

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 18 JANUARY 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD, HOVE, BN3 3BQ

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chair) Councillor Hill (Deputy Chair), Mears (Opposition Spokesperson), Gibson (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Bell, Lewry, Drutt and Moonan

PART ONE

Introduction to Larissa Reed

The Chair welcomed Larissa Reed, the new Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing to the Committee. Ms Reed informed members that she had been working in housing services for some 20 years, which included managing council housing. She had been Head of Temporary Accommodation and set up the Camden Pathway Project. Ms Reed had a great deal of experience in managing all sorts of accommodation. The most important thing to her was that tenants received excellent services and that the council worked very hard to achieve that aim. Ms Reed was excited about all the projects happening in Brighton & Hove and considered it was a great privilege to be part of Housing Services. Meanwhile, she was always available to answer members' questions.

48 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

48a) Declarations of Substitutes

48.1 There were none.

48b) Declarations of Interests

48.2 There were none.

48c) Exclusion of the Press and Public

48.3 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

48.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item contained in part two of the agenda.

49 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

49.1 Councillor Moonan referred to paragraph 38.9 in relation to her comments on ETHRAG. The paragraph did not reflect what she had intended to say. She had said that whilst ETHRAG were long term tenants the council would acknowledge them in every way it could.

49.2 Councillor Druitt referred to paragraph 38.15 (4) in relation to the request to present a report to a future Housing & New Homes Committee, and asked when the report would be submitted to the Committee. The Chair replied that the report would be submitted as soon as it was ready.

49.3 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committee held on 16 November 2016 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendment outlined in paragraph 49.1 above.

50 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

New Homes at Robert Lodge North and Pierre Close, Portslade

50.1 The Chair stated that she had enjoyed officially opening the 9 newly completed council flats at Robert Lodge North on 12 December. The flats were built to a very high quality and finish with fabulous views from their balconies, and the tenants she had met were thrilled with their new home.

50.2 The Chair was pleased to see the many improvements that the new development had brought for existing Robert Lodge residents, and hear such positive feedback from the resident association on their involvement.

50.3 The Chair was looking forward to meeting tenants of the four new council houses at Pierre Close, Portslade that were also completed in December, under the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme.

HRA Borrowing Cap

50.4 The Chair stated that the Council were disappointed in the response regarding lifting the HRA borrowing cap and its potential impact on delivering affordable homes for rent under the Council's successful New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme.

50.5 This was likely to have an adverse impact on the Council's ability to respond to the needs of a growing more diverse population and the Council's capacity to maintain mixed and balanced communities and retention of lower income working households and employment in the city.

50.6 However the Council would continue to press the case for lifting the cap through devolution negotiations with government and the Council would continue to focus on the

work it was doing to address the key priority of increasing the numbers of and make best use of affordable homes. This work included:

- The 'New Homes for Neighbourhoods' estate regeneration programme to deliver new affordable homes in the city. More than 20 projects that would deliver nearly 300 homes, were in progress; 34 homes had already been completed and more than 130 were currently being built;
- Improving supply through best use of existing HRA assets including conversions / hidden homes programme. 8 projects delivering 27 new homes;
- A Living Wage joint venture with Hyde Housing to deliver 1,000 new lower cost homes for rental and sale;
- Bringing long-term empty private sector homes back into use through the Empty Property Strategy – over 150 long term empty private sector homes were being returned to use every year, some of which were leased as temporary accommodation;
- Enabling delivery of new affordable homes in partnership with Registered Provider partners and the Homes & Communities Agency.

Successful Bids for Government Funds – New Ways of Working to Prevent Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- 50.7 The Chair was pleased to advise that Brighton & Hove City Council been successful in bids for government funds to introduce new ways of working to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 50.8 Brighton & Hove was a city with an acute housing crisis, and homelessness was an increasing pressure and the Council had been rewarded by its innovative approach to homelessness prevention and work to reduce rough sleeping with a funding boost of over £2.5 million to the city.
- 50.9 It was a reflection of the good reputation the Council had for innovative approaches in this area that it was able to draw the money to the city.
- 50.10 The vision was to work with partners across housing, social care, health, probation, and education as well as the voluntary sector to make sure all residents of the city had access to a 'Housing Action Plan', to timely advice and information, and the earliest possible interventions to prevent small issues becoming bigger problems and housing crises.
- 50.11 Through increasing intervention work, the aim was to reduce statutory and non-statutory homelessness and use of temporary accommodation. Setting up a plan for each household would avoid duplication and help services in the city become more efficient, and residents would have their expectations and goals clearly identified early on.
- 50.12 A main thrust of this work was to identify the early triggers that can result in people becoming homeless and to work with them to build resilience and enable them to plan for any changes that would otherwise tip them into homelessness.
- 50.13 The funding included:
- £1.3 million for homelessness prevention trailblazer work
 - £350,000 for new a post to support rough sleepers with substance misuse and mental health needs, and a worker to help people new to the streets or experiencing hidden forms of homelessness to get the emergency accommodation and support they need

- £1 million to work in partnership with neighbouring councils on a project to help long-term entrenched and revolving door rough sleepers to move them into sustainable accommodation and co-ordinate their engagement in substance misuse, mental health services and work and learning

50.14 The Chair reported that this winter, the council was working with local homelessness charities on a '[Make change count](#)' campaign to raise awareness of how to help people living rough on the streets. To donate to the local homeless charities behind the campaign, please go to www.localgiving.com/appeal/makechangecount.

Progress with Brook Mead

50.15 The Chair reported that in addition to the trail blazing work to prevent homelessness through earlier intervention; she was also pleased to update the Committee on the significant progress on site with Brook Mead; the Council's flagship scheme to provide much needed extra care accommodation in the city. As one of the few councils to deliver an extra care scheme despite reductions in funding, the scheme should be ready for occupation in the summer/autumn 2017 and there would be opportunities for staff and potential residents to view the show flat at a launch and open days in February.

Your Rent Matters Campaign

50.16 Finally, the Chair updated the Committee on the Your Rent Matters campaign to raise awareness on the impacts of welfare reform; which the Committee were advised of at the last Housing & New Homes committee. She was pleased to confirm that all 7,517 working age tenants were contacted; with 677 households spoken to directly resulting in 300 assessments and 214 referrals for support carried out.

51 CALL OVER

51.1 It was agreed that all items be reserved for discussion.

52 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Petitions

52.1 There were none.

Questions

52.2 Sheona Nicoll asked the following question:

“Can you please help us understand how the allocations procedure works when placing vulnerable people in unsupported temporary accommodation in Brighton and Hove, and what, if any, safeguarding policies are in place?”

52.3 The Chair replied as follows:

“When a household becomes homeless and we have a housing duty towards them, then initially it depends upon what accommodation is available at that time. We do not

hold properties vacant in anticipation. When a household is referred for accommodation, a risk assessment is also undertaken and where appropriate, referrals are made to Adult Social Care or other support providers. Households are also provided with information about support that they can self refer to. Households who present too great a risk to be managed in general needs accommodation are referred to Adult Social Care.

As soon as accommodation that we contract is available, there are several considerations that we take into account when allocating as follows:

Regard is had to the “Temporary Accommodation Allocation Policy” which relates to households who have been placed outside of the city who may have a priority to be moved back to the city.

