
G. Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes.	
<b>8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>	



**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**NORTH AREA HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL**

**7.00pm 2 FEBRUARY 2015**

**HOUSING CENTRE, EASTERGATE ROAD, BRIGHTON, BN2 4QL**

**MINUTES**

**Representatives:** Heather Hayes (Coldean), John Marchant (East Central Moulsecoomb), Kath Davis (Broadfields), Bob Spacie (Laburnum Grove), Barbara Castleton (North Moulsecoomb), Ray Goble (Elwyn Jones Court)

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

**Officers:** Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Laura Turner (Performance & Improvement Officer), Peter Huntbach (Senior Housing Manager), Rachelle Metcalf (Senior Tenancy Enforcement Team), Sam Smith (Housing Programme Manager), Jo Thompson (Project Manager), Janine Healey (Performance Manager), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement), John Peel (Democratic Services Officer), Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer)

**Guests:**

**36 APOLOGIES**

36.1 Apologies were received from Tracy Cox and Councillor Marsh.

**37 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

37.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 December be approved and signed as the correct record.

37.2 Bob Spacie asked for any further update on the qualifying age for the Discretionary Decorating and Gardening Scheme.

37.3 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement clarified that Housing Committee had agreed to set the qualifying age at 70 rather than the proposed 75. She added that the savings identified would be used to support residents now on the threshold on qualifying age.

37.4 Bob Spacie stated that he was still awaiting an update on water fountains in sheltered schemes.

37.5 The Head of Tenancy Services apologised for the delay in sending feedback to Bob and would ensure he would receive an update.

**38 PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3**

- 38.1 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement presented a report that covered Housing Management Performance during Quarter 3 of the 2014/15 financial year. The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement stated that unfortunately it had not been possible to provide the full report, only the briefing sheet although the latter still provided information on key indicators. The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement asked tenant representatives for their permission that representatives were satisfied for the full report to still be submitted to Housing Committee once ready and for any comments to inform the fuller report.
- 38.2 Tenant representatives confirmed their support for the full report to be submitted to Housing Committee.
- 38.3 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

**39 UPDATE ON NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS PROGRAMME**

- 39.1 The Panel considered a report that provided a progress update on the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme including an update on progress at Selsfield Drive specifically.
- 39.2 The Chair noted that work would not commence at Selsfield Drive for some time and asked if there was any way to speed up the process.
- 39.3 The Project Manager stated that it would be difficult to reduce that timescale as there were large works required such installing a sewer system and ground works. Furthermore, it was very important to gather residents views regarding the development.
- 39.4 Ray Marchant noted that there had been a request to incorporate a small housing office at the Selsfield Drive site and asked if it was feasible to do so.
- 39.5 The Project Manager stated that this request had not yet been passed to him but he would discuss the option with colleagues.
- 39.6 Peter Hartley asked if the building would be a green development.
- 39.7 The Project Manager confirmed that there would be green spaces, food growing areas and would adhere to sustainability code level 4 which was very high.
- 39.8 Heather Hayes noted that residents had concerns regarding the buildings size and were worried light to their properties would be restricted.
- 39.9 The Project Manager clarified that whilst the building would be five storey in height, it would be designed as such that it would be of similar size as a three storey building. The proposed development had also passed a 'rights of light' test.
- 39.10 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

**40 LEVEL ACCESS SHOWERS**

- 40.1 The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the 6-12 month pilot to install level access showers in ground floor properties that became empty and requires a bathroom replacement.
- 40.2 Peter Hartley asked if these conversions would be wet rooms.
- 40.3 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement clarified that the conversions would not be wet rooms but would be fully accessible for wheelchair users and those with mobility difficulties.
- 40.4 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

**41 HIGH RISE SECURITY OPTIONS**

- 41.1 The Panel considered a report that provided information on the steps taken to manage and reduce unwanted visitors accessing low and high rise blocks, provided recommendations on a sustainable approach to manage the issue ongoing and expanded upon options raised such as CCTV systems and concierge service.
- 41.2 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

**42 IMPLICATIONS OF ASB AND POLICING ACT 2014**

- 42.1 The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the new provisions for tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) contained within the Anti-Social bad Policing Act 2014.
- 42.2 The Chair asked if the changes allowed for tenancy action if a resident was found to be dealing prescription drugs.
- 42.3 The Senior Tenancy Enforcement Officer clarified that the new powers would not allow for such action and was not set out in the Misuse of Drugs Act but the associated ASB from any conviction could be determined as a breach of tenancy.
- 42.4 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

**43 SHELTERED HOUSING**

- 43.1 The Panel considered a report that set out recommendations to better define the aims and purposes of the sheltered housing service following a review conducted in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Housing in 2013. The recommendations also proposed a name change to 'Seniors Housing- Independent and Community Living'.
- 43.2 Bob Spacie stated that he had found the report to be high quality and he hoped that everything detailed could be achieved. However, he was concerned that the sense of community had been destabilised beyond repair by procedure and health and safety legislation.
- 43.3 Peter Hartley asked what the minimum age for people entering senior housing was.

- 43.4 The Older Persons Housing Manager clarified that the current limit was 50 years old and one of his first projects should the report be agreed, would be to work with Homemove and the Lettings Team to look at this issue.
- 43.5 Heather Hayes stated that she was concerned that young people with often quite complex needs were being housed in accommodation designed for older people and did not meet their requirements.
- 43.6 The Older Persons Housing Manager replied that this was covered in the report which outlined that senior housing should become more similar to retirement housing.
- 43.7 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

#### **44 ESTATES DEVELOPMENT BUDGET DECISION**

- 44.1 The Panel considered a report that requested a decision on whether to use a bus tour or a multimedia presentation to gather information on the Estate Development Budget (EDB) bids submitted in the area ahead of the main meeting.
- 44.2 Representatives conducted a vote on the two options and agreed to view a multimedia presentation.

#### **45 ITEMS FROM TENANT ONLY MEETING**

- 45.1 (Item 2- City Assembly) John Marchant stated that it was much preferred that this meeting be held in the Housing Centre.
- 45.2 Heather Hayes stated that she aware that wheelchair users had found it difficult to manoeuvre at Clarendon & Ellen.
- 45.3 Ray Marchant stated that use of the Housing Centre was free and should be used.
- 45.4 Peter Hartley stated that he had also heard of difficulties for wheelchair users and he had also noted that some of the fire exits had been blocked.
- 45.5 The Resident Involvement Manager stated that the comments of the Panel would be relayed to the Involvement & Empowerment Group regarding future meetings.
- 45.6 (Item 6- Closure of Housing Offices) John Marchant asked why temporary facilities could not have been set up after the emergency closure of Oxford Street Housing Office.
- 45.7 The Chair noted that Councillor Randall had asked for the feasibility of libraries being used.
- 45.8 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement clarified that the option of using a library had been investigated but had not been found to be feasible. Temporary measures had been established at Bartholomew House that could be used until the future of Oxford Street was determined.

45.9 The Chair stated that he hoped it could be communicated that Post Office branches would accept payments.

45.10 **RESOLVED-** That the responses provided to the items raised at the Tenant Only meeting be noted.

**46 CITY WIDE REPORTS**

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

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of



# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Special Area Housing Management Panel

10.30 14 May 2015

### Housing Centre, Moulsecoomb

#### Minutes

**Voting Representatives:** Alan Cooke (Craven Vale) Charing, Muriel Briault (North Portslade) Tony Brown (Evelyn Court), Alan Davies (Rosehill Court), Kath Davis (Broadfields), Vic Dodd (Ingram Crescent), David Eve (Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge), Ann Ewings (Mount Pleasant), Janet Gearing (Woodingdean), Ray Goble (Elwyn Jones), Alison Gray (Clarendon & Ellen), Heather Hayes (Coldean), Barry Hughes (Sylvan Hall), Barry Kingston (Hampshire Court), John Marchant (East Central Moulsecoomb), John McCabe (Laburnum Grove), Patrick McKenna (Manor Farm), Mary Moore ( Muriel House), Peter O'Connor (Bates Estate), Charles Penrose (Sloane Court), Owen Spence (Mayflower Square), Jason Williams (Hereford Court).

**Non-Voting Delegates:** Chief Blackbear (Ingram Crescent), Christina Hadleigh (Hampshire Court), David Marshall (Sanders House), Ray Metcalfe (East Central Moulsecoomb), Dave Murtagh (East Moulsecoomb), Walter Sargison (Broadfields), Linda Shaw (Sylvan Hall), Jenny Simmonds (Coldean), Mary Whitner (Southawk), Paul Wright (Coldean), Tony Worsford (Leaseholders Action Group).

**Officers:** Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement), Keith Dadswell (Mears EDB Projects Manager), Hilary Edgar (Housing Services Operations Manager), Pat Liddell (Resident Involvement Officer), Simon Pickles (Housing Stock Review Manager), Scott Lunn (Asset/LDV/Voids Surveyor), Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Satti Sidhu (Performance & Improvement Officer), Lucie Royall (Housing Customer Services Team Leader), Liz Woodley (Senior Solicitor).

#### 1. Apologies

1.1 Jean Davis (Leach Court), Jean Carter (Evelyn Court), Chris El Shabbah (Robert Lodge), Jane Hunter (East Moulsecoomb), Benjamin Okagbue (Head of Property & Investment), Chris Row (St James House), Jane Thorpe (Highden, Westmount & Crown Hill)

#### 2. End of year Performance Report 2014/15

2.1 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement presented a report that covered Housing Management performance for quarter 4 and the whole of the previous financial year. There were many green overall many indicators of green showing that performance was good and had met targets.

- 2.2 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement went through the few targets that were amber or red. The number of tenants with seven or more weeks of rent arrears is slightly higher than last year. The collection rate of leaseholders' gross arrears is high due to the significant increase in major works.
- 2.3 The overall turnaround time target for empty properties was missed because of the disparity between the average-times for general needs and Seniors Housing properties that have difficult to let studios.
- 2.4 Tenant satisfaction with repairs has increased over the year but did not quite meet the 96% new target. The wait time for the repairs helpdesk has improved over the year and was almost on target for the last quarter.
- 2.5 The removal of bulk waste did not meet the year-end target due to the team being called away on other jobs like office removals in quarter four.
- 2.6 The light replacement target was not met but the margin was small, of the 2,117 jobs completed during the year, 44 were done late.
- 2.7 Janet Gearing asked if the tiny increase in rent arrears was a result of cash desk closures.
- 2.8 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said that the increase had only been small, largely due to excellent work of the cashiers and several teams; Income Management Team, Customer Services and Performance & Improvement. The council contacted all residents and set up alternative arrangements and direct debits increased by almost 900. Most people now use Paypoint card facilities. Feedback is that there now is a much wider range of places to pay and people get do get a receipt.
- 2.9 Ann Ewings said it is positive that the extra effort officers made was successful.
- 2.10 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said it is a priority for Housing to make it easy for tenants to pay their rent and the council is keen to prepare for the future when Universal Credit comes in, which may be at the end of 2015.
- 2.11 Christina Hadleigh asked if Housing identifies the top 10 worst estates for arrears. Is there a worst estate? Do we know why?
- 2.12 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said Housing doesn't identify a top10 but we struggle more to collect in the Whitehawk area. There are other hot spots. The general reason for the increase is the under-occupancy penalty. There is a higher concentration where there are larger houses. May be issues in other areas but Whitehawk and Moulsecoomb have more large family accommodation.
- 2.13 Christina Hadleigh noted an increase and rush of work at Hampshire Court. And asked if it is anything to do with the elections or end of year?
- 2.14 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said it is coincidental. As residents on the Home Service Improvement Group will know major works programme is set far in advance, consulted on and agreed and the council sticks with the programme,

unless there are small alterations.

