

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

2.00pm 6 JANUARY 2021

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present

Councillors: Siriol Hugh-Jones (Chair)

Officers: Martin Reid, Simon Hughes, Ododo Dafe, Geof Cage, Hannah Barker, Tom Matthews, Thomas Bald.

Housing Area Panel Representatives: Barry Hughes, Jane Thorp, David Spafford, Eileen Stewart, Dave Croydon, Emma Salcombe, Carl Boardman, Theresa Mackey, Charlotte Rogers, Barry Brewster.

1 WELCOME, APOLOGIES, AND MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1.1 There were no apologies.

1.2 There was concern that the Minutes were too vague. In particular, item 13.6 was noted to not fully reflect the views of the residents. In future, minutes will provide more information on what was agreed.

1.3 David Spafford, Theresa Mackey, and Eileen Stewart needed to be added to the attendee list and the voting record for the previous meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be agreed subject to the information in subject 1.2 above.

2 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 The Chair made the following communications:

“Firstly, I just wanted to wish everyone a happy new year, and secondly I just wanted to give you a bit of reassurance about repairs during the lockdown, now that we’re in our 3rd lockdown. We do operate a COVID-19 safe service so the current guidance hasn’t changed at this time, and we adopt a safety led approach to ensure that repairs are carried out with the correct Personal Protective Equipment, and individual staff and service risk assessments are in place and social distancing protocol is followed for the safety of residents, staff, and contractors. It should be noted that the guidance and legal requirements relevant services during the pandemic have necessarily changed several times during the last year and they could change again. Repairs are being prioritised in the following order: those that pose a health and safety risk, those that are having a significant impact on the resident and/or

causing damage to properties such as leaks and roofing, and then all other repairs. Operatives won't be attending any non-essential repairs in properties where the occupant is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or have a current confirmed case of COVID-19."

3 ADULT LEARNING OFFER

3.1 Simon Hughes presented this item and gave the following points:

- The funding for this project started in September 2020 and was a continuation of some of the work previously conducted regarding adult learning.
- The Housing Revenue Account grants expanded with the focus now on Council tenants for the step-in project.
- The step-in project is centered around community engagement and cohesion.
- A pack was included in the Agenda on pages 41-46 for the meeting which included the details.

3.2 Barry Hughes was informed that the Whitehawk Inn is a Brighton Housing Trust project, and the Step In Project costs about £35,000.

3.3 David Spafford was informed that £20,000 was received from the Housing Revenue Account for the Whitehawk Inn project, and that the overall cost of the project was between £32-35,000. Simon Hughes added that the project would be a gateway to work and learning for the community.

3.4 Theresa Mackey was informed that everyone across the city can use the Whitehawk Inn, and that lots of people from Kemptown often use it, but 76% of people that use it are from Whitehawk, with 60% of them being Council tenants. The Money Works network advertises their services across the city as well as the Roots BBO project. The Whitehawk Inn is advertised on the website, but the majority of responses are from people in Whitehawk.

3.5 Martin Reid added that part of the purpose of Housing Area Panels was to show residents what the Housing Revenue Account is funding in their areas. He added that he could provide a breakdown of costs that the HRA is planning to implement.

3.6 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that the 24% of other people who were not local would maybe be living in sheltered or temporary accommodation.

3.7 Emma Salcombe was informed that sessions could be organised in the community room of Essex Place for people who struggle to get out to Whitehawk.

RESOLVED – The Presentation was noted.

4 ITEMS FOR HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.1 Ododo Dafe gave a verbal update referring to pages 11 – 40 of the Agenda, and made the following points:

- The report had been altered in response to the comments and suggestions made by residents.
- The report showed what has gone well in the department but also how COVID-19 has affected the service.

4.3 Emma Salcombe asked what the process would be of making a property secure within the 24-hour guideline. This was asked as a real-life example as previously her property was left unsecured for 24 hours. Ododo Dafe responded that it would depend on the availability of workers, the time of day, and the location of the premises, but it would be important to have the issue resolved if it was an emergency. Also that it was difficult to discuss specific cases in a public meeting, but in a case such as this, the response is dependent upon circumstances such as if it was a crime scene, and if a security guard may have been deployed to wait for someone to fix the door. Ododo Dafe offered to investigate the issue further.

4.4 Barry Hughes praised Ododo Dafe and Housing on their dealing with the current situation.

4.5 Jane Thorp pointed out that at the last panel, the information about leasehold disputes was inaccurate, and that there should be some targets for this issue. Jane Thorp also asked for an estimate of when post inspection processes will be in place. Martin Reid responded that that issue will be discussed at the Leaseholder Action Group later that evening and would be happy to review KPIs.

4.6 Eileen Stewart raised that there had been 6 lift breakdowns over Christmas 2020 and another that day, and that people gathered downstairs which didn't allow for social distancing. Ododo Dafe responded that investigations will be led into the causes of the lift breakdowns, and that from the information in the report there had been 151 breakdowns in the current quarter, with 143 of those being fixed within 24 hours. Martin Reid added that he would investigate this and get some feedback from the repairs team.