Pregnant women and households with dependent children have to be provided with accommodation that does not have shared facilities within 6 weeks, under statute.

Regard is also had to households we may have to transfer urgently from one unit to another for example if they are being evicted due to behaviour that is due to mental health needs.

The suitability of the unit of accommodation that is available (for example, is it the right size and does it meet mobility needs).

For those households to whom we have a statutory housing duty, we have to comply with the legislation regarding ‘suitability’ and households can request a formal review of this if they are not satisfied. They will then be moved to alternative accommodation if this is upheld and these moves also need to be factored in when allocating accommodation.

Consideration is also given to the length of time households are waiting.

The same considerations are given when longer term temporary accommodation becomes available.

In terms of safeguarding – the Local Authority has safeguarding policies which cover all departments. If there are any concerns about the safety of an adult then referrals are made to Adult Social Care. Our contracted providers are aware of how to make safeguarding alerts if they have any concerns”.

54.4 The Chair asked Ms Nicol if she had a supplementary question.

52.5 Ms Nicoll mentioned that she had just moved into temporary long term accommodation having been through three different emergency properties. Providers had told her that they did not know who was coming into their properties. Ms Nicol had been in two places where there were people with drug and alcohol problems who were housed in the same place as people with babies and young children. Ms Nicol asked if the council could confirm that it is down to the provider to deal with that problem and was there a way of preventing that situation arising in the first place?

52.6 The Head of Housing explained that the council had limited supply of temporary accommodation and had to allocate it based on the people who presented as homeless. It was not always possible to provide separate accommodation for different groups but the council did complete risk assessments and tried to make sure everyone was safe in temporary accommodation.

52.7 **RESOLVED-** That the Public question be noted.

52.8 Daniel Harris asked the following question:

“Can the council explain why they do not request and record structural survey reports for Emergency Accommodation buildings which house the vulnerable?”

52.9 The Chair replied as follows:

“The council does not have a full repairing lease and it is only in such circumstances i.e. where the council would have repair liabilities that structural survey would be obtained. Structural repairs remain the responsibility of the building owner/ head lessee and so a structural survey is not required. The contracts contain detailed specifications of what standards of accommodation need to be achieved and contain clauses to cover insured risks. In the event of a significant event such as a fire that rendered the property uninhabitable, the council has break clauses.”

52.10 The Chair asked Mr Harris if he had a supplementary question.

52.11 Mr Harris mentioned that in relation to the fire break clause, there had been a fire in Percival Terrace last year so he did not know why that contract had not been broken. Mr Harris referred to listed buildings that were used for temporary accommodation. He asked whether under the heritage and planning legislation it was the council's responsibility to ensure that these buildings were maintained as they should be.

52.12 The Chair replied that Mr Harris would receive a full written response to his supplementary question and it was confirmed that the response would be circulated to all members of the Committee.

52.13 **RESOLVED-** That the Public question be noted.

Deputation

52.14 The Committee considered the following deputation which was presented by Sheona Nicoll:

“Journey Home publication

The Journey Home

In December last year, ETHRAG were invited to a parliament event for the launch of the Journey Home Publication by IPPR North and Just Life, Introduced by John Healy MP - Shadow Housing Minister. The report consisting of 45 in-depth interviews had uncovered the bleak reality of life in Unsupported Temporary Accommodation (UTA). Sadly by the end of the 3 year research project 5 of the 45 interviewees are now

deceased. This report will help to save lives and improve life for those living in Unsupported Temporary Accommodation.

The topics covered will be:

Stages in the journey through UTA

1. Finding a bed
2. Moving in & First Few Weeks
3. Longer stays
4. Eviction or moving out

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create temporary accommodation boards. (Already in place in Manchester and Newcastle)
- Establish 'greenlists' and 'exclusion' lists.
- Develop a minimum, consistent set of standards.
- Provide appropriate in-tenancy support."

52.15 Ms Nicoll stated that ETHRAG was working with various agencies in the city to improve accommodation. Ms Nicoll had been made homeless last January and did not want anyone else to go through that experience unsupported. ETHRAG were asking the council to support the recommendations outlined above.

52.16 The Chair responded as follows:

"I would like to welcome ETHRAG to the Committee. I am glad to hear that you have been working successfully with The Trust for Developing Communities to become fully established and representative and it is good to have you with us today.

Thank you for your deputation, and for sharing your story with us. I have read the Just Life report, *The Journey Home* which contains some good ideas on improving the outcomes for people who are living in unsupported accommodation across the country. There is a lot of detail in the report that will need careful discussion. It also required a partnership approach that we are not able to agree to today as most of the partners are not present.

I would therefore like to propose that the Council call together a meeting of all the partners listed in the report who would make up a Temporary Accommodation Board. There are the LA, current tenants, health services, mental health services, substance misuse services, fire and police, environmental health, local housing providers such as housing associations and third sector organisations.

At this meeting we can look at the report in detail, assess what is already in place within the city, and I am confident that much of the good practice does already exist in Brighton and Hove and then decide if together we want to jointly contribute to a Temporary Accommodation Board and other proposals within the report.

I hope you and the Committee can agree that this is a practical way to take forward your deputation's recommendations."

- 52.17 Councillor Mears agreed that it was a good idea to have city wide discussion on this matter, and requested a report back to the Committee following that discussion. The Chair agreed that it would be appropriate to have a report back following the meeting with partners.
- 52.18 Councillor Moonan stated that she had read the report which had outlined many good examples and good practice. She agreed that a partnership process was required. Wrap around support had potential and there was a need to work with the voluntary sector to achieve that aim. She looked forward to more detail.
- 53.19 Councillor Gibson welcomed the response. He paid tribute to the brave members of ETHRAG who were living in great insecurity. Councillor Gibson stressed the need for the report requested at the last meeting to be submitted to the next Committee. The idea of a Board was a positive idea. He supported Councillor Mears request to bring back a report once the meeting with partners had taken place.
- 53.20 The Chair informed members of ETHRAG present at the meeting that officers would arrange a meeting between ETHRAG and partnerships in the City and report back on the findings.

52.21 RESOLVED

- (1) That officers arrange a meeting between ETHRAG and partnerships in the city and report back to the Committee on the findings.

53 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

- 53.1 There were no Petitions, Written Questions, Letters or Notices of Motion from Councillors.

54 HOUSING FIRE SAFETY POLICY

- 54.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which explained that the council was required to comply with relevant legislation and subsequent guidance to minimise the fire risk to occupants in council owned housing stock. The Fire Safety Policy set out Housing's commitment to provide a safe environment in which council residents are assured that the risk of injury or damage to their homes caused by fire is minimised. The report also set out additional work being undertaken to improve fire safety in the housing stock as set out in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.11. The report was presented by the Head of Tenancy Services accompanied by the Health & Safety Business Partner and the Borough Commander, Nigel Cusack (East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service).
- 54.2 Councillor Atkinson referred to the reference to 'daisy chain extensions' in the seventh bullet point of paragraph 4.3 on page 38 of the agenda. He asked if there had been any thought about having extensions with USB slots. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that as the council were rewiring properties they were putting in additional plugs and could look into the request. The Health & Safety Business Partner stated that the main obstacle could be the cost as this type of plug could be quite expensive.