- 2.15 David Eve noticed that a high proportion owe small amount of money. What are we doing about this? Are we catching people early? Is there anything in place to support?
- 2.16 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said he is correct, 70% owe less than £300 and 25% owe less than £50. If they are monthly payers, they may be a week or so in arrears. Most pay in advance. Also Housing Benefit may not have been paid. Generally the council's approach is to contact people as early as possible as it's easier to deal with smaller rather than larger debt. The council wants to stop debt creeping up and as well as our own services, signposts tenants to access Money Advice and Community Support (MACS) who also help tenants try to save money on all bills, (eg mobile, phone, energy, shopping).
- 2.17 Tony Worsfold asked what the council is doing about bulk waste and graffiti.
- 2.18 The Head of Tenancy Services recognised it is a very large problem city wide and is a Labour manifesto commitment to address it. Housing does collect fly-tipping and if the person is identified action is taken, although it is very hard to do that. People do start to assume that this is the method to dispose of bulk items. Estates Services are working on a plan to address the situation. The City Clean service was affected by the bin strikes. Housing are meeting them about graffiti. Normally Housing is good on dealing with graffiti but it is increasing. Housing is looking at the cause of East Brighton and Queens Park area based issues and what can be done.
- 2.19 Christina Hadleigh said the area identified had a drug and alcohol problem to rival Grimsby that goes back before 2008 as well as high levels of poor mental health.
- 2.20 The Head of Tenancy Services said it was before her time but was a very good point. People in Queens Park and in all tenures where there is a high density of housing may be aware of high levels of rough sleepers. There is a national increase in rough sleeping; people are living in desperate times. There have been a number of activities and residents will have seen increased security in some areas. This is in council business plans and the council can report back to residents on this.
- 2.21 Tony Brown stated there is a problem with bins, when you ring City Clean, you never get the job done properly. He asked if City Clean is back as part of the council?
- 2.22 The Head of Tenancy Services said that City Clean has always been under Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC).
- 2.23 Tony Brown asked why all this rubbish is being left around and nothing being done about it?
- 2.24 The Head of Tenancy Services said this echoes frustrations across the city and all tenures. She can feed this back to City Clean's Senior Officers – and ask them to feedback to Tony directly.
- 2.25 Tony Brown stated that if bins are not emptied on regular basis the city looks disgusting. Also where bins have been put in the road is sometimes dangerous.

Whole system needs to be put in correct positions, including where parking has been lost.

- 2.26 John Marchant asked why rubbish stays for days in Moulsecoomb? He felt that Hove is treated differently; mattresses are removed quickly. Do City Clean & Estate Services communicate with one another back at the office and why can't they come out straight away?
- 2.27 The Head of Tenancy Services said Housing doesn't have information about this and the target to remove bulk waste is 7 days. There is a huge amount being fly-tipped across the city. When tipped-off that it is on Housing Revenue Account land, the council's Estates Service takes it away. We almost met this target last year performing at 96% against a target of 98% (that is 2,758 out of 2,874 reported cases of fly-tipping was removed within 7 days)
- 2.28 John Marchant said he disbelieved this.
- 2.29 The Head of Tenancy Services said this is a serious allegation; Housing is subject to external audit and works to targets. It is not treating one area different from any another. Housing's bulk truck is out all day every day. Housing moves as quickly as it can. Where there is hazardous waste reported a contractor will move within 24 hours. If it's on Highways land then Housing reports it to City Clean who have the same targets.
- 2.30 Ann Ewings said she found the service to be good.
- 2.31 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

### **3. Annual Report 2015**

- 3.1 The Performance & Improvement Officer stated that Housing has taken a similar approach to last year's report with some new features including New Homes for Neighbourhoods and tenancy fraud and plans for the year ahead. It is linked to the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) satisfaction survey showing where teams can improve and how they are doing.
- 3.2 There was resident involvement through the Business & Value for Money Service Improvement Group and there was an article in the spring edition of Homing In. We hope to have a similar design. Residents present were asked to give their feedback on the design and colours, and copies were passed around.
- 3.3 Charles Penrose asked who the Chair of Housing is and who wrote the report?
- 3.4 The Performance & Improvement Officer stated that the report was put together by her team. The Chair of Housing will do an introduction to the report.
- 3.5 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said it is like any book that has a foreword. It is not yet known who the new Chair of Housing will be (post-election). When in post, they will write an introduction.

- 3.6 Charles Penrose said it would have been good not to push the date (of publishing) forward.
- 3.7 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said Housing knew there were elections and didn't want to delay the panel seeing this information. Not having a Chair of Housing now doesn't affect the information as it is factual.
- 3.8 Charles Penrose said he felt that to have Special Area Panel this week was asking too much of residents with the Seniors Housing Action Group (SHAG) and City Assembly also meeting this week.
- 3.9 The Resident Involvement Manager stated a Special Area Panel had been called now as reports are going to the June Housing Committee.
- 3.10 Barry Hughes said the Tenant Editorial Board will need copy in good time before it goes to Housing Committee – before 15 June.
- 3.11 The Performance & Improvement Officer said she would circulate it.
- 3.12 John Marchant said the report states that 63% residents are satisfied with ways to get involved. With our Tenants Association meetings we don't get the same information. Where did you get the percentage?
- 3.13 The Performance & Improvement Officer said the figure is taken from the STAR survey.
- 3.14 John Marchant asked what the STAR survey is and if residents in this room agree? How did the survey go out? He had never received this survey.
- 3.15 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement advised that a report about the STAR Survey went to an Area Panel last year and it went to Housing Committee. It had included information on where the full report could be seen. The STAR survey is conducted by an external organisation; 3,000 out of 12,500 randomly selected homes take part, not every tenant is invited to take part. The research company said it is a good statistical sample rate widely adopted by research companies in UK.
- 3.16 Ann Ewings asked if Housing has to spend money out of its budget employing an external company?
- 3.17 Alan Cooke said if Housing employs its own staff to do the survey then it is open to accusations of bias.
- 3.18 Charles Penrose raised the section on Seniors Housing. He said at the SHAG meeting there was much unrest regarding the conversions of flats and a Special General Meeting will be arranged.
- 3.19 The Resident Involvement Manager stated that this question has also been raised for City Assembly this Saturday.
- 3.20 Ray Metcalfe commented that the report says that 90% of sheltered residents are

satisfied.

- 3.21 Tony Brown felt that tenants are not being informed of what is going on as at Evelyn Court they just walked in.
- 3.22 Ann Ewings said that when the new design for the conversion of studio flats to one bedroom flats was discussed residents were told that tenants would be given choice of whether to have it converted.
- 3.23 Charles Penrose said SHAG will be insisting there be a site meeting before work starts.
- 3.24 The Housing Stock Review Manager said he was sorry to hear about the concern about the proposals and the level of consultation at Evelyn Court. Housing had run a pilot to discover what best way to proceed. The aim is to make a better living environment, but if people don't want a conversion they will not be forced to have the work done, so it is not compulsory. Communications will be improved with a communications and consultation plan put together involving residents.. There are 235 flats to convert over three years. Housing will share the programme details with the Seniors Housing Action Group.
- 3.25 Ann Ewings asked that if people have doubts can they see a show flat?
- 3.26 The Housing Stock Review Manager said that we can arrange this and have offered taxis to help with this. Any concerned tenants can see a flat.
- 3.27 Asked whether the results of the survey shouldn't reflect this dissatisfaction, the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement said while it would be wrong to alter the results of the survey for the report. However the annual report can express that there is an issue of dissatisfaction about the conversions.
- 3.28 Christina Hadleigh said a lot of people in Seniors Housing either aren't conscious or they say they are satisfied because they don't want the hassle.
- 3.29 The Head of Tenancy Services refuted this. There are a lot of active people, plus if people don't have mental capacity they wouldn't be our tenants.
- 3.30 John Marchant asked how many of the sample surveyed were in Seniors Housing?
- 3.31 The Head of Tenancy Services stated one in four homes were surveyed across all housing stock. When the results come back the company tells us what is statistically significant and whether we can report it as such.
- 3.32 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

#### **4. Loft Conversions and Extensions Scheme**

- 4.1 The Asset / LDV / Voids Surveyor informed the meeting that in order to meet the needs of some overcrowded families there is now a loft conversions and extensions scheme.
- 4.2 To spend the budget wisely it is better to carry out the works when the property

becomes empty rather than move a family out (into alternative accommodation) and get the work done then.

- 4.3 He said the length of time the work took depended on the size of the property. The system is being improved so that different elements of the work can be coordinated better, but some projects can take 16 weeks to complete.
- 4.4 Janet Gearing asked why some properties are left empty when the council doesn't have enough housing?
- 4.5 The Asset/LDV/Voids Surveyor stated there were lots of reasons; subsidence, some being unlive in but there is a tenancy, and other reasons why the council can't undertake work on them. Sometimes while waiting for planning permission, Mears can still do rewiring, or foundations. Or the property might be a long-term empty waiting to be transferred to Brighton & Hove Seaside Homes or a property that is apart of the extensions project.
- 4.6 The Head of Tenancy Services said herein lies the wider issue where empty properties are concerned, which the council tracks and monitors. The quarterly report explains what's going on with empty properties. Sometimes they look empty. Other times people don't realise that the council doesn't own them any more so has no control over them.

Sometimes there is a reason why a tenant can't be in that property, domestic violence or hospital for example. In order to protect tenants' property, the council sometimes boards it up. Such properties can become abandoned. It is useful if residents can please let Housing know if they suspect properties have been abandoned. If a property is abandoned the council also can't just take it back, but has to go through a process which can include giving notice and trying to locate the tenant.

- 4.7 Janet Geering said she had known of a drug raid and then the tenant hadn't got in touch for months. Surely you can get it back then?
- 4.8 The Head of Tenancy Services said there are different scenarios such as needing evidence from the police. Sometimes for a length of time or if a coroner is involved the council cannot take the property back, that would be in contempt of court. The council tries to keep to this to a minimum, because of the financial cost and the housing need in the city.
- 4.9 Alan Cooke reminded that the agenda item is the loft extension program item.
- 4.10 The appendices were handed out at the meeting. They were a map and table of overcrowded dwellings and a map of homes that may be suitable for wheelchair conversion.
- 4.11 Heather Hayes asked if Seaside Homes are still picking up empty properties.
- 4.12 The Asset/LDV/Voids Surveyor said the process is that an offer is made to the Housing Asset & Investment Manager who says whether the property concerned meets the criteria and is suitable for passing to Brighton & Hove Seaside Homes.

