

## BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

2.00pm 18 DECEMBER 2019

BARNARDS CENTRE, ST JOHNS MOUNT, MOUNT PLEASANT, BRIGHTON, BN2 0JP

#### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Hugh-Jones (Chair), Rainey

**Voting Representatives:** Barry Hughes (Sylvan Court), Theresa Mackey (Highcroft Lodge), Martin Cunningham (Hampshire Court), Carl Boardman (Warwick Mount), Jason Williams (Hereford Court), Jane Thorp (X), Eileen Stewart (Somerset Point), Tony McCoy (Sloane Court), Emma Salcombe (Essex Place)

**Non-Voting Delegates:** Trish Barnard (Hereford Court),

**Officers:** Glyn Huelin, Rebecca Mann, Ben Stride, Justine Harris

**Guests:** Alan Cooke, Sarah Booker-Lewis

#### 35 APOLOGIES

35.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Powell and Rita Devitt.

#### 36 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

36.1 Several points of accuracy were made in relation to the minutes with the following corrections made shown in bold italics and strikethrough below:

31.3 Councillor Clare Rainey had the following enquiries, concerns and statements:

- Clarification was sought regarding **what** the perceived difference was, following the departure of Sharon Davis.

32.1 The Chair gave a brief update on the Housing Committee Work Plan and stated the following:

- Various key targets were being considered such as 800 ~~councils~~ **council homes**, 700 additional affordable homes along with continued improvement of council housing.

36.2 The following matters of clarification were made: with regard to minute item 31.4, it was explained that repairs were not funded by the EDB but by the HRA.

36.3 With regard to minute item 31.4, the Chair asked if windows due for maintenance had been looked at.

36.4 Panel representatives relayed multiple accounts of problems with windows. It was explained that at Warwick Mount, the windows in every flat required inspection as the mechanisms were rusting and failing.

- 36.5 Officers clarified that the maintenance programme was currently being reviewed however, the windows at Warwick Mount would be inspected as there appeared to be a specification issue.
- 36.6 Panel representatives proposed expanding the brief of resident inspectors to include issues such as those raised at Warwick Mount. Some concern was expressed regarding the technical skill required to inspect building issues and that only Housing Managers had undertaken the training required to assess structural and maintenance issues.
- 36.7 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved and signed as the correct record subject to the above corrections.

### **37 CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF COUNCIL HOUSING PRESENTATION**

- 37.1 The Panel received a presentation from Alan Cooke detailing the history and development of social housing in Brighton & Hove. The presentation commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Addison Act which led to council's becoming large-scale builders of social housing.

### **38 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME**

- 38.1 (Question 1: Anti-social Behaviour) The Panel asked whether residents were legally permitted to take photographs to provide as evidence towards investigations and how for how long CCTV records were kept.
- 38.2 Officers confirmed that residents could submit evidence and that CCTV recordings were kept up to 28 days.
- 38.3 The Panel asked for confirmation that the currently installed fire doors could null and void certain insurance policies. Further questions and comments were made about whether a 2-inch gap underneath the door met fire regulations and ensured safety from smoke inhalation.
- 38.4 Officers confirmed that as long as a consistent fire plan was in place, there would be no impact upon insurance claims. It was explained that 2i-inch gaps were standard for fire doors as the doors expanded in the event of a fire. In the event of a fire, smoke and fire would rise to the ceiling so would not permeate through the gap at the bottom of the door.
- 38.5 **RESOLVED-** That the answers to the various Resident Questions be noted.

### **39 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET UPDATE**

- 39.1 In response to questions asked, Officers clarified that the Project had been established for a three-year period but may well extend beyond that and residents living in areas without a resident's association could apply via the Housing Customer Service Centre, RIO's or ward councillors.

### **40 CITY CLEAN UPDATE FOR CENTRAL WARD**

- 40.1 The Panel heard from representatives from Hampshire Court that numerous problems had been experienced by vehicles parking in front of dropped kerbs and the work done to address that had not been good enough. Furthermore, it was explained that residents of Essex Place were experiencing huge problems with two local commercial garages that were blocking access and blocking pavements and roads. Attempts to resolve the problem had not been successful.
- 40.2 In response, officers stated that they would contact the associations direct to discuss the issue. It was agreed that a report to a future meeting specifically on parking may be useful.

#### **41 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2**

- 41.1 The Chair asked if the steep upward trend for claimants of Universal Credit to be in rent arrears had continued.
- 41.2 Officers clarified that the rate had slowed and detailed methods of support available for claimants in such circumstances.
- 41.3 The Panel expressed concern that a quarter of social housing tenants were in rent arrears and asked whether there was sufficient officer resource to ensure that people were helped to avoid those arrears build up.
- 41.4 Officers explained that recruitment to vacant posts in the area had been complicated however, had recently been filled. It was proposed that a report detailing the work undertaken around tenancy sustainment be brought to a future meeting.

#### **42 CITY WIDE REPORTS**

- 42.1 **RESOLVED-** That the various Citywide reports and the information contained therein be noted.

#### **43 TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATION UPDATES**

- 43.1 The Panel representatives provided updates on their resident association activities.

#### **44 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 44.1 Representatives from Sylvan Hall stated that an outside consultant had been appointed to investigate recycling in the block and would report their findings to Cityclean.
- 44.2 Officers detailed the offer made available by the Community Engagement Team for £250 grants for resident lead arts projects.
- 44.3 It was agreed to move summer meetings of the Panel to a start time of 7pm with autumn and winter meeting start time remaining at 2pm.
- 44.4 It was agreed to receive a report to a future meeting on repairs.

The meeting concluded at 4.05pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of