- 54.3 Councillor Mears welcomed the report. She referred to paragraph 3.11 on page 37 of the agenda which referred to the Resettlement Initiative. She asked for reassurance that provisions put in place in the past were still in place. The Head of Tenancy Services confirmed that provisions were in place. The Housing team considered support needs and there were a number of follow up visits. Tenants were sometimes linked to a Tenancy Sustainment Officer and received a fire safety visit. A new post had been developed to provide a risk assessment for vulnerable tenants.
- 54.4 Councillor Druitt referred to paragraphs 3.7 & 3.8 on pages 36 and 37 which referred to mobility scooters. He noted that there was not much mention of buggies and pushchairs. He stressed that many wheelchairs were bigger and less collapsible and the recommendations set out in paragraph 3.8 might be discriminating against people with wheelchairs. Meanwhile, some tenants might not be able to afford external storage.
- 54.5 The Head of Tenancy Services replied that it was absolutely critical that clear common ways were maintained to provide safe access in the event of a fire. The council did need to balance individuals' needs with safety issues when considering the provisions of the Equalities Act. A solution was needed for the storage of wheelchairs which met the equalities duty. Officers acknowledged that mobility scooters enhanced people's lives and were working to help people find solutions. However, people did need to think before buying a buggy/scooter as some were very large.
- 54.6 Borough Commander Cusack (East Sussex Fire & Rescue) stressed that some people were charging scooters in common ways and this had led to fires.
- 54.7 Councillor Bell thanked officers for the report. He stated that the use of the electrical supply in common ways and the charging of buggies must be investigated. With regard to the sprinkler system, he noted that there would be no budget for this work from 2017 onwards. He asked about support for vulnerable people in relation to fire safety. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that officers had been carrying out an audit of any sockets that were not lockable, so people could not extract electricity. Meanwhile, the council was carrying out work with the fire service to encourage fire safety visits. Carelink also encouraged fire safety visits. With regard to the budget, it had been agreed to provide sprinklers at St James House and a business case had been made for Essex Place. Money was available for those schemes. If the schemes proved successful, the matter could be reviewed and the budget revised accordingly. Meanwhile, portable charging was available for mobility scooters.
- 54.8 Councillor Hill referred to the dangers of having a build up of layers of paint. She asked if this was an issue. The Health & Safety Business Partner explained that a large build up of paint could be a flammable risk. However, the council did not tend to have a large build up of paint in its properties. It was not considered a big enough risk to justify money being spent.
- 54.9 Councillor Barnett stressed that if people gave up their mobility scooters they would lose independence and a social life. She believed that the council should provide an outside shelter for scooters. Councillor Barnett mentioned that all sheltered blocks had a large communal lounge. She suggested that a partition could be put in place in these rooms to provide storage for scooters. Councillor Barnett also suggested using one of the studio flats as a store. The Head of Tenancy Services stressed that there was not an issue with mobility scooters in Seniors Housing. That was because there was a scheme

to manage them. Officers did not want to take away people's independence. It was necessary to look at each individual on a case by case basis. Some people moved into properties and their health deteriorated, which was more problematic. The council had built stores but found that when people moved they were left empty. There was a need to find low cost options and to look at each case individually.

54.10 The Head of Housing mentioned that new build schemes had separate storage areas that residents could rent.

54.11 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Fire Safety Policy attached at appendix 1, be approved.
- (2) That the additional fire safety work that is taking place be noted.

55 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2017/18 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY.

55.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Resources and the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which presented the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue and capital budget for 2017/18 as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Members were required to consider the revenue budget proposals including savings and service pressures as well as changes to rents, fees and charges and also the capital programme. The report also set out the Medium Term Financial Strategy and 30 year financial forecast. The report was presented by the Assistant Director – Finance, accompanied by the Principal Accountant, the Housing Asset Strategy Manager and the Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment.

55.2 Councillor Atkinson thanked officers for the report. He raised issues on the following:

- Page 48 – paragraph 3.1 – priority 1, in relation to Right to Buy receipts. How much did the council receive back?
- Page 53 – paragraph 3.20 second bullet point mentioned the reduction of the benefit cap and roll out to universal credit. Was there an early warning system to find out which people were getting into difficulties?
- Page 49 – Renovation of Seniors Housing schemes to convert studios into one bed flats – Residents at a block in Portslade were very happy with the conversion of their block.
- Page 66 – Appendix 3 - in relation to lightning protection. One block had been hit twice. Was this block on the list for protection?
- Page 72 - Appendix 4 – An explanation of alternative delivery models was requested.

55.3 The Principal Accountant referred to the question about Right to Buy. She explained that when the council received the capital receipt it was allowed to use 30% of the total. The capital receipt could be allocated for use towards new build projects and the project could be funded up to 30%. The Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing stated that with every receipt received, only 30% could be used on each home. This was causing problems for some councils. The council sometimes worked with a

partner and gave them the 30% funding. There were strict rules on how Right to Buy receipts were used.

55.4 The Assistant Director – Finance referred to the question about Universal Credit. This would be phased into the city during 2017. There was a need to learn from the experience around the country on the potential impact on arrears.

55.5 Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment referred to the reference to studio conversion. This was part of the council's 'in homes' programme. The council made sure it made best use of its assets to improve supply and it was a popular way of making some of the council's formally hard to let properties more popular. That programme was being kept under review because it was necessary to ensure that the council continued to meet the needs of residents. On universal credit the council were working hard to identify households at risk of loss of benefit and who may need assistance. With regard to alternative delivery mechanisms the council had been working with Hyde on the joint venture and the wholly owned housing company.

55.6 The Housing Asset Strategy Manager reported that he was aware that some blocks were not protected adequately in terms of lightning protection. Generally speaking the council install or reinstall lightning protection when major works are carried out. He would find out what was happening with Downland Court and reply to Councillor Atkinson.

55.7 Councillor Mears raised issues on the following:

- In the past Right to Buy receipts were used for budgetary purposes in the general budget. Had this process stopped or was it continuing?
- Page 50 – Capital Programme – Concerns had been raised at council around leaseholders and housing management contracts. Councillor Mears was concerned about the way this paragraph was worded. The council needed to ensure that when nearly £40m of tenant's money was being spent that best value was being achieved.
- Page 51 – paragraph 3.14, modernisation of passenger lists - concern was raised about the wording of this paragraph.
- Page 53 – Paragraph 5.2 - Councillor Mears had not received the letter sent to the Area Panel's.
- Page 54 - Budget consultation - Councillor Mears reported that there had been a budget consultation process at East Area Housing Management Panel in less than 10 minutes.
- Page 59 – Appendix 1 – Councillor Mears had asked questions on agency staff and had received some information. 17 posts needed to be recruited.
- Page 60 – Appendix 1 – Saving of £450,000 for gas contract. Councillor Mears assumed this was a one off saving. How was the contract set? Did it impact on the savings put forward?
- Page 60 – Appendix 1 – Service Pressures/ service re-design – Confirmation was requested that these were not items moved over from the general fund.
- Councillor Mears asked for the number of apprenticeships which were originally 200.

