

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

2.00pm 30 NOVEMBER 2016

**THE BARNARD CENTRE, ST JOHNS MOUNT FLATS, MOUNT PLEASANT, BRIGHTON,
BN2 0JP**

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Gibson (Chair).

Representatives: Carl Boardman, Ann Ewings, George Coates, Martin Cunningham, Barry Hughes, Christina Hadleigh, Tomm Nyuus and Jason Williams.

Officers: Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Glyn Huelin (Business & Performance Manager), Miriam Gee (Performance & Improvement Officer), Annabel Tate (Housing Manager), Mike Meik (Health & Safety Business Partner), Di Hughes (Business Change Manager), Emma Gilbert (Tenancy Services Operations Manager), Rebecca Mann (Resident Involvement Officer) and Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement).

Guests: Jeff Tourmentin (Mears Representative).

18 APOLOGIES

18.1 Apologies were received for Theresa Mackey, Linda Shaw, Alan Davis, Jane Thorpe and Tony Worsfold.

19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

19.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 September 2016 be approved and signed as the correct record.

20 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

20.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“The recent City Wide conference took place on the 17th November 2016 and 40 people attended.”

20.2 Ann Ewings noted that extending the question time at the City Wide conference would be a positive change.

20.3 The Chair stated that he wished to hold an informal budget meeting on the HRA with residents.

20.4 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to have an informal budget meeting in The Barnard Centre, St Johns Mount on Monday 16 January 2017 at 1600 hours.

21 HOUSING FIRE SAFETY POLICY

21.1 Di Hughes, Business Change Manager, and Mike Meik, Health & Safety Business Partner, introduced the report and highlighted:

- The new fire safety policy would be reported at the Housing & New Homes Committee on 18 January 2017.
- The current policies and vulnerable resident fire procedures had been updated.
- The sprinkler system had been installed in Somerset Point and a further two high rise blocks were to have the system installed in 2017.
- Following the advice from the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, alternative solutions were being found to store mobility scooters, as they could not be kept in the communal hallways.
- There was an article in the previous edition of Homing In providing information regarding fire safety, and there would be a further, more detailed, article in the winter edition. Posters had been redesigned and leaflets had been produced.

21.2 In response to queries from the Panel the Officers clarified:

- The article in Homing In did give advice regarding the use of candles.
- A resident believed that the sprinkler was unnecessary, not aesthetically pleasing and may disturb the residents. The Officer responded and explained that the sprinkler system was an additional precaution and was match funded by the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS). The sprinkler system would put the fire out quicker and would limit the damage caused, in addition to potentially saving the lives of residents and fire fighters.
- The sprinklers were in every room in the flats and common ways.
- A failure in compartmentation was highly unlikely, especially in purpose built blocks; however, regular checks were undertaken.
- The cooker cut off system would be wired to an electric cooker and if it was to detect the temperature exceeding a certain amount, the supply would be cut off before a fire developed.
- If anything was noticed on the communal hallways then residents should contact the Housing team, rather than wait for an estate inspection.

21.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

22 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

22.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the responses.

23 HRA ASSET MANAGEMENT - DELIVERING ACCOMMODATION

23.1 Simon Pickles, Housing Stock Review Manager, introduced the report and highlighted:

- The Housing & New Homes Committee agreed to the closure of Stonehurst Court, senior housing scheme, as it was in an inappropriate location.
- There were six possible options; however, four of these were viable. These were to create:

- 1) 11 new homes.
- 2) 14 new homes.
- 3) 10 converted homes.
- 4) Retain the 20 existing studios.

- The preferred options would be to either offer family homes or temporary housing for homeless people.

23.2 In response to queries from the Panel the Housing Stock Review Manager clarified:

- There were currently 20 studio flats on the site.
- Six studio flats situated at the front of the building would be retained.
- Family homes were needed in the city.
- That he would feedback that the residents had suggested a mix of studio flats and family homes.