**4.13 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

## **5. Visitor Parking Charges**

- 5.1 The Housing Customer Services Team Leader said that they manage car parks and garages on housing land. The proposal is to introduce visitor parking charges. The Car Parks & Garages Team currently provides a permit scheme for residents of council houses and flats to enable their visitors to use designated bays in Housing car parks. There is currently no charge to residents for these permits.
- 5.2 The current scheme has run for a number of years, with permits available to all residents who live near to car parks with bays designated for visitor use. The scheme is not open to residents who live outside these areas. At moment there are visitor parking across the city with lots parking bays in some areas and not so many in others. Housing are re-looking at need.
- 5.3 Sometimes this system is being abused and permits have been sold and genuine visitors can't park. The proposal is that Housing introduces a paid for visitor permit scheme, in line with the one operating on highways.
- 5.4 The Housing Customer Services Team Leader said that Housing is looking at Hampshire Court separately as it is managed by the resident's association
- 5.5 Jenny Simmonds said her daughter lives at Essex Place and they can't park in the nearby disabled bays as they are always in use, so her partner has to go home, after dropping her off.
- 5.6 Alison Gray said Ellen Street has no visitor parking bays but some disabled bays. People park in the disabled bays so there is nowhere to park. Some spaces are too tiny for getting wheel chair in and out of a car.
- 5.7 If residents without a blue badge are parking in disabled bays in car parks where parking is enforced, residents should contact Ethical Parking, who can issue a parking ticket.
- 5.8 Charles Penrose said that the Leach Court car park serves both Patching Lodge and Sloane Court too. Doctors visit every day, some three times a day.
- 5.9 The Housing Customer Services Team Leader said that carers mostly have badges and can park on the street. If changes are made to visitor parking Housing will work with Adult Social Care to let them know about the changes in advance so they can let carers know.
- 5.10 Charles Penrose felt there should be no visitor parking charge on Park Street.
- 5.11 Ray Metcalfe visits The Pines twice a day. He advised he would not pay to do this.
- 5.12 Owen Spence asked about private contractors? Any contractor for Housing is entitled

to a permit.

- 5.13 Heather Hayes asked how long does it take to get an untaxed vehicle moved? Could Mears be told not to park in parking bays because carers can't park? Mears are also parking in an ambulance bay at Elwyn Jones Court.
- 5.14 The Housing Customer Services Team Leader agreed to look into this after the meeting.
- 5.15 Chief Blackbear said that Ingram Crescent had historically said no to parking enforcement but across the road from the estate they now have controlled parking and they are parking in the estate.
- 5.16 The Housing Customer Services Team Leader said Ingram Crescent is currently being reviewed and parking enforcement will be introduced there later this year.
- 5.17 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

## **6. Review of Area Panels**

- 6.1 This report presents the work of the Strengthening Area Panels Task & Finish Group which was set up at the request of the September 2014 round of Area Panels to identify ways to increase tenant consultation and input into the decision making process, following the abolition of the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee. The group met five or six times and have come up with a number of suggestions.
- 6.2 Barry Hughes said the number of Tenant & Resident Associations (TRAs) has reduced from 70 to 50, so there are less Area panel members. This is due to apathy or a combination of being an aging population and people not having time. Need to bolster attendance at Tenant Only (TO) meetings too. A pledge was made to strengthen Area Panels with the abolition of the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee (HMCSC). At the Central TO we have tried some experiments and looked at the location and given people directions.
- 6.3 To strengthen the blue pages information flow from TO meetings to Area Panel, we have suggested a star system. Because of the skills of people at TO meeting we can resolve a one star matter between ourselves. The second star might be restricted to that area only. Three stars would be communicated across the city and to Housing Committee for action.
- 6.4 Also we requested that blue pages move forward to the start of meeting to make sure officers have not left.
- 6.5 If a tenant representative has not attended the Association will be written to. Have had a request from Jane Thorpe, she has a specific problem in that her deputy is not confident about attending on their own. Please can a RIO liaise with them on this?
- 6.6 Generally the mantra is to quote back to the council "Resident Involvement is at the

heart of everything we do in Housing.” Your attendance at Area Panel is important and do take back to the TRAs the need to strengthen TO meetings.

- 6.7 We want less ‘death by PowerPoint’ and papers sent to delegates earlier so representatives can read the reports in good time before the meetings.
- 6.8 The council says how good it is. It is for us residents to tell it where it is going wrong.
- 6.9 Regarding the chairing of Area Panel, we asked to have a member of the Housing Committee as Chair. Bill Randall agreed, it will help to directly feed to the Housing Committee.
- 6.10 Charles Penrose asked if it possible for this group to resurrect HMCSC to the council?
- 6.11 Barry Hughes bemoaning this is a recurring theme. It is incumbent on Area Panels to lobby to see if similar can be restored.
- 6.12 Charles asked if this could be on the next agenda of Area Panel
- 6.13 Barry Hughes said Charles is a chair of a Tenant Only meeting and could ask for this.
- 6.14 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

## **7. Community Payback Estate Development Budget (EDB) process**

- 7.1 The Resident Involvement Manager explained that each Area Panel has put aside £2,500 for Community Payback (CP) tools and specialist equipment for their area. A process for requesting CP work has been developed and there is a form available from the Resident Involvement Team (RIT). Left over materials like paint can be reused and tools can be pooled.
- 7.2 RIT will check that work is on Housing land, there is a toilet for workers, if residents will provide refreshments, and that proposed work is not to be done by paid staff.
- 7.3 A monthly jobs list will be published and quarterly reports will go to the Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group, and an annual report will go to the Area Panels.
- 7.4 Sylvan Hall uses CP and Barry Hughes said they are good and experienced and have facilities. The association has a specific need for gardening tools for its 7.5 acres.
- 7.5 The Resident Involvement Manager said there is a stand-alone CP project at Clarendon & Ellen and there was one at the Bristol Estate and these can continue. She wasn’t aware of the Sylvan Hall project as Housing has not given any funding. Stand-alone projects can continue. The idea of this procedure is to get CP into areas where they have not previously worked.
- 7.6 Christina Hadleigh said they would not have CP back at Hampshire Court as they have had problems with them in the past.

- 7.7 The Resident Involvement Manager said associations would have to apply to get the work done.
- 7.8 Ann Ewings felt this was unusual behavior; she had had decent work done by the service. They come supplied and don't misbehave.
- 7.9 The Resident Involvement Manager said that EDB main bid forms have just been sent out to TRA Chairs and Secretaries. Further copies are available from the Resident Involvement Team. The deadline for submission is 13 November 2015.
- 7.10 Ray Metcalfe asked if the CP representative can come to meetings? He could cover some of the main ones, especially to start with.
- 7.11 The EDB Project Manager said in the past CP communication has not been brilliant. There have been lots of quick bids for CP works. This will be better as we can get more areas covered and help with any issues. Also we can help identify work as we talk to TRAs. CP will publish a diary so we can advise the TRAs.
- 7.12 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

## **8. Request to sell a Piece of HRA Land at Connell Drive**

- 8.1 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that Housing would not ordinarily sell land, quite the opposite; it looks to build on more land. This request to buy is on a private estate in Woodingdean. The request has been made by a recent ex-councillor.
- 8.2 Christina Hadleigh asked why can't Seaside Homes take this on? Can we put a disabled flat there?
- 8.3 The Housing Stock Review Manager replied that while the size of the land in question was just large enough to build one property, its size and position meant that planning consent would not be granted, so it was not developable by the council.
- 8.4 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that before Housing considers selling Housing have to be sure the land would not benefit the council. The site is next to two garages, and consists of shrubs which attract litter. If Housing sold it, the council would get a capital receipt and would no longer have to spend money on shrub maintenance and litter clearance.
- 8.5 Alan Cooke asked can you confirm there is no other council housing in the area?
- 8.6 Ray Metcalfe asked is it now to time to put the price up? This valuation was from a while ago, the price of land has gone up.
- 8.7 The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that he had mentioned this to the valuers but, in this time, the build costs have also gone up, cancelling each other out.
- 8.9 Patrick McKenna had left this point to be raised, he thinks the land is and being sold

too cheaply. The cost of the land is £26,000 so a future sale of the building by the applicant would make a large profit.

8.10 The Housing Stock Review Manager he is happy to look into this point.

8.11 Linda Shaw felt it could be a one off property. Housing is crying out for land. Someone might build to sell.

8.12 The Housing Stock Review Manager has looked at this site with other sites and this site is not viable for Housing. Housing does have to build 500 homes by 2030 but this site is not viable.

8.13 Ann Ewings said the profit will stay in the Housing Revenue Account. £26,500 would be earmarked for major works, refurbishment or new building.

8.14 Christina Hadleigh felt the site should have a no build clause. This could be the old boys club.

8.15 The Housing Stock Review Manager hadn't picked that up. The case was being handled transparently and is going to the Housing Committee for a decision.

8.16 Ray Metcalfe felt one lone council home in a private estate served no purpose. It is better invested elsewhere.

8.17 The Housing Stock Review Manager said people can email any questions to him after this meeting or he will be present on Saturday at the City Assembly.

**8.18 Resolved** – that the report be noted.

## **9. Any other business**

9.1 The Resident Involvement Manager stated that is a really good time to switch energy providers. Please bring copy of your bill to the City Assembly.

9.2 Charles Penrose thanked the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 12.40.

**Items from Tenants Only Meeting held on Tuesday 24/03/15**

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**1. Oxford Street Housing Office**

*It has now been confirmed that Oxford Street Housing Office will not re-open. The closure of Lavender Street has been delayed, but this is not accessible to most residents in the north area, as it is a long way away and not on a bus route. The Housing Offices in Whitehawk and Hove are also not accessible for north area residents.*

**Action:**

***It was agreed that this should be raised at the next City Assembly and Area Panel. The council will be asked to look into the possibility of opening a new Housing Office to replace Oxford Street***

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**Response from Hilary Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager. T – 01273 293250**

No final decision has been made regarding the future of the Oxford Street Housing Office and there are no plans to close the Lavender Street Housing Office. Within a week of the Oxford Street Housing Office closing a service point was opened at Bartholomew House for council housing queries.

Footfall in all housing offices continues to decline as an increasing number of residents are choosing to make contact on line and by telephone rather than come into the offices – this was particularly noticeable after the closure of the cash desks (the final one at Lavender Street closed in February).

The future of the Oxford Street site will need to take account of the changes to the way residents want to contact the Housing service. Home visits are still available for those residents who want face to face contact but are unable to travel to one of the housing offices.