- Page 61 – Clarification was requested regarding the increase in employees costs in property and investment.

55.8 The Assistant Director – Finance explained that an element of the Right to Buy receipts still went to the General Fund. This was between £4m and £5m and was built into the 10 year General Fund Capital Programme. The Capital programme schemes were set out in order of priority and was a choice for members.

55.9 The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment reported that officers checked prices and value for money in relation to major works. The programme was kept under review and considered on a scheme by scheme basis. Officers would ensure value for money in relation to lift modernisation. The gas servicing contract had resulted in city wide ongoing savings. Service redesign around the adaptation service reflected work the team was already carrying out. This was proactive preventative work.

55.10 The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing was sorry that Councillor Mears had not received information sent to the Area Panels. This would be reviewed and officers would try and send out the information electronically. With regard to the question about agency staff, the council was reviewing the use of agency staff but there were cases where the service to the customer would be detrimental if there were not experienced skilled staff. If there was a necessity, agency staff would have to be used in the short term. However, it was accepted that agency staff was not a direction that the council wanted to continue in the longer term.

55.11 The Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture referred to the HRA share of the apprenticeship levy. From April 2017 the Government were introducing a levy in businesses or employers that have a certain number of employees. Therefore this is the HRA's contribution towards that levy and that levy then funds the training element of apprenticeships. He could arrange for information about numbers of apprenticeships to date to be sent to Councillor Mears.

55.12 Councillor Mears raised further issues on the following:

- Page 61 – Appendix 1 - Redundancy reserves – How much had already been paid out of this reserve?
- Page 62 – Appendix 1 - Head of Housing HRA. An explanation of this figure was requested.
- Page 63 – ICT - £646,000 – Appendix 1 - What was the overall cost the HRA was going to contribute to this and when would the work be completed?
- Page 63 – Director - £16,000 – what did this relate to?
- Page 67 – Appendix 2 - conversion and extensions – It was important that the budget should be extended to enable families to remain in a properties.
- Page 68 – Appendix 3 – Housing ICT budget - £80,000. Clarification was sought on the figure.
- Page 70 – Appendix 4 – Other costs should be itemised.

55.13 The Assistant Director – Finance stated that he would have to check the figure for the costs incurred under the restructuring & redundancy this year and provide this information to Councillor Mears after the meeting. He believed that the reference to Head of Housing HRA (Page 62 – Appendix 1) related to a sustainability post, an

Energy Project Manager. With regard to Page 63 – Director - £16,000 – that is an apportionment on what was effectively a cost centre which captures some of the costs related to the Director's budget. There would be an appropriate apportionment from this budget to the HRA.

- 55.14 The Principal Accountant referred to the question relating to Page 63 – ICT - £646,000 – Appendix 1- This represented the charge to the HRA for all the support services received from ICT. The £80,000 in the capital programme was for capital ICT costs such as new hardware.
- 55.15 The Assistant Director – Finance stated that support services charges had been reviewed over the last couple of years and the ICT charges had been reviewed and were based on reasonable basis of apportionment and reflected investment in ICT infrastructure and increased data security.
- 55.16 The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing explained that with regard to ICT there were two elements being considered. One element was the renewal of the housing management system, which had not yet commenced. The housing management system currently in use was old and coming to the end of its life. There had also been another project which was part of corporate modernisation and that was ongoing.
- 55.17 The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment referred to the question relating to Page 67 – Appendix 2 - conversion and extensions. He explained that the service supported as much as it could the conversion and extension of existing homes. That programme was kept under review. The programme was focusing on empty homes that become vacant. The Housing Asset Strategy Manager explained that the service did take some homes from major adaptations where there were families in situ and officers worked with the adaptations team to ensure the adaptations were integrated with the new build element of the property.
- 55.18 The Assistant Director – Finance referred to the question about other costs. This would include other supplies and services. The Principal Accountant would supply a breakdown to members.
- 55.19 Councillor Moonan referred to page 48 –Paragraph 3 – Priority 2, which referred to promoting the highest possible building, space and environmental standards. She understood that the council were exploring new modular builds. Would they comply to the same standard? The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment explained that the intention would be to build to the same standard. The council were looking at modular build pilots. Sometimes they would be used on sites that the council struggled to develop to its usual space standards. Compromise may be seen in difficult sites such as Eastergate Road. The government was providing funding for modular build at scale. The council would discuss these issues with partners and bring back a report to committee. The Housing Asset Strategy Manager reported that insulation was built into modular build properties.
- 55.20 Councillor Bell raised issues on the following:

- Page 48 – Paragraph 3 – Priority 1 – When the council adapt HRA properties why were they not identified as adapted properties? Adaptations were often taken out when new tenants moved in.
- Page 49 – Paragraph 3.4. Councillor Bell noted this referred to budget savings of £0.932 million to mitigate the impact of service pressures.
- Page 59 – Appendix 1 showed an increase in staff costs of £104,000. It also showed savings against major works of £300,000. Why were the council spending less money on major works.
- Councillor Bell noted increased costs on Page 60 – Appendix 1 – Service pressures – Strengthening BHCC client side for re-procurement of the repairs and improvement contract - £150,000. 147,000 for Senior housing scheme manager increased costs. Further resource required – review of tenancy agreements - £35,000.
- Page 61 – Appendix 1 – increase in employee costs of £147,000. Councillor Bell was concerned that the council was mounting up increased costs in staffing. Savings from the HRA would mean fewer services for tenants because costs were being increased for staff.
- Page 63 – Appendix 1 – Support Service Charge of £646,000 for ICT. Councillor Bell noted that with a further £80,000 this was over £700,000 from the HCA for ICT. He wanted assurances that that was not supporting anything that should be coming out of the general fund. A breakdown of those costs was requested.
- Page 70 – Appendix 4 – borrowing costs of £6m. More details were required. Councillor Bell wanted to know why and for what purpose the council were borrowing, who the council would borrow from and what the interest rates would be.

55.21 The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing explained that with regard to adaptations, all properties that were adapted were advertised and priority was given to people who required those adaptations. However, sometimes an adaptation was so specialist to a particular need that it was difficult to find someone with housing need and the adaptations were removed. In other cases, ill advised adaptations may have taken place in the past and in those cases steps were taken to remove those adaptations where they were not appropriate. Although the amount of support service charge might seem high the systems supported a very large housing service. There were asset management systems, rent account systems and general systems. The Executive Director confirmed that the HRA element only paid for the HRA.

55.22 The Principal Accountant referred to the question relating to page 59 – Appendix 1 which showed an increase in staff costs of £104,000. This looked at the forecast this financial year at month 7. At that point of time there was a £104,000 projected overspend on staff costs as a result of the service redesign being slightly delayed. Officers were now working on the forecast for month 9 and it looked as if employees costs would not be overspent. The £300,000 for major works was extra income the council had received, because the timings of capital projects had led to more major works being billed than expected.

55.23 The Assistant Director – Finance referred to the question about Page 70 – Appendix 4 – borrowing costs of £6m. He explained that this was the cost of servicing the debt not the amount borrowed which was around £140m. The council borrowed in order to fund the Housing Capital Programme.

