

Subject:	Deputations	
Date of Meeting:	22 September 2021	
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law	
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Wards Affected:	All	

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Notification of one Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

(1) Council fails to keep tenants free from harassment & anti-social behaviour.

Spokesperson: T. Graham

Supported by:

M. Gray
R. Pettigrew
G. Ennis
S. Burnaby-Davies
N. Stevens
M. Long
B. Hughes

Topic: Council fails to keep tenants free from harassment & anti-social behaviour.

Presenters: T. Graham & M. Gray

Introduction

I've been Chair of the Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge Residents' Association since Nov 2019. From 2002 till 2013, I worked in B & H Neighbourhood Housing Offices.

The Council fails to keep tenants free from harassment & anti-social behaviour. It's a system failure.

*So-called 'Noise Nuisance' for too many tenants is a life-disrupting nightmare. One couple in Nettleton Court have kept over 4 years of Diary entries: two Officers at different times have suggested that **they** move from their home of 18 years.*

Environmental Health & the ASB Team are Court-focused. Lacking serious support, perpetrators with mental health problems often 'fail to engage': the victims are left to suffer the consequences.

Main text:

Part 1 - Personal account, an eye-witness statement.

My name is (redacted), and I am (redacted) years old. Last year I had open heart Surgery and have spent most of this, and the last year, shielding from covid-19.

I became unintentionally homeless after my long-term relationship broke down in Aug.2019. After being assessed, I was found to be in housing need.

I was sent to Kendal Court, Railway Road, Newhaven that was/is part of B&H emergency Housing allocations.

I was accommodated in a single room, without bedding, cooking equipment, or electricity. (I bought an electric card from the caretaker later) The mattress was urine and blood stained from the previous tenant who, from reading a summons, delivered to me by mistake, from the Brighton Magistrates court, (redacted).

The caretaker refused to change the mattress until the following day as he said his shift was over, and therefore, I slept on the floor for the first night.

Within the first week, the other tenants in my block were fighting, screaming and shouting at each other over drugs and alcohol. It is no surprise to me that there were five unnatural deaths in the building, shortly before my arrival.

I was scared to leave my room and kept the door locked at all times. The police were called many times in the time that I was there, due to constant disturbances.

Finally, I was moved to Dudeney Lodge, Upper Hollingdean Road, Brighton. In a flat that was let by Sea-side homes.

The tenant below me suffered from mental health problems and the slightest noise made him react irrationally. I was chopping a carrot for a soup that I was making in the daytime, when he came up to my flat, shouting abuse, and because I did not open the door to him, he kicked the letterbox off my door.

His bullying behaviour, constantly banging on his ceiling, carried on for months and despite constant phone calls to housing, nothing effectively happened.

I was then moved to my present flat which is a permanent tenancy in the same building. I thought that I had escaped from the unstable neighbour below me, only to find another one above me. This person used his flat as a workshop, drilling, electric planing, hammering, etc. sometimes until midnight. Again, after many complaints to housing, nothing happened, and he continued to make unbearable noise until he left the flat, without my being told, after one year.

This is my short living experience in social housing, I simply ask, what changes do we need to make in order to improve our housing service? I have some ideas to put forward to this committee today, I hope you will consider them.

Part 2. A way forward.

The 'Housing first programme' currently includes levels of support for the vulnerable that are significant and sustained. Where is the comparable support for those in

temporary accommodation currently housed by Seaside Homes in council properties like ours? There will be risks (and some failures) in assessment and allocation, still, effective monitoring and support must be delivered. The damage up to now, sometimes prolonged and extreme, is borne by neighbours, whose tenancy rights are abused without effective redress.

As you know, High-rise blocks are echo chambers and amplify noise many times over. A simple way to reduce this excessive noise pollution, would be to install, in every uncarpeted flat within High-rise buildings, a 20-25mm foam underlay with hardwearing fitted carpets.

There are many elderly and vulnerable residents in our senior High-rise blocks who cannot afford, or do this upgrade by themselves, yet they unknowingly, cause a great deal of noise disturbance to other tenants. The cost of this carpeting to me was around £800 in total.

I believe that you are beginning to do this in sheltered accommodation, so I ask you to extend this important upgrade to all the other senior housing stock.

Leaseholders who sublet their flats in High-rise blocks, especially to families with children, should be made to do this under the conditions of their leasehold, and it should be followed through by B&H housing officers until the work is done. Indeed, it should be a condition of the "Right to buy scheme".

Also, there must be a better flow of information from each department within the housing system. First, in the assessment process, and then in the support that is given to long-term tenants. I also believe that Tenant Resident Associations should be encouraged to play an active role in this undertaking.

We must continue to develop new integrated pathways from homelessness, through to secure accommodation, with housings' higher management, monitoring the support and guidance that is given to new tenants in both emergency accommodation and in their first secure tenancy's probationary year. (Kendal Court should never happen again).

Finally, there must be a better recording system, with inbuilt accountability for the way placement and decisions are made. Decisions that can ultimately affect our tenant's physical health, mental health, and emotional wellbeing.

(On behalf of the Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge Residents' Association)