## **2. Damp problems in properties built with interior bricks**

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*There are flats in Coldean that were built with 'Midhurst White' bricks, which are intended for internal use. As a result they are not water tight and there have been ongoing problems with damp in these properties.*

*The council attempted to resolve this by using cavity wall insulation, but this also became saturated with water and made the situation worse.*

*They have now removed the cavity wall insulation and fitted air bricks. This has also not resolved the problem and the flats still have problems with damp.*

*There have also been incidences of bricks being removed from properties when work is being done, such as window replacements, and the gap being filled with cavity wall insulation foam which is porous and soaks up water.*

### **Action (II)**

***It was agreed that this should be raised at the Area Panel, and the Home Group, which monitors the Mears contract.***

***Clarification will be requested on:***

- ***What further action is planned to solve the problem of damp in the Coldean properties built with Midhurst white bricks?***
  - ***What is the standard procedure for filling gaps when bricks have been removed?***
- 

**Response a. from John Currell – Property & Investment Team Asset Manager. T – 01273 293355**

**Response b. from Phil Ludwig – Mears Planned Works Manager  
Tel: 01273 574354**

- a. We are pleased to inform you that Haig Avenue is currently on this years planned programme to be painted with a specialist coating designed for this brick type. This work will be subject to the statutory leasehold consultation requirements.
- b. The standard procedure is that any disturbed brickwork is re-bedded and pointed in mortar after the window install. Very occasionally where bricks are loose they will be temporarily just stuck in place using expanding foam so that they do not get mislaid and also so that we do not get any water ingress prior to permanent fixing with mortar. Expanding foam is also not porous.

### **3. Asbestos**

*7 years ago work was done to properties in Staplefield Drive as there was known to be asbestos in the soffits, bathroom panels, and other internal fittings.*

*Work is now being done to repair/replace roofs on Staplefield Drive, but a discussion with those doing the work indicated that they had not been informed of the presence of asbestos or given a copy of the asbestos register.*

*There was concern that the asbestos register is not being referred to routinely when work is carried out to properties across the city, and therefore the appropriate precautions are not being taken.*

#### **Action (III)**

***It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel, and clarification be requested on:***

- ***Where the register is kept and how it can be accessed by residents.***
  - ***What procedures are in place to ensure the asbestos register is always checked when work is to be done on a property.***
- 

#### **Response from Mears, Tracey Horner – Responsive Repairs Manager.**

Q1 Mears do not hold the asbestos register for the council. Instead the council holds data against individual addresses where the council has had tests conducted and removals undertaken in the past. Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) is responsible for the data held with regards to asbestos which is on a central data base. Residents can request this information from the council (Freedom of Information), for their home.

Q2 All operatives are required to complete a health and safety check before starting any repair works. They are required to check for any visual signs of asbestos before commencing works. Subcontractors are instructed to do the same. It would not be possible for Mears to check the register every time they attend to a property to carry out a repair. Some properties have asbestos containing materials that BHCC does not know about, which could be floor or ceiling tiles that a resident has fitted.

When the repair involves disturbing asbestos Mears safe working practices require that all operatives will not start work if they have any concerns that they may be disturbing asbestos materials. If there is anything identified at their visit, the operative is then required to check back with the office and see if we have any data on file. This can be done many times a week and Mears often have to stop work in order to get any suspected material tested and must wait for the results before work can commence.

With regard to Staplefield Drive specifically, the only asbestos present externally that could have impacted on the work was identified, tested and removed by licensed contractors prior to the roofing work. All major projects have a health and safety plan before works commence and part of this would contain information on asbestos. Any works requiring

replacement of kitchens or bathrooms would require an asbestos survey carried out which is fairly in depth.

#### **4. Window Replacement**

*Anglian windows have started window replacement work. However, they are moving from one area to another, rather than keeping to the schedule that reps have been given. In Coldean they did two properties and have not returned for 3 weeks.*

#### **Action (III)**

***It was greed to raise this at Area Panel, with the proposal that Anglian windows complete work in one area before they move on to the next.***

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#### **Response from Mears, Phil Ludwig – Planned Works Manager.**

The resident representatives have already been updated individually and through the Lewes Road Consortium meetings on a regular basis about the programme.

Predominantly this year's window replacement programme is in Coldean but we also have commitments elsewhere in the city due to competing priorities, referrals, urgent works etc and therefore resources will be moved round accordingly.

There is also a need to maintain continuity of fitting around cancelled appointments, technical issues, staff resource etc and therefore the programme will always have some flexibility in it and be working in multiple areas. The fitters will not be in Coldean every day as appears to be the current expectation.

## **5. Completion of emergency and routine repair jobs**

*Mears state the emergency repairs will be done within 24 hours and routine repairs will be done in 20 working days (4 weeks). Their statistics state that this is achieved in 99% and 98% of cases. However, those at the meeting felt that it doesn't reflect the reality of tenants' experiences.*

*Two key problems were identified:*

- *Contractors often have to return to a property several times before a repair is completed satisfactorily*
- *When there are delays the tenant is not informed of this.*

### **Action (III)**

***It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel, and the following information be requested:***

- ***On average, how many return visits do Mears have to make per repair?***
  - ***What procedures are in place to ensure tenants are kept up to date with the progress of their repairs when there is a delay?***
- 

### **Response from Mears, Tracey Horner – Responsive Repairs Manager.**

Q1 The majority of repair jobs are completed on the first visit, however, Mears do recognise that some do need a return visit for reasons such as materials or the operative / contractor does not have sufficient time to complete all the works on the first visit. Another reason for not completing works on a first visit is that a second tradesperson is required to follow on after the first. Please note that emergencies are in the main to only make the property safe and habitable and further works are often required following the making safe. Therefore a proportion of emergencies do generate a follow on works order to renew items which will require another visit.

Q2 Tenants should be informed if the operative / contractor has to leave works unfinished before leaving site. Operatives also report this back via their handheld devices so the office is informed. They also submit further worksheets which the office will process and make contact with the resident to book in for another appointment. Mears do carry out regular tool box talks with operatives and meet subcontractors monthly to re-iterate the importance of clear communication to both residents and the office team so the resident can be kept informed at all times.

## **6. Accountability and Resident Involvement**

*Several of those at the meeting said that they repeatedly report issues to their Resident Involvement Officer, but that they never receive any feedback about what action has been taken.*

*It was agreed that this is very demoralising and an obstacle to getting people involved, as people don't get to see the outcome of the action they take.*

*When an improvement to a local area is proposed it usually takes at least two years to get it put into effect.*

*People also felt that when they report things via their councillor or MP they get a much quicker response. It was the feeling of the meeting that resident's reps don't receive the same respect as councillors or MPs, and that this is an obstacle to involving people and improving local areas.*

*It was also felt that there should be a higher level of accountability, and that officers should be expected to report back to reps and associations when issues have been raised with them.*

### **Action (III)**

***It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel, with some discussion on how accountability could be improved.***

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### **Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Team Manager. T – 01273 293022**

The Resident Involvement Team is committed to improving Housing Management Services and it is unfortunate that some resident representatives believe that the service provided is not meeting their needs. At meetings the Resident Involvement Officers will advise, make notes and take actions forward at the request of associations.

For any enquiries or actions, the officer will report directly back to the chair of the association or to the association itself at the next meeting. If the enquiry is not related to association business then the issue will be passed to the relevant team. However the members of the Resident Involvement Team will often follow up these enquiries until they are resolved, however this is not always possible and once the resident involved is signposted it is their responsibility to contact the relevant Team to obtain a resolution.

If a resident has an individual enquiry we encourage them to contact the Housing Customer Services Team (01273 293030), or the Mears Repair Help Desk (0800 0526140) when it arises. If there is a problem with a repair that has not been resolved by the Repair Help Desk there is also the Property & Investment Team process that representatives can follow.

If there has been a problem with a specific issue regarding association business not being followed up, please do raise it with me and I will ensure that everything is being done to resolve it.

With regards to the length of time it takes to make improvements in areas I take this to be in reference to the Estate Development Budget (EDB). As suggestions for main bids are taken as early as May and the voting to agree on these bids is in April, it is understandable that this seems like a delay before anything is done.

Most associations are aware that there is a lot of work involved in inspecting, measuring and obtaining quotes for these works before the voting can take place. If a bid is successful the Mears EDB Team will then schedule the works throughout the forthcoming financial year. It is inevitable that some works will be planned later in the year however Quickbids under £750 are being carried out on a monthly basis and there has been positive feedback from many associations on the timeliness of these works.

The Resident Involvement Officers have the council's values of respect, collaboration and openness at the core of our work. We endeavour to listen to and work with customers to continually improve services. If there has been a specific incident of an Officer not treating residents with respect Please can you give me an example of an Officer not treating a resident with respect please do raise it with me and I will ensure that everything is being done to resolve it.

The Resident Involvement Team does adhere to response times when dealing with requests and actions from Resident Representatives; however some of the items which are brought to the team are not directly related to the work that we do and therefore must be directed to the correct department. This takes time and may result in a longer response time than those enquiries that go through Councillors or MPs.

Please can you give me example(s) of an enquiry that has not been responded to by the Resident Involvement Team and I can look into it?

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 17 JUNE 2015**

**FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, SHIP STREET, BRIGHTON**

# **DECISION LIST**

## **Part One**

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### **7 CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

*Contact Officer:* Caroline De Marco                      *Tel:* 01273 291063  
*Ward Affected:* All Wards

- (1) That the committee's terms of reference, as set out in Appendix A to this report, be noted.
- (2) 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. (Councillor Mears indicated that she would be the Conservative representative on the Urgency Sub-Committee. The Green Group would nominate their representative at a later date.)

### **8 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - FINAL SCHEME APPROVAL - FINDON ROAD AND GARAGE SITES UPDATE**

*Contact Officer:* Jaine Jolly                                      *Tel:* 01273 290356  
*Ward Affected:* East Brighton

- (1) That approval be given for:
  - i. The final design.
  - ii. The scheme rent levels.
  - iii. The estimated levels of additional investment required from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the chosen rent model and

delegates authority to the Executive Director of Environment, Development and Housing and the Executive Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Estate Regeneration Member Board to agree reasonable amendments to that subsidy if changes arise.

- (2) That the Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to:
- iv. Approve that the land at Findon Road, former Whitehawk library site is appropriated to the HRA for a capital receipt of £0.940 million for planning purposes and the development of new housing.
  - v. Approve a budget of £14.1 million for the Findon Road scheme in the HRA Capital Programme which will be financed through a mixture of unsupported borrowing and retained Right to Buy capital receipts.
  - vi. That the site at 4-7 and 15-20 Kensington Street is appropriated for planning purposes and the development of new housing.

## **9 HOUSING ADAPTATIONS SERVICE UPDATE**

*Contact Officer:* Sarah Potter, Martin Reid      *Tel:* 01273 29-3168, *Tel:* 01273 93321

*Ward Affected:* All Wards

- (1) That the outturn and investment in adaptations be noted.
- (2) That the measures in place to manage the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) expenditure within budget over the next three years be approved.
- (3) That the report be referred to the Health & Wellbeing Board. The Committee's concerns are also referred to the Board.

## **10 PROPOSED ADDITIONAL LICENSING SCHEME FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO)**

*Contact Officer:* Martin Reid      *Tel:* 01273 93321

*Ward Affected:* Brunswick & Adelaide;  
Central Hove; East  
Brighton; Goldsmid;  
Preston Park; Regency;  
Westbourne

- (1) That the results of the consultation and evidence gathering exercise undertaken in relation to the proposed additional HMO Licensing Scheme as summarised in the report and detailed in the Appendix, be noted.