55.24 Councillor Gibson raised issues on the following:

- The current borrowing rates were 2.1% and it was a favourable time to borrow.
- It was a good budget and achieved a great deal. Nevertheless it reduced reserves that were available (page 61 – Appendix 1 - Projected Reserves at 31 March 2017). What did officers anticipate to be the known risk from the high value levy?
- The budget was made easier by having extra income for the New Homes for Neighbourhood Programme. £877,000 additional rental income would be coming in next year. He hoped the programme would be stretched as far as possible.
- Feedback from tenants – Consultation had improved this year but could have been better. Voting was sometimes confused.
- Tenants felt that a priority should be fixing things that could cost more if delayed such as problems with guttering and roof repairs.
- Estate development budget – The report stated on page 67 that the Estate Development proposed budget is £243,000 but he was led to understand that the budget expenditure is £540,000. It was important that that was corrected.
- Service costs are supposed to be charged at the actual cost and the perception from the tenants' meetings was that hardly anything ever happens to TV aerials. A query was raised as to whether the 76p service charge for TV aerials reflected 76p worth of expenditure on TV aerial maintenance in the last year.
- Concern was expressed from tenants who felt that they might be paying for services that are for the general community i.e. lighting on housing estates on housing land. This was paid out of the HRA but was external to the blocks.
- ICT Service Charge – The charge had increased from approximately £559,000 last year to £646,000. This was a big increase. Which elements had increased and why had they increased?
- Why was there was a 9% increase in Human Resources Support Service charge?
- Estate development budget – At a tenants' meeting it was asked if there was any scope for greater efficiency through more competitive tendering?

55.25 The Assistant Director – Finance explained that the average pool borrowing rate was around 4.5% to 4.6%. Current rates were very good but this was not always the case in years gone by, which explains the higher average rate over time. In terms of reserves the council and the HRA ring fenced accounts should only hold the reserves for specific purposes and on the basis that it needs to hold them and has commitments against them. There was a minimum working balance requirement of £3m. At the moment there was not much detail available on the high value homes levy and at this stage it was not possible to include any reasonable assessment within the budget. This would have to be considered within the 2018/19 budget process. In terms of the Estate Development Budget, page 61 showed that reserves were reducing and therefore it could be seen that these were being used to support the EDB core budget. It was the core budget that was only £243,000, but the expenditure in 2017/18 would be around £540,000, by topping up that budget by use of the reserve.

55.26 Councillor Gibson replied that councillors needed to be presented with what was intended to be expended. The Assistant Director – Finance agreed that there could be added clarity around that issue. He also stated that detail around support service

charges would have to be sent to Councillor Gibson. There were added costs around ICT for example.

- 55.27 The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment stated that the council were proposing to spend £1.2m on roofing because it protected the asset. Guttering was a day to day repair. Mears had talked to the Home Group residents about guttering. If there were guttering issues councillors should let him know.
- 55.28 The Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing referred to the high value void levy. Up to the referendum it was unclear on how it could work as it needed to be an ongoing form of income for government in a similar way to subsidy. A Working Group tried to work with DCLG to come up with a more sustainable solution but the DCLG stopped the working group meetings and said it needed a complete re-think. Therefore the Executive Director could not estimate how much needed to be set aside for the high value levy.
- 55.29 The Principal Accountant stated that TV aerial charge of 76p was made up of 2 separate elements. One was the installation costs that were being spread over 7 years. Another element was for servicing and maintenance which was around 25p. After the 7 years that installation part of the charge will be reviewed. Aerials are serviced once a year.
- 55.30 Councillor Druitt raised issues on the following:
- He congratulated officers on savings £450,000 on the gas bill. Were there other things the council could save money on?
 - More detail was requested on Page 60 - Appendix 1 – £120,000 saving on responsive repairs and other procurement opportunities.
 - Page 63 – Appendix 1 – Support service charges. £25,000 for energy efficiency did not seem very much money. Was there data on energy efficiency support?
 - Page 67 – Appendix 3 – Home energy efficiency & renewables had seen a massive drop in budget. Were there figures for some of the benefits that the council had seen as a result of previous energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes and how did the council measure in financial terms how effective those schemes were, and what the council might gain in the future from further investment in those areas.
- 55.31 The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment stated that it had been decided to have joint housing approach to energy efficiency. The £25,000 service charge for energy efficiency covered part of a management post that dealt with that issue across the general fund and the HRA. There was a sustainability team and an affordable warmth team that worked across both tenures. The council invested significantly in energy efficiency and paragraph 3.15 in the report outlined some of this work. With regard to the question on responsive repairs, the council did make a saving last year. This was partly due to proactively investing in the stock which reduced responsive repairs. Secondly, there had been a reduction in stock through Right to Buy.
- 55.32 Councillor Druitt asked for answers to financial questions to be collated and sent to all members of the committee. This was agreed by the Chair.

55.33 Members voted on the following amendment moved by Councillor Gibson and seconded by Councillor Druitt.

“That where the recommendations are listed in the policy, under point 2, that the following be added:

2.2 That the Housing & New Homes Committee:

- (a) Notes that the proposed payments to Government to fund the Housing Association Right to Buy scheme could severely constrain the HRA;
- (b) Requests that Policy, Resources and Growth Committee review the capital programme, once the extent of the levy is known;
- (c) Produces a report setting out options for mitigating the high value levy without resort to the sale, and therefore loss, of social housing. This report should explore housing management efficiencies, reductions in the capital expenditure and review the apportionment of expenditure between the HRA and the General Fund to ensure adherence to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (schedule 4, para 3-1, p194);
- (d) Set up a task and finish working group and use the existing consultation process with tenants representatives, (including Area Panels), members of all parties and officers, in order to review transfers between HRA and General Fund, in line with 1989 Local Government Housing Act requirements as in c)”

55.34 Amendment 2.2 (a) was agreed by 6 votes. There were 4 abstentions. Amendment 2.2 (b) was agreed by 6 votes. There were 4 abstentions. Amendment 2.2 (c) was unanimously agreed. Amendment 2.2 (d) was unanimously agreed.

55.35 Members voted on the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report. 2.1 (a) was agreed by 6 votes. There were 4 abstentions. 2.1 (b) was agreed unanimously. 2.1 (c) was agreed unanimously and 2.1 (d) was agreed by 4 votes. 2.1 (e) was agreed unanimously.