23.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

24 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2

24.1 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the report and highlighted:

- The report had been reformatted to be read easier.
- The indicators showed that 34 areas were on target, six targets were almost met and five were below target.
- The repairs contract was under target due to the average time to repair and the answering calls time. This was mainly due: to the loss of subcontracting work; the high demand of work; and the change of staff on the helpdesk.

24.2 In response to queries from the Panel the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement clarified:

- A resident raised concerns regarding major projects running one year behind schedule and noted that more detail should be included in the report explaining this. The Officer explained that the Council were working to resolve the issues with certain areas, for example, scaffolding and were monitoring the performance with Mears on a weekly basis.
- Mears was a competitive business and retaining staff was challenging. There was a recruitment day for Mears in December.

24.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

25 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET

25.1 The Head of Income Involvement & Improvement highlighted the presentation that was given at the City Wide Conference on 17 November 2016.

25.2 The Officer outlined the slide regarding the Capital Investment and the proposed areas that would have their budgets either reduced or increased to make savings. The

seven voting co-optees present undertook an electronic vote in response to “Do you think we have got the balance right?”. The results were as follows:

57.1% voted “yes”.

28.6% voted “no”.

14.3% voted “not sure”.

25.3 A resident noted that the budget for sustainability and carbon reduction work should not been reduced. The Business & Performance Manager noted that it was not economically beneficial.

26 TENANCY FRAUD AMNESTY BRIEFING

26.1 Annabel Tate, Housing Manager, introduced the report and highlighted:

- An amnesty was beginning at the beginning of December to potentially gain properties back that may have been sub-let.
- The Housing team were working alongside the tenancy and fraud team.
- The keys to the properties could be returned to the Council anonymously and the resident would not be prosecuted. It was a cost effective way to regain properties.
- Similar amnesties had been successful in other authorities.
- The residents were encouraged to report and fraud suspicions they may have.
- There would be a feedback report presented at the Area Housing Panels in March.

26.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

27 STAR (SURVEY OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS) SURVEY 2016

27.1 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the report and highlighted:

- The postal survey was sent to a randomly selected sample of 3000 tenants and had received a higher response rate from the previous year.
- There were two areas where the satisfaction rate had been reduced, these being: the overall quality of homes; and neighbourhoods as a place to live.
- There will be a short article in the next edition of Homing In and a further, more detailed article in the spring edition outlining the findings.

27.2 In response to the queries raised by the Panel the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement clarified:

- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had strict guidelines outlining where the money should be spent. The HRA could be spent on improving neighbourhoods; however, the Council could not spend the HRA on residents that were not Council tenants.
- The choice based letting scheme allowed tenants to bid for available properties and these properties were not prioritised for mental health needs but for housing need. It was added that a higher number of residents with mental health issues were being housed because there was a greater need.
- It was proposed and agreed that a future item should be presented to the Area Housing Panel.

27.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

28 ESTATES DEVELOPMENT BUDGET REVIEW

28.1 Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, introduced the report and highlighted:

- The budget was going to be reduced; however, the reserves in place would be added to the total and the amount would remain the same as the previous year.
- The feedback that had been received through the EDB budget consultations and through the “blue pages” showed that residents wished for the process to be made fairer.
- A survey had been sent to the Chairs, Secretary and Treasurers of the Tenant Only Meetings.
- The proposals for the EDB budget were:
 - 1) To limit the number of main bids to four per association.
 - 2) To limit the value of a main bid up to £15,000.
 - 3) To limit the number of quick bids to five per year.
 - 4) Residents should not use the EDB budgets for multiple quick bids for a work that should be a main bid.

28.2 A resident proposed that the report be deferred; however, this was not seconded.

28.3 A vote was taken by the voting co-optees present.

28.4 **RESOLVED** – That the recommendations were agreed.

29 CITY WIDE REPORTS

29.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the reports.

30 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

30.1 There was none.

The meeting concluded at 4.20pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of