**14 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - BROOKE MEAD EXTRA CARE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

*Contact Officer: Jo Thompson*  
*Ward Affected: Queen's Park*

*Tel: 291466*

- (1) That it be noted that the final contract costs for the Brooke Mead Extra Care Housing scheme are within the approved £12m budget.
- (2) That the risks associated with this project are noted.

**15 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR 2014/15**

*Contact Officer: Ododo Dafe*  
*Ward Affected: All Wards*

*Tel: 29-3201*

- (1) That the report, which was submitted to the Citywide Area Panel in May 2015, be noted, along with the comments of the Committee.

## **Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)** **'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'**

### **Minutes of LAG Committee Meeting**

**Monday 18 May 2015, 6.00pm to 8:00pm**  
**Hampshire Lodge**

- 1. Present:** Linda Shaw (LS), James Corbett (JC), Barbara Roberts (BR) and Tony Worsfold (TW)

**Officers:** Dave Arthur (DA) (BHCC) & Keely McDonald (KM) (BHCC)

**Apologies:** Apologies were offered for Muriel Briault, Dee Howland and Dave Croydon

**Minutes:** Trevor Jones (BHCC)

- 2. Introduction of New Members.**

2.1 LS –welcomed Barbara as a new member to the LAG committee and the rest of those present introduced themselves.

- 3. Minutes of previous meeting & matters arising.**

3.1 LS – mentioned that we would be going through the minutes from the last LAG committee meeting but that Dee Howland had taken notes during the closed session at April's AGM and points from these could form part of this year's LAG action plan. LS -provided copies of the notes for those present to consider.

3.2 Page1. Point 2.4 TW – mentioned that a single incidence of ASB is unlikely to see action taken if it is noise related and you report it to Environmental Health. You need to keep a diary of ASB and it will have to have occurred on several occasions before action will be taken.

DA – recommends an email to Housing Customer Services or contact the Neighbourhood Team. They will then contact Environmental Health if appropriate or if it is a major problem pass it on to the ASB team.

LS – asked if an update on the new ASB powers could be printed in the next edition of Homing-In.

3.3 Page 3. (AGM)

LS –felt the new format used at this year's AGM had worked well. In particular the closed session that allowed people to speak openly and the stands. The venue (Brighthelm Centre) was good but, getting there was a problem for some.

DA –from the council's point of view agreed the new format worked very well. The closed session was a step forwards and it is worth trying the same format for next year's AGM at which ever venue we decide to use. The attendance for this year's AGM was disappointing.

## Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)

### 'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'

TW –didn't believe LAG should close their minds to there being a presentation from a council officer if the issue was relevant.

3.4 Page 4. Point 4.1 LS –mentioned LAG had requested copies of the Resident Involvement and Neighbourhood Officers job descriptions so they knew who was responsible for what.

3.5 Page 4. Point 4.5 DA –the government intends to extend Right to Buy to Housing Associations. The discounts are on a sliding scale, more than £100,000 on properties in London, with a maximum of £77,900 for properties elsewhere in the country for 2015/16.

LS –this will reduce the pool of properties available for social housing.

DA –part of the new Labour administration's pledge on housing is for 500 new council homes in the next 4 years.

JC –asked how many properties BHCC had sold under RTB in the last financial year.

**Answer:** 21 houses & 31 flats (DA – 29/5/15)

3.6 Page 5. Point 5.1 LS –attended the recent Special Area Panel at the Housing Centre and LAG will now be represented on the four area panels. TW –we managed to get the Terms of Reference changed and LAG will have a representative and a deputy for each of the four areas.

3.7 Page 5. Point 6 DA – Property & Investment are being re-structured and are to review the consultation procedures for high cots major works. Glyn Huelin has offered to attend the next LAG committee meeting.

**Action:** DA –to invite GH to the next LAG meeting.

TW –asked what prompted the review.

LS –accountability has always been a contentious issue for leaseholders.

TW –the consultation at Warwick Mount was satisfactory.

DA –P&I continually review their procedures with the aim of implementing improvements on lessons learned from previous consultations. The key lesson really is to engage with residents at the earliest possible stage.

TW –asked if council procedures were available to residents?

DA – didn't know what procedures were available to the public, but the high cost major works procedures to be reviewed would certainly be made available to the committee who whose consultation was very important to their final shape.

**Minutes** –were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting.

#### 4. Key committee action points for the year 2015/16

4.1 KM –asked those present for suggestions for issues LAG wish to add to the action plan to be taken forward in the coming year.

## Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)

### 'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'

4.2 LS –mentioned she had spoken to Dave Croydon who agreed leaseholder engagement was a big issue for the coming year and needed to feature in the action plan. He is willing to take responsibility for setting up a closed Facebook page for leaseholders in an attempt to get more leaseholders to engage.

TW –didn't HRAG have a Yahoo forum?

KM –RIT are working on a Menu of Engagement which will rely strongly on Facebook. Facebook is popular with more people than Ning as a social media platform and would likely attract more leaseholders than other forums.

**Action:** LAG to discuss with DC the setting up of a closed Facebook leaseholder page.

### Issues taken from the notes taken at the AGM

4.3 Page 1 Point 3 TW – Rachel Chasseaud said the council are working on what information they can share to help us identify the leaseholders living in the different blocks.

DA – we are happy to write to all leaseholders in a building on behalf of any leaseholder who would like to set up a Recognised Tenants Association in their block. But we cannot disclose personal data that is given to us in confidence & protected by the Data Protection Act.

4.4 Page 1 Point 6 LS –the council website is difficult to navigate and needs simplifying.

TW –the search facility on the council's website is helpful and you can subscribe and get alerts on reports as they are published.

JC –there needs to be a page telling you how to navigate the website.

KM –LAG could invite a member of the council's media team to a meeting.

4.5 Page 1 Point 9 JC –having a cap on the cost of major works and communication and consultation with leaseholders by the P&I team is another issue we could add to this year's action plan.

DA – the council must be able to justify the cost of works that are proposed & where there may be an alternative method, to compare the pros and cons of the two. The financial implications to leaseholders also needs to be taken into account when procuring work.

4.6 Page 2 Point 5. LS –removing redundant television cables from some blocks needs addressing.

KM –in Queens Park redundant cables will be removed if there is a Health & Safety issue.

4.7 –after further discussion the following issues were agreed for this year's LAG Action Plan:

## Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)

### 'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'

1. Communications strategy for leaseholders (including use of Facebook as a forum; different ways of communicating; countering the decline of the meeting as a social norm; building a leaseholders network; improvements to council website)
2. High cost major works: communications; consultations; project management
3. Seek implementation of workable procedure for removal of redundant cables which cause nuisance or damage at a building
4. Review the current Leaseholders Disputes Procedure.

### 5. Next Meeting dates.

#### 5.1 Dates for next LAG committee meetings:

- 6 July, 6pm-8pm 2015
- 7 September, 6pm-8pm 2015
- 2 November, 6pm-8pm 2015
- 4 January, 6pm-8pm 2016
- 7 March, 6pm-8pm 2016
- 9 April, AGM 10am-1pm 2016

**Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)**  
**'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'**



**Minutes of the Senior Housing (Independent Community Living) Action Group Meeting**

Held on Wednesday 13 May 2015 10.00am-12.30pm  
Leach Court, Park Street, Brighton.

**Present:** Roy Crowhurst (Chair), Paul Agius (Evelyn Court, West), Joyce Bean (Elwyn Jones Court, North), Peter Bentley (Lindfield Court, North), Tony Brown (Evelyn Court, West) Jean Carter (Evelyn Court, West), Allan Davies (Rosehill Court, North) Jean Davis (Leach Court, Central), Kath Davis (Broadfields, North), Jack Edmunds (Lindfield Court, North), Ray Goble (Elwyn Jones Court, North), Bette Lewis (Jasmine Court, North), Peter Lloyd, David Marshall (Sanders House, West), Mary Moore (Muriel House, West) , Tomm Nyhuus (Somerset Point, Central), Charles Penrose (Sloane Court, Central) , Walter Sargison (Broadfields, North), Ernest Tidy (Churchill House, West), Elizabeth Tinkler (Laburnum Grove, North), Colin Vincent (Brighton and Hove Older People's Council), Beverley Weaver (Sanders House, West) Jonathan Woolven (Jubilee Court, North).

**Officers:** Chantel Cooper (Resident Involvement Assistant – Minute Taker) (RIA), Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer) (RIO), Peter Huntbach (Older Persons Housing Manager, BHCC), Michael Logue (Scheme Manager Woods House and Evelyn Court, attending as an observer).

**Councillors:**

**Apologies:**

**1. Welcome and introductions**

**2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

2.1 (p1, 2.2) Update on elections to the Older People's Council (OPC)– election now taking place on 2 July 2015 via postal ballot, not sometime in June. The over 70s will get a ballot paper automatically. Those under 70 will only get one if they are registered with Electoral Services.

2.2 (p4, 5.5.1) regarding the conversion of studio flats at Evelyn Court.

Tony: Work is bogged down. Site foremen, when asked either won't tell residents anything or don't know anything. When you ask Mears, they say that they need to 'get parts' and, to do this, they need to go back to the council and ask for authorisation to get such parts. Question is, why, if this is part of a scheduled programme of works, do they need parts/authorisation?

In residents' minds this work is not being done and is dragging on longer than scheduled and they want something done about it...

2.3 (p5, 5.5.4 and 5.5.6) regarding the Sanders House studio flat conversions.

2.3.1 Beverley: Show flat at Sanders *did* take three weeks to convert – due to pressure from the council's chief executive to get it done on schedule. *But* the rest took longer – eight to twelve weeks, then there were further delays while the council

decided what rent rates to charge for the converted flats.

- 2.3.2 Residents were told not to go back to their old flats – had to go back to new flats which were allocated to them.
- 2.3.3 Furthermore, there was *no* consultation regarding the conversions at Sanders - the first the residents knew of the proposed conversion of their flats was a Health and Safety talk from Mears in their lounge.
- 2.3.4 At this point a big problem with the studio flat conversion programme as a whole erupted within the group.
- 2.3.5 Jonathan: viewed the converted flats at Sanders this Monday morning (11 May, 2015) – thought them very nice but cramped. Couldn't live in one himself. Was concerned therefore whether residents in his block will be asked whether they want their flats converted because it seems to have been done as a *fait accompli* at Sanders House.
- 2.3.6 Chair proposed that someone from Mears should attend the next S.H.A.G. meeting to be questioned about these concerns (the delays and the apparent lack of consultation) and so their responses can be minuted for the record and set down in black and white.

Trouble is, next meeting is in two months' time – 8 July, 2015, which is too late – need a meeting sooner – a special, 'emergency' meeting.....

- 2.3.7 **Action 1:** Jonathan will raise the issue of consultation at tomorrow's Special Area Panel meeting.

Elizabeth however, maintained that at her block, they *were* consulted and there was no compunction to have their flat converted if they did not want it converted

- 2.3.8 **Action:** Tomm, as the Home Service Improvement Group's representative on the Core Group can raise the issues directly with Ian Stone and James Cryer, Mears at its next meeting at the end of May.

Beverley: You need to talk to Alan Shaw, the project manager and Nigel French about this, *not* James Cryer.

