

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL
NORTH AREA
16/8/2022 7PM
MINUTES**

Attendees:

Residents: Jane Hunter, Ian Knowles, Jenny Simmonds, Heather Hayes, Des Jones, Ian Beck, Jim Hornsby, Brighde Stewart

Councillors: Cllr Fowler (Chair), Cllr Knight, Cllr Meadows, Cllr John, Cllr Yates

Officers: Rebecca Mann, Francis Mitchell, Justine Harris, Grant Ritchie, Natalie Beckwith, Geof Gage
Press: Felice Southwell,

1 – WELCOME, APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 There were apologies from Cllr Osborne and Cllr Grimshaw.

2 – ACTIONS AND MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Ian Knowles noted that he had been omitted from the attendees list of the previous meeting.

Action 1 – Ian Beck communicated to the panel that there had been missed and irregular waste collections across the North Area and stated that collection times indicated online are inaccurate.

- a. **ACTION** – Justine Harris to report Ian Beck’s concerns regarding missed refuse collections to Rachel Chassaud.

Action 2 – Ian Beck stated that although this issue had been passed to the North Area team for investigation, the action had not yet been completed.

- b. **ACTION** – North Area team to investigate broken gate that has lead to fly tipping in residents garden.

Action 3 – Ian Knowles confirmed that this action had been completed.

Action 4 – There was no response to this action.

2.2 Ian Beck stated that several accidents had happened as a result of brambles overhanging onto the pavement on Davey Drive.

2.3 Des Jones stated that the promised regular maintenance of Davey Drive has not yet begun.

Action 5 – Rachel Chassaud to attend next meeting.

a. **ACTION** – Rachel Chassaud to attend next meeting.

2.4 Heather Hayes stated that the issue raised in item 3.3 of the minutes of May’s meeting had since been resolved.

2.5 **RESOLVED** – The panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were correct record.

3 – HOUSING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN PROGRESS UPDATE AND HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2022/23

3.1 Grant Ritchie delivered the report on this item.

3.2 Ian Beck doubted the repairs call answered statistic, stating that it took him 45 minutes to report a repair.

3.3 Cllr Knight informed the panel that the gas safety compliance statistic relates to boilers having a valid gas safety certificate.

3.4 Grant Ritchie stated that the ideal time to complete routine repairs would be 21 days, but that this is hindered by the backlog caused by the pandemic. Grant Ritchie stated that approval has been granted to bring in temporary staff to focus on the backlog and anticipated that the backlog will be reduced from ~7000 to ~2000.

3.5 Ian Beck stated that while the emergency repairs hotline is working excellently, the routine repairs hotline is not up to standard.

3.6 The Chair invited Ian Beck to contact her via email with any complaints he may have regarding repairs so that they may be investigated.

4 – RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS – 3 STAR

Lack of Social Housing for Families.

- 4.1 Heather Hayes stated that the Council is not building enough homes, citing concerns with the amount of student accommodation being built in the city. Heather Hayes also stated dissatisfaction with the number of flats, rather than houses, being built. Heather Hayes was informed that the Council is not responsible for the construction of student accommodation.
- 4.2 Justine Harris stated that flats, rather than houses, are being built as they are more space effective and increase the number of homes available in the city. Justine Harris also stated that houses will be built in the Moulsecoomb Hub.
- 4.3 Heather Hayes was informed by Grant Ritchie that properties with adaptations that had not been bid on when looking to be re-let undergo assessment to determine whether the benefit of the adaption outweighs the property lying empty for a longer period of time, if this is not the case then the adaptation is removed before general relet.
- 4.4 Ian Beck is informed that when a bought-back Council house is sold, the Council is offered first refusal on purchasing it.

Refuse and Recycling.

- 4.5 It was agreed by the panel that issues relating to this item had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Kitchen Replacements and Repairs.

