

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: WEST HOVE & PORTSLADE AREA

2.00pm 16 OCTOBER 2018

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Moonan (Chair) and Barnett

Representatives: Alison Grey (Clarendon & Ellen Road), Ted Chapman (Clarendon & Ellen Road), Roy Crowhurst (Wood House), Patricia Weller (Knoll), Ann Tizzard (Knoll), Joe Macrae (NPRA), Graham Dawes (Philip Court) and Muriel Briault (NPRA)

Non-Voting Delegates:

Officers: Sharon Davies (Housing Business Programme Manager), John Currell (Housing Asset Strategy Manager), Grant Ritchie (Lead Consultant - Health & Safety), Janet Dowdell (Tenancy Services Operations Manager), Pat Lidell (Resident Involvement Officer), Hillary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager), Annie Sparks (Regulatory Services Manager), Ododo Dafe (Head Income Involvement & Improvement) and Anoushka Clayton-Walshe (Democratic Services Apprentice)

Guests: Delia Hills (Mears) and Sarah Booker-Lewis (Local Democracy Reporter)

30 APOLOGIES

30.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Nemeth, Lewry, Janio, Ann Packham, Vic Dodd and Joan Westmoreland.

31 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

31.1 The Chair communicated the following:

"You may know that Rachel Chasseaud left the post of Head of Tenancy Services at the end of August to take up the position of Assistant Director of the city's Environmental Services. Justine Harris has been appointed as Rachel's replacement. Justine is currently the Housing Options Manager and will be taking up her new post shortly and is looking forward to being at our next panel meeting.

A report will be going to November's Housing & New Homes Committee to share information about the work that the residents' Estates Development Panel has been carrying out over the summer to make the EDB bidding process simpler and quicker for residents and to announce increased funding being made available for environmental improvements. This additional money will be spent on work that has been identified through the many different ways we engage with residents and their

feedback on areas for improvement. These include the STAR satisfaction survey, the feedback residents have given us recently during consultation on the delivery of repairs and maintenance, the annual customer satisfaction survey, estate inspections, feedback from complaints and councillors enquiries in addition to information from residents associations. This report will give an outline of what is proposed, with a more detailed report going to committee in January 2019. A briefing on that report will come to the next round of Area Panels and invite your comments and contributions on the proposals it will make on the future of the Estates Development Budget and how the additional funding is spent.”

- 31.2 The Chair stated that the report would go to the next Housing & New Homes Committee and then come back to Area Housing Panels with a more detailed report.
- 31.3 In response to Residents, Officers responded that a detailed report would be available after the Committee due to the timings in relation of the Area Housing Panels. Officers added that they wanted to increase money for the environmental budget, however the exact allocation was not known yet.

32 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 32.1 Councillor Nemeth noted that he had sent his apologies and they were not recorded in minutes of the previous meeting.
- 32.2 Residents noted that clarification was not included on item 20 that the IG doors had not failed the safety tests.
- 32.3 Residents noted that the opinions raised on item 20, that the new benefit policies from central government had been designed to make rent collection difficult for councils, should be included.
- 32.4 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

33 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

33.1 1) Blocked drains

- Residents stated there needed to be a planned programme of maintenance because blockages had been reported on numerous occasions and there was still no response.
- Councillor Barnet noted that Hove Park Lower School suffered from flooding and there a nasty accident was likely to occur.
- Residents stated there were reported problems of constant flooding at Mile oak. Residents added that these incidents arose even in the summer months.
- Officers responded by saying that many of the examples were for the Highways team and reports had been forwarded to them, however problems raised today would be followed up and residents were encouraged to continue reporting.

33.2 2) Major Works at Clarke Court

- Residents stated that it was clear in the question that a timeframe was requested and nothing in the response indicated dates.
- Officers responded that they would go back to Richard Daburn, the Surveyor & Contract Manager, to give an update on potential dates and would then be communicated back through to the Area Housing Panels.