- 2.3.9 Peter (Huntbach's) response to these queries

Principle behind these studio-flat conversions is that there are lots of studio flats - these are hard to let and can take up to 72 days to re-let, if they are let at all. This is because, these days people want to have a separate bedroom and so want to move into one-bedroom lets.

The council has lost 80k in revenue (lost rents) because of this. This situation was untenable so the council agreed something had to be done about it...

Original idea was to convert flats as they became available to re-let but this would

be too slow, so the conversion programme came about, with Sanders House being the first up for conversion.

Problem is however that, even after conversion, the flats at Sanders still can't be shifted so conversion might not be the best way forward after all and needs to be re-thought.

Simon Pickles, Housing Stock Review Manager is looking at re-configuring the whole conversion programme e.g. knocking two studio flats into one one-bedroom flat to create more space.

There is also the issue of the disruption caused to the resident by converting flats which are occupied.

So there are question marks over the whole programme, the project and its mechanics need to be clarified.

Agrees therefore that there should be a special meeting to discuss this, with the Property and Investment team, Simon and the contractor all present.

- 2.3.10 Suggestion, as it was observed Hannah was taking notes from this discussion, that she should use these to formulate a question to put to City Assembly on Saturday (16 May, 2015).

**Action:** Hannah to use her notes from this meeting to formulate questions for City Assembly on Saturday.

It was queried whether a special meeting was still required if a question/questions were being put to City Assembly.

2.3.11

Group **agreed** that it still wanted the special meeting, as soon as possible.

**Action:** Chair to contact Alan Shaw and Simon Pickles to agree a date for this special meeting and send out invitation letters via Hannah.

**Action:** Peter (Huntbach) to liaise with Simon Pickles to ensure that the right people attend this meeting.

It was clarified that this special meeting would have a one point agenda – the studio flat conversion programme.

Q - Hannah to Peter (Huntbach): Regarding consultation (or lack of it) – is there a document which sets out the level of consultation?

2.3.12

A – Peter: There's a principle of consultation but no actual document and perhaps there should be...

(p 7,5.66) Alcove at Elwyn Jones Court is still locked.

- 2.4 Peter: A programme to re-furbish communal areas has been approved – will look

at the better use of space e.g. alcoves.

(p 10, 7.5) Update regarding the water-leak damage at Elwyn Jones Court:

- 2.5 Carpet belonging to the flat which experienced the water-leak has been located and it is fine so it is now back down again.

The flat below however, is still in a state of disrepair – it has now been five months...

**Minutes** – agreed as an accurate record.

### **Interval**

## **3 Update from Peter Huntbach**

### **3.1 Staffing**

Has three Scheme Manager vacancies

Has more Scheme Manager hours than ever but still not at full capacity so still using agency staff to bridge the gap.

A prospective Scheme Manager from the agency is currently awaiting a DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service check – what was a CRB or Criminal Records Bureau check) to come through.

### **3.2**

#### **Events**

Peter circulated an information sheet to the group, detailing what events the Fabrica Art Gallery is running for adults.

The Fabrica Gallery is located inside an old church, opposite the old Post Office at 40 Duke Street, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 1AG (since this information was missing from their information sheet).

Their contact telephone number is : 01273 778646

Their web-site is: [www.fabrica.org.uk](http://www.fabrica.org.uk)

- 3.3 Further to the previous minutes (p8, point 5.9.1) Peter spoke to the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transexual (LGBT) housing group base on how LGBT 'friendly' BHCC's seniors housing policies are. The feedback from this was positive. There will be staff training on serving the LGBT population.

Peter also circulated a leaflet promoting 'networking' lunches for LGBT over-50s which are held every second Friday of the month between 1pm and 3pm at the Somerset Day Centre, St. James Street.

- 3.4 One Church's 'Time 2 Talk' service has visited several schemes. Is looking to

produce a guide/leaflet on 'Being Neighbourly'.

Peter circulated a draft copy of this leaflet to the group. Would like volunteers to do further work on this leaflet.

3.5

3.5.1 The Seniors Housing team is changing their contact number.

3.5.2 To enable the Seniors Housing team to focus on calls more specific to their service, the Housing Customer Service team on 01273 293030 will be handling the bulk of its more 'generic' calls as at a date yet to be determined.

3.5.3 Peter distributed the draft of a letter advising Seniors Housing residents of this proposed change to the group for its input.

Group **signed-off** on the above-mentioned letter.

3.5.4 Suggestion to put Customer Service's number and the 24:7:365 Repairs Help Desk number up in all the schemes once this change has been finalised.

3.5.5 Questions

Q – Are the Customer Services reps trained to deal with seniors housing queries?

A – Yes. Many calls allegedly for Scheme Managers are actually generic issues which can be dealt with by any housing staff or are information requests.

Q – Will all the officers still have their direct lines?

A – Yes

Q – The number given for the Repairs Help Desk is a 0800 number, is there a landline number which you can dial from a mobile?

A – Yes – 01273 294409 - this will be added to the letter.

3.5.6 Peter (Huntbach) suggested that a line should also be added to the letter to the effect that repairs queries shouldn't be raised via the tenant reps but via the tenant concerned themselves as this was causing issues – although a tenant rep could provide support e.g. escorting the tenant concerned back to their flat and helping them to make the call.

This is because a tenant rep or Scheme Manager calling on someone else's behalf might not be able to answer the questions asked by repairs staff, so it is better a tenant reports problems themselves.

## AGENDA ITEM 7C

- 3.5.7 Chair clarified that a senior housing resident's first port of call should be their Scheme Manager so there is no comeback on tenant reps e.g. over the weekend or after hours.
- 3.5.8 For repairs-related matters there is the 24-hour Repairs Help Desk number which is available every day, 365 days a year.
- 3.5.9 For other e.g. medical-related matters etc, Care Link is there when the Scheme Managers have clocked off. The trouble is not everyone understands that Care Link is there or how to contact/talk to Care Link i.e. that only one person can talk on the line at once. (There is a lot of information in the welcome pack to digest).
- 3.5.10 Peter: Can include a 'this is how you use the Care Link Plus system' session with proposed session on contact telephone numbers/communications and talk about the time-lag between speaking and the response received experienced when using the Care Link Plus system.
- 3.5.11 **Action:** Peter to tell his staff to invite Carelink along to their Scheme Manager meetings with residents to talk to their residents about Carelink's service.
- 3.6 The Role of the Scheme Manager
- 3.6.1 Peter has been talking to area reps as to the way forward regarding this role.
- 3.6.2 Asked the group for ideas as to how the Scheme Manager service might be 'designed' – what the key things which they, as tenant reps would like to see their Scheme Managers deliver.
- 3.6.3 Scheme Whiteboards

Scheme Managers should keep the whiteboards at their scheme as up to date as possible.

If they put 'off-site' they should give an indication as to where off-site so tenants/residents are kept informed – it's all about communication again.

A problem was highlighted where one whiteboard at one location is not enough where a scheme is big or split on two sites.

Suggestion to have another/other whiteboards on these sites as appropriate however, then the Scheme Manager has the problem of trying to keep two or more whiteboards up to date.

Need to find a more 'circulatory' way of getting the information out to residents.

Suggestion that Scheme Managers should get a newsletter out to their residents , advising them of availability, periods of anticipated upcoming leave, who might be covering for them during periods of absence etc, advising the residents in advance of what's going on. Making it a two way thing, with articles by both the Scheme Manager and the residents.

Elizabeth: Newsletter in her scheme, as well as their rep meetings with their Scheme Manager are very good.

Another problem was highlighted in the fact that the information on the whiteboards is static and dependent on the Scheme Manager updating it, which isn't always possible due to the need to respond to emergencies or being unavoidably called away (this is partly due to the staff shortages which are currently being worked on). For example times when a Scheme Manager had put their movements for the week on the whiteboard then been moved to provide cover at another scheme mid-week without having had the chance to update the board – causing confusion.

Peter: Is keen on getting electronic noticeboards which Scheme Managers can update wherever they are however, this is in the future.

### Service Charges

#### 3.6.4

Woods House – their current Scheme Manager's time is divided with another scheme. Woods House is therefore only receiving half of the Scheme Manager service residents are paying for in their service charge and residents have issued a complaint accordingly. Moreover, the residents figure that they should have a rebate on some of the service charge they have paid as they are only receiving some of the service.

A – Peter: Service charge is a flat rate throughout the city based on one scheme manager per scheme, the idea being that the charge is equal throughout the city. But the question is, *is* this fair? Charge could be 'un-pooled' i.e. separated out for each scheme but what would be liable to happen? Larger schemes would pay less *pro-rata* and smaller schemes more. This is therefore a subject up for debate. Is open to discuss this if the group wishes...

Staffing actually costs more than what the council is charging people for the service. Indeed, the council is considering increasing the service charges incrementally over three years.

3.5 Peter encouraged the group to imagine what a Scheme Manager's service to them should look like if their Scheme Manager was full-time.

Scheme Manager should pay particular attention to those residents who don't come out of their flats e.g. pay them regular visits and try to persuade them to come out of their flats e.g. to attend coffee mornings etc.

Peter: Currently Scheme Managers are supposed to pay one home visit on a resident every three months. But could we tailor this to more or fewer visits as required?

A – Chair: Consult the tenant. Give them the choice as to the frequency of Scheme Manager visits.

Peter: Or should a more informal 'door-knocking' approach be adopted?

Q – Hannah to Peter: Is arranging social activities part of the Scheme Manager's role?

A – Peter/Chair: Not to lead on or arrange necessarily but to facilitate and support them.

**Action:** Since time is getting on, Peter to draft the group's expectations of a Scheme Manager and circulate it for their feed-back.

**4. Update from service improvement groups**

4.1 None

**5. Guest Room Bids**

5.1 Sanders House – four each: single duvet sets, fitted single sheets and pillows, two hand-towels - £102.00. **Agreed.**

5.2 Jasmine Court – two duvet covers, one pair of curtains, one curtain pole, two pillow protectors, two mattress protectors - £110.00. **Agreed.**

**6. Round Robin**

6.1 Tomm: Core Group – Partner Assessment

There was conflict – Mears is not performing as well as expected.

6.2 Walter: Seniors Housing Gardening Group needs a secretary – to help sort out the finances and swap from one bank to another.

6.3 Jean (Davis): Proposed maximum period of four weeks for occupying a guest room as guest rooms were limited and others might want to use them.

A – Peter: Agreed. Guest room use is reviewed every seven days. There is currently no maximum limit on length of stay. Consequently lots of people use them as a cheap hotel.

**Action:** Chair will put this issue on the agenda for the next meeting (is aware of the background to this proposal).

- 6.4 Charles: advised how at tomorrow's Special Area Panel there was going to be a proposal to introduce visitor parking charges – Leach Court, Sloane Court are mentioned. Would like them to take Leach Court and Sloane Court out of this and to exclude/exempt seniors housing from this proposal.
- 6.5 Ray: Brought up an issue which was discussed at a previous S.H.A.G. meeting last year – the issue of people within one's scheme going into hospital and the other residents not being told anything about how they're doing on the grounds of 'data protection'. People at Elwyn Jones Court are 'disappearing' into hospital never to be heard of more.