55.36 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That Housing & New Homes Committee recommend that Policy, Resources & Growth Committee:
 - (a) approves and recommends to Council the updated HRA revenue budget for 2017/18 as shown in Appendix 1;
 - (b) approves a rent reduction of 1% in line with government legislation as detailed in paragraph 3.7;
 - (c) approves service charges and fees as detailed in Appendix 2.
 - (d) approves the capital programme expenditure and financing budget of £39.854 million for 2017/18 and notes the 4 year programme as set out in Appendix 3;

- (e) notes the Medium Term Financial Strategy and 30 year financial projections shown in Appendix 4.
- (2) That the Housing & New Homes Committee:
- (a) Notes that the proposed payments to Government to fund the Housing Association Right to Buy scheme could severely constrain the HRA;
 - (b) Requests that Policy, Resources and Growth Committee review the capital programme, once the extent of the levy is known;
 - (c) Produces a report setting out options for mitigating the high value levy without resort to the sale, and therefore loss, of social housing. This report should explore housing management efficiencies, reductions in the capital expenditure and review the apportionment of expenditure between the HRA and the General Fund to ensure adherence to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (schedule 4, para 3-1, p194);
 - (d) Set up a task and finish working group and use the existing consultation process with tenants representatives, (including Area Panels), members of all parties and officers, in order to review transfers between HRA and General Fund, in line with 1989 Local Government Housing Act requirements as in c);

56 HRA STOCK REVIEW: DELIVERING TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION - STONEHURST COURT

- 56.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which updated members on the progress made with the closure of the seniors housing scheme, called Stonehurst Court, over the last 12 months and made a recommendation for the site's long term future use. When members considered the de-commissioning report in September and November 2016, support was expressed for the site's future use as Temporary Accommodation for people to whom the council had a duty to accommodate. The report was presented by the Housing Stock Review Manager, who set out the development options to meet housing needs at the scheme in the future. Option 3 was recommended.
- 56.2 Councillor Lewry referred to the four options set out in paragraphs 4.2 of the report on pages 80 and 81. Some of the costings seemed quite high. He referred to the photograph on page 85 of the agenda and asked if there could be a loft conversion to form an extra room. The Housing Stock Review Manager explained that the recommended option was £0.104m total cost per unit. He did not have a detailed breakdown at committee. Loft conversions had not been considered because of the urgency to meet the need for two bedroom family homes for TA households. The properties were built in the late 1940s as two bedroom family houses. In 1966 they were divided into studios.
- 56.3 Councillor Mears commented that the scheme would relieve pressure on the general fund, but noted that it was not stated in the report that the HRA would retain its asset. It was important to have it written down that this was an HRA asset. The Executive Director Economy, Environment and Culture explained that a transfer of HRA assets to

the general fund would have to be agreed by Housing & New Homes Committee and Policy, Resources and Growth Committee. It was not proposed to transfer this HRA asset to the general fund.

- 56.4 Councillor Moonan was delighted to see the scheme come forward. She referred to the six properties at the front of the scheme. She noted that tenants had moved into three of these properties. The Housing Stock Review Manager explained that the other three properties would be let through the general housing register.
- 56.5 Councillor Gibson asked if the three properties would be made decent. The Housing Stock Review Manager explained that there was an urgent inspection taking place to ensure all the studios met decent homes standard..
- 56.6 Councillor Gibson considered the scheme to be a good project and was pleased to see that the council was producing its own temporary accommodation. He wholeheartedly supported the scheme. He suggested that it might be worthwhile checking to see if it was possible to put in an extra room as a loft conversion.
- 56.7 Councillor Bell asked if the unit cost had been identified by an external professional, and whether the works would be going out to tender. With regard to the £110,000 saving to the general fund, he asked who would be maintaining the cost of this facility. He wanted to be assured that there would not be a situation whereby HRA money was being used to maintain this building, and that housing services were not receiving anything back from the general fund. If so, housing services should be charging the general fund for the use of housing properties. The Housing Stock Review Manager confirmed that an external consultant had looked at the unit costs. The work would be carried out through the council's strategic partnership for new build. Currently the principal contractor was Westridge. There would be further analysis and value engineering of the costs before work commenced. The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that the HRA would receive a weekly rent from the general fund for these properties. Officers would then use that money to manage and maintain the properties.
- 56.8 The Chair asked that officers provide information to the committee on how the general fund repays the HRA and also explore the loft conversion suggestions.
- 56.9 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That it be agreed that the core part of the scheme be converted from 20 studio flats into 10 x 2 bedroom family houses, for initial use as good quality Temporary Accommodation for households to whom we have a duty to accommodate, with the potential in the future to use the homes as general needs stock to meet the needs of families waiting on the housing register.
 - (2) That it be agreed that the 6 flats which are part of the street frontage on Down Terrace be reclassified as general needs housing, while ensuring the existing tenants (3) continue to receive support from Carelink and mobile sheltered support as necessary.

- (3) That it be noted that a budget of £1.044 million is included in the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Investment Programme 2017/18 and Medium Term Financial Strategy report, also being reported to this Committee.

57 HRA STOCK REVIEW: DELIVERING TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION - OXFORD STREET

- 57.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which explained that at its meeting on 11 November 2015, the Housing & New Homes Committee considered a range of high level future options for this Housing Revenue Account (HRA) owned former Oxford Street housing office. Members agreed that a further, fully costed report be brought back to the committee for consideration, focussing on options which would make best use of the asset, meet housing needs in the city and/or generate a financial return for the Council, whether revenue or capital. Five options were now outlined in the report. The recommended option was Option 5 (Conversion by the council into Temporary Accommodation, which also provided significant savings for the General Fund) because it provided a high financial return for the council and best met the council's strategic objectives. The report was presented by the Housing Stock Review Manager who explained that Option 5 could achieve a general fund saving of up to £0.132m a year.
- 57.2 Councillor Mears stated she was pleased to see the report. The Oxford Street property was closed in 2014 and she considered it disgraceful that it had not been maintained and had been allowed to fall into disrepair. Lessons needed to be learnt from this matter and an HRA asset should never again be allowed to fall into disrepair. Councillor Mears questioned the costings which appeared expensive and wanted it noted that this was an HRA asset and should be retained by the HRA.
- 57.3 Councillor Moonan stated that this was an empty property that would provide people with homes. She agreed that the council did not want to see buildings fall into disrepair. Councillor Moonan had been drawn to the option that would help rough sleepers but noted that this was not an ideal location for that use. Councillor Moonan asked if there were other locations that were more appropriate. The Housing Stock Review Manager explained that the Chair had asked officers to look at alternative sites. A feasibility report had been produced by an architect which would be submitted to the Members' Regeneration Board for consideration.
- 57.4 Councillor Moonan asked if the council would be using the government grant of around £0.560m and asked for confirmation that that grant would not be lost. The Housing Stock Review Manager replied that the council was working with the HCA on the timing issue. The HCA were committed to the Homelessness Change Fund and Brighton and Hove's needs in this area. Discussions were ongoing.
- 57.5 Councillor Gibson found the comments to Councillor Moonan reassuring, however one of his main concerns was that the council had a grant from the government and there was a risk that the council might lose it. He was also very concerned about the potential reputational damage if the council ended up having to forego the grant. He stressed that

Option 5 was very appealing to him as it would address the needs of 12 people. There was a shortage of accommodation for homeless people and there was an average wait of 10 months. 103 people were on the waiting list for beds. Related to that issue he was concerned that the report on Housing First was missed from this agenda. The council needed to prioritise making progress on making this provision as more and more people were sleeping rough.

57.6 Councillor Gibson thought the proposed scheme was good. He noted that there would be intensive housing support. He asked what this would entail for that client group. The Head of Housing Strategy Property & Investment explained that the committee had approved the rough sleepers' strategy. It was a priority to move people on from hostels. The Homeless Change Fund had never been linked to Oxford Street. The preferred option for Oxford Street was based on the council's budget strategy. Temporary accommodation did require more high level support than general needs accommodation. The preferred option would be deemed a general needs facility not a high complex needs 24 hour care. These were not overly vulnerable clients. The Housing Stock Review Manager stated that tenants would receive regular housing management visits and there would be a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour Officer.