33.3 3) Leaseholder charges

- Residents stated that the proposed bill to leaseholders was so high due to the council not responsibly managing these properties for decades. Residents added that people did not readily have these sums of cash available even if the council had put in schemes to support leaseholders spreading the cost.
- Officers responded that the social housing had been underfunded over consecutive years of government cuts and was subject to the Decent Homes Standard to make properties fit for purpose. The council was trying to alleviate the costs by helping leaseholders pay the bill in an affordable way and informing tenants of the costs prior to the statutory time; however they could not undo the history of poor investment. Officers added that concerns from leaseholders were being acknowledged to addressed.
- In response to residents, officers acknowledged that early notice may not be a major solution; however the system needed to be as fair as possible when considering who should foot the bill. Officers added that leaseholder feedback has welcomed extra dialogue with the council.
- The Chair stated that for residents struggling with cost, there were schemes in place to pay over time. She added that the value of the property increased which meant costs could be recovered when the property was vacant.
- Councillor Barnet stated that bills residents were receiving were more expensive than the initial price of the properties and tenants should be allowed to buy the freehold of the flat.
- Officers responded that this was possible when the majority of a block was in favour which was more likely in smaller blocks. Officers added that residents should contact Right to Buy for more information on their legal rights.

33.4 4) Estate Development Budget – Main bids

- Residents stated that it was unfair that associations were unable to bid due to the deadline shift. Residents added that the time frame of bids were fragmented as they were asked in July to propose projects for the following year when previous jobs funded through the Estate Development Budget (EDB) had not been completed.
- Offices responded that these issues were being referred for reviewed at the 16 January 2019 Housing & New Homes Committee. Officers added that that the deadlines were based on gathering provisional ideas on the basis that if they still needed work, there was still time to amend them for the final bid. The audit last year

said that better estimates were needed early on but it was clear that more discussion was needed on the process.

- Residents raised concern on the proposal to remove fencing from the EDB and requested this be reconsidered as this funding was only applied for in necessary circumstances.
- Officers responded that fencing would not be scrapped, just be funded differently and if residents were to apply through the EDB then the application would be passed to the right department.

34 SEASIDE HOMES - FUTURE ELECTION OF COUNCIL TENANT REPRESENTATIVE

34.1 Roy Crowhurst stated that there was a vacancy for the Seaside Homes Representative, due to him standing down, and if anyone was interested in becoming a trustee that they should contact Hilary Edgar.

34.2 To be a Trustee of an organisation is an exciting and fulfilling role. The most effective Boards are ones which benefit from individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences and skill sets. The role of Trustee is to ensure that Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes fulfils its duty to its beneficiaries and delivers on our vision, mission and values.

34.3 The time commitment for this role was an Induction Meeting with CEO (2 hours), 6 Board Meetings per year (2-3 hours per meeting), 4 Half Day Training Sessions per year and 2 Half Day Away Days per year.

34.4 The essential guide to becoming a trustee can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

35 FIELD OFFICER UPDATE

35.1 Annie Sparks, the Regulatory Services Manager, introduced the briefing of the new Field Officer roles. The Field Officer would work cross-service and seek community collaboration by attending Area Housing Panels, Leaseholder Action Groups and reporting to the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities & Equalities Committee. These Field Officers were from a variety of backgrounds with a range of experience and operated seven days per week with a flexible working pattern for fast effective enforcement towards service referral. The team was currently live; however it would be in full operation from early December 2018.

35.2 In response to residents, officers stated that in the event of reporting obstruction to pavements, Field Officers could use an iPad to gather quick evidence and forward this to the Highways team. Officers added that Field Officers were not replacing other services and that the Housing Office was still a point of contact.

35.3 Officers stated that there was currently a review on estate inspections and as it stood Field officers were the right people to take on that inspection role because they were on the ground familiarising themselves with communities and building relationships.

Officers added that Field Officers had annualised contracts which allowed them to hotspot on particular issues and mould against need.

- 35.4 Councillor Barnet stated that for several weeks the council had passed reports on to Field officers, but now they were not being rolled out until December and there were already many issues. She added that the Field Officers should be invited to this Panel in order to speak to herself and the Resident Involvement Officers because they knew the local issues.
- 35.5 In response to residents, officers stated that they could gather evidence of anti-social behaviour; however more serious incidences should be reported to the police as criminal behaviour. Officers added that the benefits of the Field Officer role was the out of office hours support which meant in incidences of anti-social behaviour they could collect fast evidence and pass on that information to the police or appropriate colleagues.
- 35.6 The Chair noted that a Field Officer provided a more holistic point of contact and she looked forward to meeting them.