- 4.6 Ian Beck stated that he was not satisfied with the response and was informed by Grant Ritchie that in order to meet the Decent Homes Standard, a property must have a kitchen or bathroom that is less than 30 years old.
- 4.7 Ian Beck was informed that regardless of whether a kitchen or a bathroom had been refurbished within the last 30 years, repairs can still be made to the room.
- 4.8 Des Jones was informed that the Decent Homes Standard is a national standard and has never included kitchens and bathrooms, but rather kitchens or bathrooms.
- 4.9 Heather Hayes was informed that Council homes renovated by tenants are often gutted before reletting due to the fact that the installations do not meet the standard required for relet.
- 4.10 Jennifer Simmonds stated that the vinyl in her home is peeling, resulting in her getting scratches from her doors and countertops. Grant Ritchie agreed to take Jennifer Simmonds details after the meeting to seek a resolution to this issue.

Repairs.

- 4.11 It was agreed by the panel that issues relating to this item had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Field Officers.

- 4.12 Justine Harris provided an update on the Estate Walkabout review and outlined the role of field officers. The Panel was informed that Field Officers deal with issues such as noise, housing, community safety and parks.
- 4.13 Cllr John stated that they had followed up a list of items mentioned at the resident's association meeting, one of which was pertaining to bin collections in the North Area.
- 4.14 Jennifer Simmonds expressed concerns about the declining state of her neighbour's garden.

5 – RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS – 2 STAR

Davey Bank Drive.

- 5.1 It was agreed by the panel that issues relating to this item had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Empty Council Housing and Housing Policy Procedures.

- 5.2 It was agreed by the panel that issues relating to this item had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Survey of Properties in Hollingdean.

- 5.3 Ian Beck stated that he was informed that residents associations were told they would be informed the results of the survey but that this has not happened.
- 5.4 Geof Gage stated that a stock condition survey was undertaken that has informed work programmes and will develop the three and five year programmes which will be published after agreement at October's budget setting meeting. Geof Gage stated that he will present the programmes to a future meeting after agreement.
- 5.5 Ian Beck was informed by Geof Gage that there are houses in Hollingdean in line for window replacement.

Grass Verges / Weeds on Pavements

- 5.6 The Panel agreed to discuss these two items together.
- 5.7 Heather Hayes raised concerns about grass and weeds growing on streets and becoming a hazard to residents.
- 5.8 The Chair stated that this issue had become more prevalent due to Central Government Cuts and cited Brexit as a contributing factor to unsuccessful recruitment drives.
- 5.9 Cllr Meadows disagreed that Brexit was a contributing factor and questioned whether difficulties in recruitment drives were due to people being satisfied with staying on benefits.
- 5.10 Ian Beck raised concerns about increasing Council Tax in the face of decreasing public services and criticised the policy of rewilding, stating that it makes estates look unkept.
- 5.11 Cllr John stated that a schedule of work is being procured to reduce the issue of grass verges and weeds in the City. Cllr John invited residents to contact their Councillor when they have concerns regarding their ward.

Cars Parked on Double Yellows in Hollingdean.

- 5.12 The Panel were satisfied with the response given to this question.

6 – POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

- 6.1 Jennifer Simmonds commended the repairs hotline.
- 6.2 Heather Hayes stated that there was a successful community event held in the youth club and confirmed that it would be used in the winter as a temporary community food bank. Ian Beck expressed his thanks towards the Junk Food Project, St Richards Church, and St Matthias in Hollingdean for their efforts to the community.
- 6.3 The Panel was informed that membership of the Moulsecoomb Community Market has increased to 170 members and that there are now so many members that attendance has had to be staggered.
- 6.4 Cllr Knight stated that development is soon to begin on a sports development in Wild Park and emphasised the benefits of the resource to the community.
- 6.5 Ian Beck thanked the residents of Hollingdean, and by extension the people of the City of Brighton, for helping one another through continued crises.

7 – AOB

- 7.1 Heather Hayes was informed that residents with boiler issues should contact the repairs helpdesk.
- 7.2 Ian Beck expressed concerns regarding repair wait times, citing a repair on his tap that he has been waiting four months for and the associated cost of his water bill due to the tap leaking.
- 7.3 Grant Ritchie stated that he would take the details of this repair from Ian Beck and follow up with him outside the meeting.

ACTION – Grant Ritchie to investigate Ian Beck’s leaking tap and water bill costs due to delays in repair.