4.7 David Spafford was informed of the following points:

- The Arrears Policy was being worked on with support from colleagues outside of housing, and there was quite a big review happening for what could be done to improve income collection around temporary accommodation. Ododo Dafe would report back with clear actions at a future area panel.
- The targets for collection of rents for privately leased temporary homes differed by 4.5% due to a number of reasons, but could be explained by how some temporary residents stay accommodated for a longer term, and if some residents haven't been able to settle before moving on to other accommodation, this can lead to a lower collection rate. Ododo Dafe will get back on some more specific reasons.
- The 59 empty temporary homes since September can be explained as temporary accommodation takes priority in terms of repairs, with 50 temporary homes being fixed on average per month.
- General housing safety certificates have the same standards as temporary accommodation and would be unlawful to not have a valid gas safety certificate.

4.8 Jane Thorp was informed that there would be an updated report circulated the following Monday confirming the figures of outstanding reports, and that agency staff would fill the remaining positions in the team despite the difficulties in recruitment in the early Autumn of 2020.

4.9 Carl Boardman was informed that the diagrams on page 5 correspond and refer to the same information and then asked if they could be designed to be easier to see in the next report.

RESOLVED: The Presentation was noted.

5 RESPONSES TO RESIDENT'S QUESTIONS

5.1 *Maintenance of External Security*

- Theresa Mackey raised that their front door didn't shut and has been repeatedly patched up, and that the building was not secure. Glyn Huelin's response wasn't recognised as standard practise.
- Jane Thorp agreed with the above, and added that their front door was being classed as an emergency, but months have passed without it being fixed. Geof Cage responded that a program for refurbishment was being organised, and Rob Woodbridge would investigate these instances.
- Eileen Stewart raised that their doors being patched up with metal wasn't secure and would need to be changed.
- Emma Salcombe raised that their doors and fobs are not accessible for disabled people and asked that these be changed. Theresa Mackey added that if these issues were not resolved, the Council would be in contravention of the Equalities Act and should be urgently addressed.

RESOLVED: The response was unsatisfactory, but the issues would be investigated by Geof Cage and Rob Woodbridge.

5.2 *Communications around COVID-19*

RESOLVED: The response was satisfactory.

5.3 *Major Problems with Windows and Roofs Contract*

- Jane Thorp was unhappy with the response from Glyn Huelin and noted that he had sent a more detailed response to the Leaseholder Action Group but not to the Area Panel. Hannah Barker added that Glyn Huelin was still working on a fuller response, and this would be circulated. Martin Reid added that once the Leaseholder Action Group was happy it could be shared with the Area Panel. Siriol Hugh-Jones added that after the response was discussed at the Leaseholder Action Group and any amendments made, it could then be circulated to Area Panel Members.
- Barry Hughes raised that the windows at Sylvan Hall Estate were dangerous and needed action and asked what the medium-term policy would be. Siriol Hugh-Jones added that she didn't intend to delay the response but would ensure the discussions at the Leaseholder Action Group would provide more substantive responses for residents. Martin Reid responded that work is being looked at for Sylvan Hall under a new contract, and that he can give both written and verbal updates on these to future panels. Geof Cage added that they were currently in the process of putting a program together.
- Barry Brewster asked that because Clarendon House had a new door arm fitted, how this was costed with the repair of the product that was still available and more reliable. Geof Cage added that he will investigate into this issue and report back.

RESOLVED: The response was unsatisfactory, but the response from Glyn Huelin would be discussed at the Leaseholder Action Group and circulated to Area Panel members, and other issues about windows and doors to be investigated by Geof Cage and reported back.

5.4 Door Repairs at Essex Place

- Emma Salcombe raised that the pricings proposed were unreasonable, vandalism wasn't the issue, and it was that the door wasn't wide enough. Geof Cage agreed to come back with more information about this issue.

RESOLVED: The response was unsatisfactory but would be investigated by Geof Cage.

6 DOOR INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE

6.1 Geof Cage gave a presentation and made the following points:

- COVID-19 had halted progress on this over the past year.
- A program of works is being put together for look at entrance doors throughout the city.
- The multi-steel doors need to be repaired in warmer weather.
- From April next year a program is being created to install new aluminium doors.
- Robert Woodbridge will be leading on this program.
- Resident engagement will be used before making any decisions on this program.

6.2 Barry Brewster raised that the aluminium doors get easily scarred and added that the multi-steel door would be better for longevity and sustainability. Geof Cage responded that the aluminium doors are more appropriate, given the rusting that occurs with steel doors. Geof Cage added he would pursue this to make sure the right decision is made.

6.3 Barry Hughes added that the multi-steel doors didn't work well for low rise flats.

6.4 Jane Thorp was informed that there would be a program of cyclical maintenance on an annual basis.

7 POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

7.1 Barry Hughes raised that Sylvan Hall got involved in the Plant Your Postcode in the Spring of 2020 but plans to pick this up again when possible when the current restrictions are lifted.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Emma Salcome asked what the Council were doing to address potholes on roads and uneven pavements. Martin Reid responded that himself and Geof Cage would investigate this.

8.2 David Spafford was informed that there would be an update at the Leaseholder Action Group on the Stock Condition Report. He was also informed that the information on gas boilers would be released on Monday and discussed in future area panels. Siriol Hugh-Jones confirmed that carbon neutrality would be discussed in future meetings.

8.3 Barry Brewster was informed that ground source heat pumps are being looked at by the Council.

RESOLVED – Martin Reid and Geof Cage would investigate the issue of pavements and roads.

The meeting concluded at 15:58.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of