36 A NEW DEAL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING - GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER AND CONSULTATION

- 36.1 Hilary Edgar, the Housing Service Operations Manager, gave a briefing on the government green paper. She stated that the social housing green paper proposed fundamental reform to ensure social homes provided an essential, safe, well managed service for all those who needed it. She referred residents to page 29 of the paper to see how they could get involved.
- 36.2 The Chair stated that this green paper was a great opportunity to shape government policy.
- 36.3 Residents stated that there should be a difference between supported and social housing. Residents added that the city needed retirement apartments. The current situation left people who were in desperate need of support and those who did not need any mixed together leaving some residents left terrified in their own homes due to threatening behaviour.
- 36.4 Councillor Barnet stated that social housing should host a mixture of needs and people should help each other. She added that in particular incidences that seemed threatening, residence should seek help.
- 36.5 The Chair stated that it was important that the people that needed help were receiving it and social housing had to be diverse. She encouraged residents to read the green paper and take the opportunity to engage.
- 36.6 **RESOLVED:** That the Panel noted the report.

37 FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

- 37.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the fire safety update on the proposed installation of residential sprinklers to high rise blocks. The nature of the proposal had changed whereby the system would now be optional

and put through forums to boost a more positive image. The current schemes were in partnership with East Sussex Fire & Rescue through a split budget and will be rolled out to other blocks in the city after consultation. She added that the main purpose of the sprinkler systems was to reduce the fire size and not just aid evacuation.

37.2 In response to residents, officers stated that the central blocks arranged for the scheme were selected 22 years ago with East Sussex Fire & Rescue due to the fact these blocks generated the most emergency calls. Blocks were initially selected on their height and sensitivity, however in future the age group and ability of residents would be taken in to more consideration when extended to other areas.

37.3 The Chair supported that the criteria should be more objective.

37.4 Residents raised concern of the fact that the rescue service would not be funding all future blocks and where the budget would then be sourced, particularly for leaseholders. Residents then asked for more detail on the choices on sprinkler placements and how this related to costs.

37.5 Officers responded that funded blocks were a part of the initial pilot scheme and beyond this the local authority would carry the cost; however there were other government schemes to encourage fire safety in the housing sector. Officers added that the price varied considerably but the estimated figure without funding would be £3,000 in the hope that every flat would take at least one sprinkler, particularly by the front door. If residents only opted for one shared device, then the cost would be proportionately split between the block.

37.6 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the report.

38 FUTURE DELIVERY OF HOUSING REPAIRS, PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL WORKS

38.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the update future delivery of repairs, maintenance and works through the transitional period and beyond the termination of the Mears contract in 2020. The key decisions from the report that went through the Housing & New Homes Committee and the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee was that repairs and customer service would be brought back in-house, major capital works would function on a multi-contractor framework and specialist works would continue to operate through the mechanical and electrical teams. She added that there would be full communication with all parties involved during the transition period as this was a huge change for residents and officers.

38.2 In response to residents, officers stated that after the Mears contract ended the local authority would have a direct relationship with the contractors and would still provide competition. Officers added that this still needed to go through the procurement process. Officers added that these contracts were intended to be kept as local as possible and engage with the city's markets through a stream of contracts.

38.3 The Chair stated that there would be regular updates on the changes and officers would attend the Area Housing Panels to brief on updates. She added that for more information and the decision list from the Housing & New Homes Committee residents

could visit the website on: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/repairs-and-maintenance-contract-options>.

38.4 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the report.

39 2019/20 BUDGET DISCUSSION

39.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, introduced the discussion of the 2019/20 budget to gain feedback from residents to take to the 19 October 2018 Citywide Conference. There had been various forums for residents to consult with officers to highlight areas in which the council needed to improve the environment of the estates which was the lowest performing area on the STAR survey.

39.2 Residents raised the following areas for improvement:

- enforcement against anti-social behaviour
- police presence
- ground maintenance
- CCTV
- walls and bushes for defence against noise pollution and more security
- upkeep of gardens

39.3 Officers thanked the residents for their input and said that they had a range of feedback from complaints, Area Housing Panels and surveys. They added that they intended to hold focus groups and encouraged tenants that did not usually attend meetings to get in contact to contribute ideas. More information would be provided in the Homing In magazine.

40 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

40.1 Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, stated that concerns arose from the North Area Housing Panel regarding the format of the Housing Management Performance Reports. She added that the Area Housing Panels received the report in the same format as the Housing & New Homes Committee, however if desired specialised documents, for example a summary report or infographic, this was possible upon request.

40.2 Residents responded that it could be helpful to receive a summarised infographic and then be provided with a narrative only if performance had lowered, however the current format satisfied its purpose.

40.3 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the report.

41 CITY WIDE REPORTS

41.1 **RESOLVED** – That the panel agreed to note the reports.

42 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

43 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

43.1 The date of the next meeting would be 11 December 2018.

The meeting concluded at 4:00 pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of