57.7 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the range of future options for this HRA owned former operational property at 20-22 Oxford Street set out in sections 3 and 4 of the report be noted.
- (2) That it is agreed to approve the preferred option 5, that the Council refurbishes and converts this property into 12 accessible studios and flats for use as Temporary Accommodation for people to whom the council have a duty to accommodate.
- (3) That it is noted that a capital budget of £1.186 million for option 5 is included in the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Investment Programme 2017/18 and Medium Term Financial Strategy report, also being reported to this committee.

58 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - HOUSING CO-OP PILOT

58.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Culture which reminded members that in 2014 the Housing Committee agreed to a pilot to develop a small site by a housing co-operative represented by Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH). On 23 September 2016 the Housing & New Homes Committee noted progress with the co-operative pilot and that members of a self build co-operative nominated by CHIBAH were preparing a feasibility study for development of two family houses on the Plumpton Road former garage site. The Estate Regeneration Member Board had also had regular updates on progress with this proposal. The report now sought approval to lease the Plumpton Road former garage site to Bunker Housing Co-operative in order to self-build two family homes for rent, which would be let within affordable rent levels to applicants from the Homemove register and to which the council would be able to nominate future tenants. The report was presented by the Estate Regeneration Project Manager, who stressed that the

proposal would deliver two rented homes at no cost to the HRA and was in line with the Housing Strategy commitment to support community housing developments in the city.

- 58.2 Councillor Moonan thought that the proposal was a very innovative plan. She asked if there were guarantees if the Bunker Housing Co-operative did not develop the site for any reason. She asked if there was a break clause. The Estate Regeneration Project Manager explained that the lease was subject to the co-op obtaining planning consent for the homes; the co-op having the funding available, and the co-op entering into a nomination agreement with the council. The lease would not be granted until everything was in place and the lease itself would also include a long stop date.
- 58.3 Councillor Druitt thanked officers for the report and paid tribute to Bill Randall for carrying out the initial work. One of the main advantages of the scheme was that the site had nil value but the proposal was a very creative solution from a housing co-operative who could make best use of the land. He asked if there were other sites in the city that could be similarly used.
- 58.4 The Estate Regeneration Project Manager stated that it would be up to Housing Services to decide if there were any similar sites. She agreed that there was an opportunity to learn from this site. The scheme did not set a precedent as each site should be considered on its merits. The council needed to achieve best consideration for each site.
- 58.5 Councillor Mears thanked and congratulated the Estate Regeneration Project Manager and her team for their work on this awkward and difficult site. It was important to recognise the detailed work that had been carried out. The Conservative Group would support the scheme as it would be providing homes.
- 58.6 Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 3.12 on page 112 in relation to the rent levels being discounted. He stressed that rents should reflect the nature of the scheme. The nature of this scheme was that people were putting labour into the proposal. Councillor Gibson thought the scheme was a good and interesting model. It was right to have carried out a pilot but wrong to think it could only be carried out on difficult sites. Advantages to the proposal were that the scheme would provide housing needs. It was self build and would enable a lower rent level and there would be no loss of properties from Right To Buy.
- 58.7 The Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture stated that officers tried to present the proposed rent as a percentage of market rent and local housing allowances to give members of the committee a clear benchmark from which to judge the proposals. For any piece of land the council would always look at what the best delivery mechanism and housing model was for that piece of land.
- 58.8 **RESOLVED:-**
- That Housing & New Homes Committee recommend to Policy, Resources and Growth Committee that:
- (1) The land at Plumpton Road, Brighton BN2 9YL be made available for leasing.

- (2) There be delegated authority to the Executive Directors for Economy, Environment & Culture, Finance and Resources and Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing (in consultation with each other) to enter into the necessary contracts with Bunker Housing Co-operative Limited to lease the former council housing garage site at Plumpton Road, Brighton BN2 9YL, to secure the building of two new homes for rental by the co-op. The granting of the lease is subject to Bunker obtaining planning consent, funding and entering into a nominations agreement with the council.

59 HOUSING ADAPTATIONS FRAMEWORK RE-LET

- 59.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which sought approval to procure a new framework agreement for the provision of housing adaptations for disabled people in council properties and private sector dwellings. The report was presented by the Operations Manager and the Housing Adaptations Technical Team Leader – Adaptations.
- 59.2 Councillor Moonan mentioned that with the six providers coming together they could provide an internal market to drive prices down and get the most efficient service, or they could become a cartel and do some price fixing and push the prices up. What guarantees were there to ensure the former not the latter? The Housing Adaptations Technical Team Leader explained that the prices were set in advance in the schedule of rates. He agreed that it was good to maintain the internal market and ensure that quality and timescales were maintained.
- 59.3 Councillor Mears observed that the framework agreement would create savings within the General Fund. There was need to be mindful that there was a lot of slippage from the HRA to the General Fund. It was important to recognise this matter did come under housing and the HRA and it was important that through housing there were very clear directions on how the framework agreement was progressed. Councillor Mears agreed that there was a need to ensure best value. Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 2.2 on page 124 and stated that she would want to see a report back to the committee.
- 59.4 Councillor Bell considered the report to be really important. He asked what could be done to minimise the time it took to carry out adaptations. Housing Adaptations Technical Team Leader explained that there was an initial assessment in Adult Social Care. Clients were then referred for further assessment with his team. Officers were looking at the time from the Occupational therapists recommendation until the grant was approved or the works were ordered. That time had been brought right down through the use of the framework. It was currently running at 8 or 9 weeks
- 59.5 The Chair suggested a report back in six months to review the work.
- 59.6 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the procurement of a framework agreement for the provision of housing adaptations for a term of three (3) years, with the option to extend that framework agreement for a period of up to one (1) year subject to satisfactory performance, be approved.

- (2) That the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing be authorised:
- (i) to carry out the procurement of the framework agreement referred to in 2.1 above including the award and letting of that framework agreement;
 - (ii) to approve the extension to the framework agreement referred to in 2.1 above, if required, dependent on satisfactory performance.
 - (iii) to award any call-off contracts under the framework agreement referred to in 2.1 above should he/she consider it appropriate at the relevant time.

