

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 8 SEPTEMBER 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

31. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

31(a) Declarations of Interests

31.1 There were none.

31(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

31.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

31.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

32.1 *Bevendean Community Garden Proposal* – The Cabinet Member reported that she had met with the community garden residents and had looked at a number of sites. This information would be fed back to the project group.

32.2 *Private Rented Sector Letting Agents* – The Cabinet Member reported that a Scrutiny Panel was likely to be established to look at this issue.

32.3 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 7 July 2010 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

33. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

33.1 There were none.

34. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

34.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion.

35. PETITIONS

35.1 There were none.

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

36.1 There were none.

37. DEPUTATIONS

37.1 There were none.

38. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

38.1 There were none.

39. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

39.1 There were none.

40. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

40.1 There were none.

41. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

41.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 24 June 2010.

41.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

42. ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS 2010

42.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which explained that the regulatory framework for social housing which came into effect on 1 April 2010, required "Registered providers" (including council landlords) to publish an annual report for their tenants containing a self assessment of their performance against the standards set by the Tenants Services Authority (TSA).

42.2 A full and a summary report had been produced with the involvement and scrutiny of tenants and leaseholders, in line with the plan and timetable agreed with the Housing

Management Consultative Committee on 14 June 2010. This followed discussions with the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group in April and presentations to tenants and leaseholders at the City Assembly and the Area Housing Management Panels in May and June.

- 42.3 The Housing Stock Review Manager introduced the report and explained that the full and summary annual reports were very well received at the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 1 September, with members recommending approval of the reports at the meeting. Final drafts had been tabled at the meeting today, which included the photograph taken of HMCC scrutinising the draft reports, together with some small improvements as a result of tenant feedback.
- 42.4 It had been suggested by a tenant representative that a list of tenant and resident associations should be included in the report. There were approximately 70 associations and there were changes from time to time, so this was not implemented; but a paragraph had been added to the inside back cover of the summary report stating:
- If you'd like to find out about your local tenant and resident association, or would like to get involved in other ways, please contact your local housing office.
- 42.5 The Housing Stock Review Manager hoped that more tenants and leaseholders would want to get involved as a result of reading the annual report and seeing what tenant representatives had achieved.
- 42.6 Other minor changes which had been made to the version agreed by HMCC were:
- An additional paragraph at the end of the summary report inside the back cover explaining again that tenants and leaseholders who would like to know more about the council's performance and plans, could get the full version of the report from their housing office, the council website, or ask for a copy by email or by phone.
 - As a result of a comment by another tenant representative outside of the meeting, the background shading had been lightened for the "What did tenants and leaseholders Say?" sections of the summary report to ensure that they were as legible as possible for people with poor vision.
 - To bring the full report into line with the summary report the following had been added:
 - The percentage figures to the bar charts on pages 7, 27 and 28
 - On page 4, How tenants and leaseholders were involved in producing the report:
 - that the consultation draft also went on the Tenant Forum
 - that the Housing In Tenant Editorial Board gave officers useful comments on the summary report and
 - thanks to the Tenant Editorial Board and all tenants and leaseholders who helped officers produce these reports.
- 42.7 Councillor Simpson agreed that the report had been very well received by the Housing Management Consultative Committee. It was clear, readable and accessible. She congratulated all those involved in producing the report, including the comments made

by tenants and residents. Councillor Simpson was sure that a number of tenants would read the report with great interest.

42.8 The Cabinet Member agreed that the Annual Report had been very well received at HMCC and she thanked Carol Jenkins, Housing Stock Review Manager for her work on the report.

42.9 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

- (1) That the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010 attached at Appendix 1, be approved for distribution to the Tenant Services Authority and council tenant and resident associations and to all council tenants and leaseholders who request a copy;
- (2) That the summary annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010 at Appendix 2 be approved for distribution to all council tenants and leaseholders.

43. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2009-2010

43.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which outlined key achievements and progress in implementing year 2 of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2008-2013. The report sought to demonstrate that the council were operating and developing a service which realised the vision of temporary accommodation to "...provide good quality, effectively managed properties, that meet the needs of Brighton and Hove's diverse population, contributing to the development of sustainable communities".

43.2 The Cabinet Member considered the report to be excellent. She mentioned that she had visited the team earlier in the year when they had met their target. This was a great achievement. The contract with Mears had opened up new opportunities to improve the accountability of repairs and value for money.

43.3 The Cabinet Member reported that she and Councillor Trevor Alford had sent a submission to a Select Committee at the House of Commons. As Brighton & Hove was a high rent area, they had asked if the city could be reviewed in a different way in terms of transitional arrangements.

43.4 Councillor Simpson was impressed that the target had been met. She noted the changes to the local housing allowances, and asked for a copy of the submission to the Select Committee.

43.5 Councillor Simpson asked when a report would be submitted outlining changes in housing benefits and showing what the effect of the reduction would be. Councillor Simpson was worried about the effect locally if an exception was not made. It would have a drastic effect on people who were homeless.

43.6 The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy explained that a report on the changes in housing benefits would be available in a few weeks time, to coincide with the review from the Treasury.

43.7 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That progress made on delivering strategic actions of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy during year 2 of the strategy 2008-2013 be noted.

44. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2008-2013 ANNUAL UPDATE

- 44.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which outlined the key achievements and progress of the Homeless Strategy 2008-13 which was a sub strategy of the Housing Strategy 2009-14.
- 44.2 The Service Improvement Manager, Housing Options explained that the report was the second annual update. The Homelessness Strategy addressed issues local to Brighton & Hove but also national government targets such as the 50% reduction of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 and an end to using temporary accommodation for single 16/17 year olds, except in an emergency by 2010. The strategy also linked into a broader “prevention agenda” in an attempt to improve wider outcomes and life changes for citizens and contribute to social inclusion in the city.
- 44.3 Table 2 of the report showed that homeless applications had reduced by more than two thirds since 2000/01 and since the implementation of the prevention approach in 2005/06 applications had reduced further to 966 in 2009/10.
- 44.4 The Cabinet Member considered the report to be excellent. She reported that she had attended a Task Force with St Mungo’s earlier in the year. Brighton & Hove had been hailed as a leading local authority in the country, in terms of its homelessness strategy. Those attending had been impressed with the way Brighton & Hove worked with other partners in the city.
- 44.5 In relation to Supporting People, the Cabinet Member had concerns regarding future cuts. She was drafting a letter to submit to the Secretary of State to voice the council’s concerns regarding any future cuts and to ask for a long term vision.
- 44.6 The Cabinet Member asked if a future homelessness strategy could be merged with the Youth Strategy. The Service Improvement Manager, Housing Options replied that he had been asked to obtain legal advice to see if it was possible to merge the two strategies into one document. He considered it would make sense to do so.
- 44.7 Councillor Simpson congratulated officers on their performance. The increase in homeless prevention was very good. Paragraph 4.3.7 referred to a multi-agency Recession Impact Working Group. She asked if this group would continue to monitor court activity and employment trends in the city, in the future, and whether it would change its name.
- 44.8 The Service Improvement Manager, Housing Options explained that the council had been tasked to have a Recession Impact Working Group under a previous government.

The council had merged its Prevention Working Group to have a number of partners on board. It could possibly change its name but people had got used to the current name.

44.9 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

(1) That the report be noted.

45. SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL (SWEP) 10/11 UPDATE

45.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which explained that the Homelessness & Housing Support Directorate of the Department for Communities & Local Government (CLG) recommended that local authorities ensure that there are a range of provisions in place to address the needs of rough sleepers in their area during winter. These provisions are commonly termed “Severe Weather Emergency Protocols” or SWEP. Housing Strategy had apportioned some funds each year from the CLG Homelessness Grant to ensure that provision exists to protect rough sleepers from sub zero temperatures and ultimately to ensure as far as possible, that people do not die while sleeping on the streets during winter.

45.2 The Single Homeless, QA and Risk Manager reported that the primary reason for the protocol was to prevent loss of life. The secondary reason was to engage with hard to reach people, in order to help them receive support and onto a housing pathway.

45.3 The Cabinet Member mentioned that the severe weather last winter had tested the system and had shown that the plans in place were excellent.

45.4 Councillor Simpson was pleased to see that the protocol could be brought into action if necessary. She asked for assurance that up to 20 places in the night shelter was adequate. The Single Homeless, QA and Risk Manager considered the provision was adequate and stressed the importance of ensuring that agencies were aware of what was going on. This year officers would ensure that City Clean and the Seafront Officers were aware of the protocol.

45.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

(1) That the plan for delivering of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during the winter 2010/11 be noted and the protocol agreed.

46. LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN FOR HOUSING

46.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which explained that in February 2010 the authorities in this sub-region were invited to prepare a Local Investment Plan (LIP) for housing which would set out their priorities for housing investment. Following the adoption of a Local Investment Plan, a Local Investment Agreement would be agreed, which would set out the Homes and Communities agency’s proposed investment in the area over the next three years.

- 46.2 The Cabinet Member commented that the report, along with the work the Homes and Communities Agency were carrying out, was timely as it tied in with the work on Ainsworth House and the provision of more council housing.
- 46.3 Councillor Simpson referred to Brighton & Hove being grouped with Arun, Adur, Chichester and Worthing, the "Coastal West Sussex" sub-region. She considered that the characteristics of Brighton & Hove were quite different from the towns it had been grouped with.
- 46.4 The Cabinet Member referred to paragraph 5.5 in the report. At the moment all social housing grant aided housing schemes must meet Code Level 3 of the Sustainable Code. In 2011 there was an expectation that new affordable housing schemes would meet Level 4. This would have a financial impact on new developments.
- 46.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the proposed process and timetable for completion of a Brighton & Hove Local Investment Plan for housing be agreed.
 - (2) That the Assistant Director of Housing Strategy be given delegated authority to agree the final content of the Local Investment Plan prior to the sign off with the Homes & Community Agency in September 2010.

47. **CONTRACT FOR COMMUNAL DIGITAL TV SYSTEM FOR COUNCIL HOUSING**

- 47.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which explained that presently most of the council's blocks of flats had analogue communal aerial systems. The South East (including Brighton & Hove) analogue signal would be switched off in January 2012.
- 47.2 To meet this deadline, a contract would need to be awarded as soon as possible. In order to achieve best value for money, the tender process commenced in July 2010, on the basis of a citywide contract to lease or purchase outright and maintain an IRS 9 Wire Sky+ (integrated reception system) digital aerial system, for all HRA blocks with existing communal aerals.
- 47.3 The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that there had been recent professional advice that purchasing systems would be more cost effective. The procurement had been commenced on the basis of leasing and purchasing systems in order to obtain best value.
- 47.4 The Cabinet Member asked for the report to be submitted to the next Housing Management Consultative Committee for information.
- 47.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4.50pm

Signed

Cabinet Member

Dated this

day of