Suggestion to ask the Scheme Manager to contact the person concerned and find out whether they would mind the Scheme Manager letting people know how they are doing.

A – Peter: Yes, this is a good idea and something which we will be implementing shortly.

- 6.6 Colin: Next OPC meeting is 19 May 2015, 10.15am-1pm, Jubilee Library. Topic will be July's upcoming elections. Information will be provided on the OPC's work programme for the year coming forward.
- 6.7 Ernie: Had two Estate Development main bids converted to Quick Bids at the West Area EDB area panel. Meeting was well conducted and very successful. Most got their bids agreed.

Mary: Regarding the new mixer taps which have just been put in at Muriel House. Big gadgets have been fitted under the sink – allegedly to stop people scalding themselves. But these new taps are useless and there was no consultation before they were fitted. The water comes out very slow which means it has cooled right down by the time it hits the sink and you have to wait ages for the sink to fill....So people are having to boil the kettle to get hot water and fill the bath... which means that you have older persons in seniors housing carrying around kettles of boiling water – doesn't this defeat the object?

Apparently these mixer taps were just supposed to be fitted in the bathroom but at Muriel , they were fitted in the kitchen too.

**Action:** Peter to get the council's water management expert, Adrian Day to visit Muriel House and look at the problem.

**7. Any other business**

- 7.1 Elwyn Jones Court now have a display cabinet, exhibiting residents' handiwork from Fabrica art workshops etc –it looks nice.
- 7.2 Lindfield Court – was decorated one week and the next, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers replaced but not made good/re-decorated afterwards.

Peter Huntbach: This lack of co-ordination frustrates him. He will speak to Mears to rectify the situation.

Lindfield Court – is a twinned scheme and difficult to get to via public transport. It takes their Scheme Manager 45 minutes on the bus each way to travel between the two schemes which means that effectively Lindfield Court only receives two hours of their time a day.

- 8. Next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 July 2015, 10am-12.30pm at Leach Court, Park Street, Brighton**



**Minutes of meeting held Monday 13 April 2015**  
2pm-4pm -Hampshire Lodge, Hampshire Court, Brighton

**Present:** Alison Gray (Chair), Muriel Briault (West), Joe MacRae (West), Jason Williams (Central)

**Officers:** Susan Andrew (Adaptations Customer Support Officer), Chantel Cooper (Resident Involvement Assistant - RIA) (Minute-taker), Rebecca Mann (Resident Involvement Officer - RIO), Sarah Potter (Operations Manager, Housing Adaptations Service).

**Guests:** Janine Healey (Performance Manager), Liz O’Kane (Senior Welfare Rights Co-ordinator)

**Observers:** Ted Harman (North), Barry Kent (North), Ann Packham (West).

**Apologies:** Trish Barnard (Observer).

**1. Welcome and introductions**

1.1 Group welcomed guest-speakers Janine and Liz.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**  
**Minutes** – agreed as an accurate record.

**3. Welfare Benefits – guest-speaker Liz O’Kane, Senior Welfare Rights Co-ordinator.**

3.1 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is ending for working age people ( those aged between 16 and 64). Currently people of this age who have not claimed DLA need to claim PIP. Existing DLA claimants from June 2015 will start to be informed that their DLA is coming to an end and they need to make an application for PIP. The DLA will continue until there is a decision on the PIP claim.

3.2 From now onwards working age people need to claim Personal Independence Payments (PIP) instead.

3.3 Problem with PIP is that it takes a long time to assess – can take up to a year. And that they don’t pay anything out until they’ve fully assessed the claim. This means people could be without money for up to a year.

3.4 PIP claims are based on a *descripta* – a factual description of an individual’s condition – e.g. how independent they are (or not), how they are coping with their condition/situation (or not) and what support they have in place (or not), with points awarded accordingly – the more able a person is to cope with their situation on their own, the less money they will receive (and *vice versa*).

3.5 Applicants/claimants are advised to provide as much medical evidence as they can for their *descripta* in support of their claim.

3.6 PIP Claim Process

- Stage 1: Telephone interview.
- Stage 2: Application form - this is very long and complicated. Applicants /claimants are advised seek help completing it from either Liz’s team or the FED, Centre for Independent Living based in Montague Place (Somerset Street), Brighton.
- Medical assessment by a medical assessor (from ATOS) on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

These are conducted on an on/off basis at Hove medical centre so applicants/claimants are usually referred to Eastbourne (in which case the DWP covers the taxi fare).

In cases however, where an applicant/claimant is house-bound or whatever, the individual concerned can get their GP to write the DWP a letter, making a case for that person to be seen at home. Sometimes they ask whether the disabled person is able to go to their GP or whether the GP sees them at home.

3.7 The issue of the unacceptable delays in processing applications has been raised in Parliament. For new claims the expected time frame is 16 weeks.

3.8 The DWP will write to those affected advising them that their DLA will come to an end (even if they have an indefinite award).

3.8.1 Those whose DLA has stopped because they did not complete a renewal form have to claim PIP instead. Their benefit will stop until there is a decision about their new PIP claim.

3.9 Whether you are turned down for PIP or DLA, it is now compulsory that if you disagree with the DWP’s decision, they are obliged to reconsider it. You have 28 days to request this. Advice is that it’s best to hold out for as long as you can before this 28 day period expires for any outstanding evidence, medical or

otherwise to arrive so that you send the evidence and the request together - but they have to receive it within 28 days of the decision date.

3.9.1

If you are still not satisfied with the result, you have 28 days to appeal.

**Post meeting update from Liz:** This should be done on appeal form SSCS1 which can be found on gov.uk

3.10

Sarah: The Occupational Therapists found Liz coming to talk to them about these changes helpful.

3.11

Questions

Q – What impact will the May elections/ a new government have on PIP?

A – PIP will not be affected by a new government because it's already been legislated for.

Q – Is Attendance Allowance affected by this change?

A – No.

4.

**Bathroom conversion project – guest-speaker Janine Healey, Performance Manager**

4.1

Janine reminded the group that she had spoken to it this time last year about a twelve month pilot project the Housing Committee had agreed to as part of the Decent Homes Review to convert the bathrooms of a number of one bed ground floor flats which had become vacant to wetrooms and level access showers (LAS).

4.2

Project covered general housing stock only, not sheltered housing stock.

4.3

Eight void properties were converted as a result of the project.

4.4

The Housing Committee was pleased with pilot project and agreed for it to continue.

4.5

Q – If a property has been adapted like this and the resident moves out does the property remain converted?

A – Yes, and the property is advertised appropriately so that it is let to someone else with a matching need.

4.6

Comments

Sarah: These adaptations are pro-active 'quick-wins' which anticipate and avoid the need for future adaptation after someone has moved in.

In addition to this project there is a loft/extension project to increase the supply of larger family homes and to extend some properties where there is an overcrowding and disability need.

**5. Housing Adaptions Update – Sarah Potter**

5.1 Mapping Exercise

5.1.1 Group has had some input into this, identifying areas where it is most suitable to adapt council properties. This information has been shared with those managing the lettings and loft conversion work.

5.1.2 The map, showing the distribution of council housing and areas most suitable to adapt has been produced in-house, so there was no charge for it.

5.1.3 Sarah circulated hard copies of the map to the group showing properties with adaptation potential highlighted in pink.

5.1.4 Map is incomplete and still requires further work – further input is required from the group.

5.15 Sarah requested the members of the group to distribute copies of the map to their local Tenants' Associations (TAs) etc for their input and knowledge.

5.2 **Action:** Group to do this.

5.2.1 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) adaptations

5.2.2 New budget for the year is £1.150 million, same as it has been for the last three years.

5.2.3 There was an overspend of around £35k at the end of the last financial year , 2014/15 – this shows how much adaptations work was done.

5.3 Still collating the figures of how many major and minor adaptations were done over the previous financial year. Should hopefully have these available for the next meeting on 15 June.

5.4 Sarah is starting work on a written 'Adaptations Policy' and will be consulting regarding this soon.

**6. Newsletter**

6.1 This hasn't been done due to the Chair being very sick.

6.2 Chair is well this week so would like to get together with Ann and Barry this week to collate it before City Assembly on 16 May. (This means the draft newsletter might not come back to the group before City Assembly).

**Action:** Chair, Ann and Barry to organise a time when they can meet this week to collate the newsletter.

6.3 Resource Centre to deliver copies of newsletter to Housing Centre (City Assembly venue) via taxi.

**7. Agenda planning for next meeting**

7.1 Chair would like to invite Vicki Garcia of Brighton and Hove buses who has done a lot to make Brighton and Hove buses more disabled-friendly e.g. introducing the 'buddy card' which has often been mentioned at previous TDN meetings to come along as a guest-speaker.

**Action:** Chair to invite Vicki Garcia, Brighton and Hove buses to next meeting.

7.2 **Action:** Chair also to invite Diane, a blind bus user in to talk to the group about her experience on the buses.

7.3 **Action:** Chair to invite John Hastie from the FED to talk to the group about non-housing related issues which TDN members bring up from time to time at meetings e.g. lack of drop kerbs in a certain area (which is a Highways issue).

7.4 Sarah: There is a capital budget this year for improving communal accesses - believe this budget belongs to the Senior Housing Action Group/service - but could TDN feed into this with Occupational Therapy's involvement?

**Action:** Janine to find out who's leading on this.

7.5 Plus the usual agenda items:

- Welcome, introductions and apologies
- Minutes of the last meeting/matters arising
- Housing Adaptations update (Occupational Therapy Team)
- TDN Newsletter
- Agenda planning for next meeting
- Any other business

**8. Any other business**

8.1 Further to agenda item seven of the previous meeting , 'Reviewing Terms of Reference around attendance', page 8 points 7.2 and 7.6:

- Resident Involvement Officer (RIO) Hannah Barker was asked to try and recruit a deputy for East representative, Faith Matyszak who finds it difficult to attend meetings but none was to be found.
- Becca has drafted a letter to Faith Matyszak for the group to check and sign off on.

Group **signed off** on the above-mentioned letter to Faith.

**Action:** Becca to send Faith's letter off now group have signed off on it.

8.2 Ted: Has had his level access shower (LAS) fitted at last and is very pleased with

it. This positive feedback has been passed on to the contractors concerned.

Comment:

Sarah: This is a reflection of the benefit of involving residents in the tender evaluation process for a product/service –Alison, Chair of TDN was on the tender evaluation panel.

This is a good 'living' example of the TDN at work.

8.3 Chair /Alison: The Resident Involvement Team (RIT) has a contact list of her carers – so don't panic if she has a seizure at a meeting.

8.4 Ann: Warned the group that Brighton General Hospital is now charging for parking. Even as a blue badge holder you still need to go in and ask to park in a disabled bay. The height of the barrier there is a problem too.

Meeting closed at 3.20pm

**9. Next meeting will be held on Monday 15 June 2015 between 2pm and 4pm at Hampshire Lodge, Hampshire Court, Brighton**

## **All Housing Service Improvement Groups brief overview**

### **Home Service Improvement Group 10 February 2015**

- Elections to Estates Development Budget (EDB) Panel.
- Core Group: satisfaction surveys to new lets, benefits of cladding, multi-trade repairs review.
- Partnership Group: performance remains good. Focus on satisfaction, post inspection, repairs desk wait time, bathroom completion.
- EDB Panel: Quick Bid limit up to £750, more detail needed in bids, EDB Report went to Area Panels.
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel interviewed residents as part of study on responsive repairs.
- Goals for next 12 months: heating costs & poverty, jargon busting, resident assessors, citywide fencing program, three year investment plan.