60 STAR TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2016

- 60.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which provided feedback from a satisfaction survey of a sample of council tenants carried out in June 2016. The survey results provided an up to date and statistically significant indication of customer satisfaction on a range of council housing services. The report was presented by the Business & Performance Manager and the Head of Tenancy Services, accompanied by Lucas Critchley of Mears Ltd.
- 60.2 The Head of Tenancy Services stated that paragraph 3.3 on page 132 of the agenda set out a number of core indicators and showed the benchmark position.
- 60.3 Councillor Druitt referred to page 132. He noted that the two areas where satisfaction had gone down were fundamental. These were 'The overall quality of your home' and 'Your Neighbourhood as a place to live'. He asked if officers could explain the downward trend. The Head of Tenancy Services stressed the need to focus on the key indicators that were going in the wrong direction. The result of 'Your neighbourhood as a place to live' was disappointing. The council was carrying out work with tenants around grounds maintenance and were commencing a review of grounds maintenance and the satisfaction of the service. Officers were also carrying out work with City Clean. A report on this matter would be brought back to Committee and feedback would be obtained from tenants.
- 60.4 The Business & Performance Manager stated that there was a 1% drop in satisfaction for 'the overall quality of your home'. There was more detail provided in paragraph 3.6.1 of the report. This stated that satisfaction varied by property type, and was significantly higher for those in properties built between 1975 and 1990 (87%). In contrast, those living in properties built before 1945 were significantly less satisfied than average (73%). Room layouts were smaller in older properties. Housing Services were improving this situation by carrying out the extensions and conversions programme. This was a four year investment programme.
- 60.5 Councillor Gibson stressed the importance of learning from surveys. He asked officers if they could send him an equivalent Star Survey report for 2014 as he would like to see the breakdown.
- 60.6 Councillor Gibson proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Druitt:

'That where the recommendations are listed in the policy, under point 2, that the following be added:

2.2 That following the ARP report on the STAR survey, that a further report be issued to the Committee, identifying proposed actions to improve services in response to tenants' feedback, as outlined in the survey.'

60.7 Councillor Gibson explained that the report back would look at the action plan on areas the council were seeking to improve.

60.8 Councillor Barnett referred to the indicator 'Your neighbourhood as a place to live'. She stated that the majority of complaints of which she was aware were regarding neglected gardens. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed that this was an issue. Sometimes people were unable to care for their gardens. Enforcement action could be taken if necessary.

60.9 Members voted on the Green amendment as outlined in paragraph 60.6 above. The amendment was agreed unanimously. Members then voted on recommendation 2.1 which was also agreed unanimously.

60.10 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the contents of the report and the comments of the Committee outlined above, be noted.
- (2) That following the ARP report on the STAR survey, that a further report be issued to the Committee, identifying proposed actions to improve services in response to tenants' feedback, as outlined in the survey.

61 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2016/17

61.1 The Committee considered a performance report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which covered Quarter 2 of the financial year 2016/17. The report was presented by the Head of Tenancy Services, accompanied by the Business & Performance Manager and Lucas Critchley from Mears Ltd.

61.2 The Head of Tenancy Services informed members that 34 of the 47 indicators were on target. Six were near to target and 7 were below target. The results for Housing Customer Service were concerning. The target had been 91% and the indicator had dropped to 53%. This issue had been followed up and officers were expecting an improvement, however there was a need to monitor the situation closely.

61.3 Councillor Bell expressed concern with the number of items below target were about repair work and were connected with the Mears contract. He asked if leaseholders were included within the report.

61.4 Lucas Critchley, Mears Ltd spoke to the committee regarding the number of red and amber results. He reported that the repairs helpdesk had been a success story over the last two or three years. Unfortunately in quarter 2 there had been a turnover of staff and

an experienced staff member had left. Performance did get back on track very quickly and November & December performance was ahead of target.

- 61.5 Councillor Bell reported that he started to receive complaints about six months ago. This had increased and there was a lot of dissatisfaction. He asked if there was a planned strategy that the committee could see.
- 61.6 The Chair stated that she understood that there was a planned programme given to tenants that could be passed to members. The Head of Housing Strategy Property & Investment stated that this information could be shared with members. A workshop on this subject could also be arranged for members. It had already been agreed to bring a report back to members on the contract as a whole and the overcharge issue.
- 61.7 The Business & Performance Manager informed members that leaseholders would use some of the services that were included in the statistics (Customer Services and Estate Services for example). The statistics were not reported separately.
- 61.8 Councillor Druitt raised a concern that in the Housing Revenue Account item earlier members were informed of a saving of £120,000 from responsive repairs. However, in this report the repairs items scored the worst. Councillor Druitt stated that he was concerned that whilst the council had committed to saving money from the repair bill, there was a mountain to climb to improve the repair programme. He referred to the small drop in rent collected as proportion of rent due to 98.5%. He asked why this was the case. The Business & Performance Manager explained that savings achieved were purely by virtue of fewer repairs being required by having fewer properties in the portfolio as a result of Right to Buy, and investment in capital works. Meanwhile, the length of time a repair took was something that officers would want to work with Mears to address. The savings were not at the cost of performance.
- 61.9 Councillor Druitt asked if there was something written into the service level agreement with Mears Ltd. The Business & Performance Manager explained that the process involved the development of a Service Improvement Plan. Where targets were missed Mears Ltd were required to improve them in a timely manner. Lucas Critchley explained that the contract was wide ranging and other areas of the contract had positive results. Responsive repairs was hugely important but was one part of a very large contract. He agreed that the focus did need to be on the Key Performance Indicator on average days to complete and there was a great deal of effort going into improving performance.
- 61.10 The Head of Tenancy Services explained that the reduction in income collection rate was a small drop. She stressed the impact of welfare reforms and that families were affected by the benefit cap. Welfare reforms were a large concern. Officers wanted to give tenants the best advice and support.
- 61.11 Councillor Gibson remarked on discrepancies between the Performance report & the Star Survey. In particular, overall repair satisfaction was 77% in the Star Survey and 95% in the Performance Report. There was a need to look at this massive discrepancy. The Business & Performance Manager explained that it was not unusual to see differences in the Star Survey and the Performance reports. The responsive repair indicator was a very immediate result. The last completed repair gave a broader idea of

the service. In 2017/18 officers were looking at making more improvements to the ways residents could report online to give a more balanced response.

61.12 Councillor Mears stated that she was not connected in any way with the Mears contract. She raised issues around the contract and stated that she had received more complaints regarding repairs from leaseholders. Councillor Mears stressed that it was the responsibility of the council to monitor repairs and there was a responsibility to ensure value for money for tenants and leaseholders. Councillor Mears referred to page 143 with regard to rent loss due to empty dwellings. She stressed that these were homes people could live in and this matter should be addressed urgently. The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing considered that the result on the quarter was still a good result compared to other areas. The Head of Tenancy Services stated the performance on void turnaround was good, but she agreed that there was a need to minimise the amount of time a property was empty

61.13 Councillor Hill referred to page 29 of the Star Survey and stressed that results showed that it was much more important that work was done well rather than quickly. She noted that there were no age comparisons in the Star Survey and asked if ARP research could be asked to provide this information. Councillor Hill referred to issues with the out of hours service. The Business & Performance Manager replied that the out of hours service for repairs was run by Mears Ltd from one of two national call centres. Call centre staff would have less local knowledge but did have a close relationship with the Brighton & Hove call centre.

61.14 Councillor Atkinson stated that it had been useful a couple of years ago to sit down with representatives of Mears Ltd to discuss matters of concern. He concurred with Councillor Bell's comments.

61.15 Councillor Druitt referred to page 145 – 1.15, Tenant in arrears by amount. He noted that there were no figures for quarter 2. The Head of Tenancy Services informed Councillor Druitt that she would provide this information to all members of the Committee.

61.16 **RESOLVED:-**

(1) That the report and the comments of the Committee as outlined above be noted.

62 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

62.1 There were none.

63 PART TWO MINUTES

63.1 **RESOLVED** - That the Part Two minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committee held on 16 November 2016 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

64 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

64.1 **RESOLVED:**

That the Part Two minutes attached at Item 63 remain exempt to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 9.01pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of