### **Home Service Improvement Group 21 May 2015**

- Six Resident Assessor workshops developing the programme, nearing agreement on role description & reporting process. To agree Terms of Reference next.
- Revived the Resident Action Plan to pick up any citywide service improvements.
- Core Group: staff survey reviewed, management and performance improving, customer focus is strong.
- Partnership Group: reviewed key performance indicators, customer care and overdue orders.
- Two volunteers will work with Property & Investment to produce Jargon busting information.
- Explored fuel poverty that affects 2.28M homes in the UK F. Discussed the Warm Homes discount and energy saving tips.

**Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group  
19 March 2015**

- Recommendations for improving services of Estate Services, City Parks, City Clean, Tenancy, and Neighbourhood Teams and follow up letters.
- Considering the difference CCTV makes to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour – cost versus benefit.
- Discussing recharges.
- Looking at ways to improve working relationship with Community Payback Team.

**Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group  
2 July 2015**

- Discussion around the benefits of residents growing their own food on council estates and support available from Harvest Brighton & Hove and use of the Estates Development Budget.
- New Community Payback procedure now in place following review and input from group.
- Influenced a Car Parks & Garages Review Report that has been to Area Panels.
- City Parks – Manager Richard Bradley intends to come to talk to group in response to letter sent by the group.
- Estates – welcome suggestion of working flexibly to address problem areas which might require 'one off' cleans.

**Tenancy Service Improvement Group  
18 March 2015**

- Date of clean up and green up day confirmed with residents and logistics arranged by the group.
- Contributing to the review of tenancy succession letters with the Performance & Improvement Team.
- Presentation of group's work at City Assembly discussion.
- Progress work on attendance and getting new recruits to the group.

**Tenancy Service Improvement Group  
5 May 2015**

- Exploring contribution group can make to the new ASB victim-centric policy.
- Clean up and green up project to end with wild flower planting on 10 May.
- Anti-Social Behaviour standards introduced as a topic for future group input.
- Allocation sub group may reconvene after the Local Election.
- Work on the new Succession to a Tenancy letter ongoing.
- Main meetings to be held bi-monthly; subgroups more frequently.

**Tenancy Service Improvement Group  
9 July 2015**

- Feedback given on group's successful Planting Day on 10 May.
- Reviewed the draft updated Tenancy Handbook.
- Discussion about forming a focus group to update the Succession to a Tenancy letter.
- Looked at the new enhanced Service Standards for tenancy enforcement – the level of service victims and witnesses can expect to receive from the council with regard to anti-social behaviour
- Group to provide feedback on the new service standards.

**Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group  
2 April 2015**

- Reviewed and agreed group's aims and objectives for 2015/2016.
- Reviewed and agreed the group's business plan for the year ahead.
- Worked on draft "menu of involvement" leaflet.
- Received update on revision of resident representative handbook and recruitment of resident sub-group to work on this.

- Agreed associations and Area Panels to gather calendar of community events to advertise resident involvement at.
- Agreed resident involvement information pack to include success stories.
- Agreed to advertise resident involvement success stories more widely.
- Planning in place for May's City Assembly.

**Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group  
6 June 2015**

- Reviewed new draft resident involvement leaflet and suggested improvements
- Discussed key areas of first draft of resident involvement handbook.
- Went through calendar of community events including the play bus service
- Fed back initial thoughts about the City Assembly.
- Looked at the Resident Involvement Budget that is the same as last year.

**Business & Value for Money Service Improvement Group  
8 April 2015**

- Living Our Vales Everyday – discussed how Resident Involvement was working.
- Group asked what Annual Reports they would like to review this year.
- Reviewed the Council's Performance Report.
- Agreed to incorporate the Housing Income Management Sub-Committee.
- Reviewed the Everyone Counts Action Plan for Resident Involvement.
- Looked at the cost of Resident Involvement compared to similar Local Authorities.
- Approved an article promoting newsletters for Homing In.

# New homes for neighbourhoods Update



July 2015

Brighton & Hove City Council's New Homes for Neighbourhoods Programme is building much needed new council homes on council owned land and improving council estates and neighbourhoods. We are aiming to build at least 500 new council homes across Brighton & Hove.

**Two new council homes will be completed at the end of July and constructors are on site to build another 72 new council homes at five locations across the city. Five further homes have received planning consent and a planning application has been submitted for 58 more.**

All will be let at affordable rents within Housing Benefit limits through the council's choice based lettings scheme, Homemove.

The council's Estate Regeneration Team works with local residents and ward councillors to improve their neighbourhoods and make best use of council housing land and buildings to help meet the city's housing needs. We update and consult resident associations and local ward councillors directly about development of new homes in their area. We consult wider residents before putting in a planning application.

The team are working with council architects, housing and many other council teams and partners to deliver the programme of new council homes as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## **Preston Road – 2 new wheelchair accessible family bungalows**



Two new wheelchair accessible three bedroom family bungalows are on target to be completed at the end of July. They are built on the site of former temporary accommodation prefabs which were no longer fit for use.

The bungalows are now being allocated through Homemove.

## **Former Manor Place office – 15 new flats at Robert Lodge**

Foundations for the first block of nine new flats have been laid on the site of the old prefab Manor Place Housing Office and work has started on the new concrete structure. This addition to Robert Lodge should be finished in early 2016. The second block of six flats won't be started until the first block has been completed.



Initial works to the communal garden are now finished and it has been handed back to Robert Lodge residents who recently enjoyed a summer BBQ there.

## **12 new family houses in Portslade and Hangleton**

Work has started on three former garage sites at Foredown Road and Flint Close, Portslade and Hardwick Road, Hangleton where 12 two and three bedroom houses, including a wheelchair accessible home, will be built.

The Guinness Trust, the council's development agent for these three schemes, has been talking to local residents to ensure the construction goes as smoothly as possible. We expect the completed homes to be handed over to the council and ready for letting in the first half of 2016.

## **Brooke Mead – 45 extra care flats**

Hoardings have also gone up around the Brooke Mead former temporary accommodation block in Albion Street where a new extra care scheme is to be built. The gas and water mains are being diverted before the existing building is demolished in September. Completion of the new homes is expected by summer 2017.



The council successfully bid for £2.4 million in government grant to help pay for this scheme of 45 flats with community facilities. We are working closely with Adult Social Care to make sure it will meet the needs of future tenants and holding regular meetings with local residents and businesses and Albion Hill Residents' Association.

## **Ardingly Street car parking site – 5 new homes in Kemp Town**

The council's corporate strategic construction partnership is preparing to start works in early autumn on five new one and two bedroom council homes in Ardingly Street, Kemp Town, including a two bedroom wheelchair accessible flat. Users of the 13 car parking spaces on the current site have all been relocated to other spaces nearby.

As well as the local resident association, residents and businesses, we are also keeping St. James's Community Association Group (LAT) updated.

### **Findon Road, Whitehawk – 58 new flats on former library site**



The council’s Housing and Policy and Resources Committees have agreed proposals for 58 new homes, including ground floor flats designed for households with wheelchair users, on the former Whitehawk Library site. A planning application has been submitted.

Residents’ comments on community issues which came out of the ‘Planning for Real’ consultation event we organised

in Whitehawk in March have now been analysed and prioritised and Due East Neighbourhood Council is developing these into an action plan.

### **Design Competition for small sites**

There has been a tremendous response to our design competition with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) for former or underused car parking sites on council housing land at Hinton Close, Rotherfield Crescent and Natal Road and a small council owned commercial parking site in Frederick Street, all in Brighton.

A technical panel will now whittle down architects’ initial proposals to five designs for each site, on which local residents around the sites will then be consulted. The winning designs will be announced in December.

### **Kensington Street car parking site – 12 new homes in the North Laine**



Design of 12 flats and houses on three small, constrained sites in Kensington Street in the North Laine is progressing.

This follows successful consultation with local residents and businesses earlier this year.

### **Former Selsfield Drive Housing Office**

The council architect who will be developing the initial design for 20 flats on the site of the former Selsfield Drive Housing Office on Lewes Road will meet with the Bates Estate Residents Association in September to discuss the proposals and get their input.

## **For more information**

There's more information on the New Homes for Neighbourhoods council webpage at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn), including regular updates on individual schemes and links to planning documents.

You can contact the Estate Regeneration Team by:

Email: [estate.regeneration@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:estate.regeneration@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Phone: 01273 290591

Post: Estate Regeneration Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, Room 506,  
Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2SR



## Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes

Latest Information – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Since Seaside Homes went live in November 2011, we have leased and refurbished a total of 416 properties and the partnership has now generated just over £21.5 m for the HRA to continue the decent homes work.

All 416 Seaside properties are now complete and tenanted.

### Property Details

Property Type	Batch 1 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2011	Batch 2 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2012	Batch 3 30 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2012	Batch 4 1 <sup>st</sup> Jun 2012	Batch 5 1 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2012	Batch 6 1 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2012	Batch 7 27 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2013	Batch 8 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2014	Batch 9 1 <sup>st</sup> Sep 2015	Total
Studio	5	1	5	3	6	8	11	4		43
1 Bedroom	19	21	20	12	27	23	32	29		183
2 Bedroom	20	17	12	18	16	18	13	27		141
3 Bedroom	14	9	3	2	6	3	2	5		44
4 Bedroom	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0		5
<b>Total Properties</b>	61	48	41	35	56	52	58	65		416

The transfer of batch 9 is scheduled to take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2015. Original batching projections indicate that this batch should consist of 48 un-refurbished properties.

However, we have been advised that a number of the properties may have already undergone refurbishment prior to transfer. Final batch numbers will not be known until the end of July 2015.

The following tables provide a breakdown of the number of refurbished and un-refurbished properties received in each batch and progress made on refurbishment works.

<b>Table 1</b>	<b>Refurbished Properties</b>	<b>Un-refurbished Properties</b>
Batch 1	44	17
Batch 2	8	40
Batch 3	0	41
Batch 4	0	35
Batch 5	3	53
Batch 6	0	52
Batch 7	2	56
Batch 8	43	22
Batch 9	TBC	TBC
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>316</b>

*Table 1 - the breakdown of properties leased to date:*

At the time of handover Seaside Homes receives a mix of properties some of which have already undergone refurbishment and are ready to be tenanted and others for which refurbishment is about to commence.

### Refurbishment – Progress to date:

<b>Table 2</b>	<b>Refurbishment Works COMPLETED</b>	<b>Refurbishment Works Incomplete</b>
Batch 1	17	0
Batch 2	40	0
Batch 3	41	0
Batch 4	35	0
Batch 5	53	0
Batch 6	52	0
Batch 7	56	0
Batch 8	22	0
Batch 9	TBC	TBC
<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>0</b>

*Table 2 – 316 properties were transferred to Seaside as un-refurbished.*