

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 13 JUNE 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Wakefield (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Pidgeon, Randall, Robins, Summers and G Theobald

Tenant Representatives: Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Jean Davis (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Tina Urquhart (West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel), Beverley Weaver (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Chris Kift (Hi Rise Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A Declarations of Substitute Members

1.1 Councillor G Theobald declared that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Peltzer Dunn.

1B Declarations of Interests

1.2 Councillor Randall, Councillor Summers, Heather Hayes and Ted Harman declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

1C Exclusion of the Press and Public

1.3 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.

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

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meetings held on 7 March & 22 March 2011 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

Scrutiny Panel Proposals

3.1 Councillor Randall referred to the scrutiny panel proposals raised by John Melson at the City Assembly. An report on this matter would be brought to the next HMCC in September. This work would be carried out with the support of the tenants.

Annual report to tenants and leaseholders for year ending 31 March 2011

3.2 The Chair reported that at the last meeting, the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion had informed members that last year's annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders had been held up as a good example for other landlords to look at in a report by the four national tenant organisations.

3.3 They praised this council's report for its comprehensive and honest service assessment and were impressed with the number of quotes from tenants about levels of service. And they gave credit for having heavily involved tenants in the development of the report.

3.4 All tenants and leaseholders had been asked what they would like to say or see in this year's annual report in Homing In and on the website. Officers would be giving an update and asking residents for contributions at this month's Area Panels, as Chris Kift did at the City Assembly.

3.5 Officers were now drafting the 2011 report and it would be circulated to resident associations and published for consultation with residents at the end of June. Tenants and leaseholders could then give their feedback on the council's performance and report the achievements of their associations and resident-led groups – to be included in the final report.

3.6 The Cabinet Member hoped that residents would contribute to this report as much, if not more than, last year and looked forward to the final draft coming to the HMCC in September 2011.

4. CALLOVER

- 4.1 The Chair asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.
- 4.2 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for debate and determination.

5. PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were none.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 6.1 There were none.

7. DEPUTATIONS

- 7.1 There were none.

8. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 8.1 There were none.

9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 9.1 There were none.

10. HOUSING CENTRE PRESENTATION

- 10.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Senior Project Manager regarding the new Housing Centre in Moulscomb which would have its official opening on 5 July 2011. Major works on the Centre were completed in March. Staff began to move into the centre in April 2011 and would continue to move in up to July.
- 10.2 Members were informed that Property and Investment, Mears, Car Parks and Garages, Rent Accounting, Estate Service, Lettings Team, Right to Buy & Leasehold and Policy & Performance would all be based in the Centre.
- 10.3 The purpose of the Housing Centre was to transform and improve the service, provide a central hub for housing, improve customer service, provide repairs and improvement co-location and develop the partnership.
- 10.4 The Centre offered closer working, improved service, training and conference rooms, meeting rooms, an atrium & display area and a residents' room. Michelle Johnson, Community Participation Officer, would work with residents and users with regard to the use of the residents' room.
- 10.5 HMCC members would have an opportunity to look round the building at the official opening on 5 July.

- 10.6 The Senior Project Manager reported that the building had high sustainability levels. The building needed air conditioning but would use heat pump technology. The building had an Energy Performance Certificate with a 46 energy efficiency rating, which placed it in the B Category. This was very energy efficient for a retro building.
- 10.7 The Senior Project Manager thanked all those who had been involved in the project and hoped all HMCC members could attend the official opening.
- 10.8 Chris Kift asked why the disabled toilets in the building were locked. The Senior Project Manager replied that there were 4 or 5 disabled toilets in the building. One was locked due to special medical needs on the recommendation of doctors. This required a RADAR key to open it. The other disabled toilets were accessible.
- 10.9 Tina Urquhart considered the Housing Centre to be a very nice building but stressed that it was difficult for people living in Mile Oak to get to meetings at the Centre at 10.00am. The Project Manager replied that officers would want to arrange meetings at times that the tenants could attend. He stressed that the Housing Centre would not be used for all meetings. It was important to make use of other facilities across the city.
- 10.10 Councillor Robins expressed concern that the Housing Centre was too far away for the people in Portslade and West Hove to attend meetings or see officers. He asked if there would be provision for tenants in this area of the city. The Project Manager replied the idea was not to use the Housing Centre as a major public access point. Officers would continue to provide face to face services to local areas.
- 10.11 Stewart Gover considered the Housing Centre the finest operational centre Mears Ltd had ever had. He stressed that taxpayers had paid for the lease, and major renovations had been paid for by the people of the city.
- 10.12 Jean Davis asked for consideration to be given to tenants who are unable to walk far. It was a long walk from the car park to the Housing Centre. The Senior Project Manager replied that there were 6 disabled bays in the car park which were close to the front doors. The Housing Centre was disabled compliant and had a disabled lift which could be used in the event of a fire.
- 10.13 Councillor Randall was pleased to see that the building had a good sustainability rating. He asked if there would be capacity in the building for adult learning and whether it would be possible to provide crèche facilities. The Senior Project Manager replied that two rooms had been equipped for training. The training would be run in a similar fashion to the training provided at the Hollingdean Depot. With regard to crèche facilities, the building was quite flexible and as the service developed officers would work out priorities for the workspace.
- 10.14 **RESOLVED** – That the presentation be noted.

- 11. AUTHORITY TO AWARD A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR THE BUILDING OF 15 NEW COUNCIL HOMES AT AINSWORTH HOUSE**
- 11.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which requested delegated authority to award the contract in relation to the construction works at Ainsworth House. The report summarised the work to procure a contractor.
- 11.2 Members were informed that improving housing supply was one of the key strategic priorities of the City-Wide Housing Strategy. A key goal was to increase the supply of affordable rented housing including building new Council homes. Planning approval for the Ainsworth House proposals was awarded on 27 April 2011.
- 11.3 Councillor Farrow welcomed the construction of council homes in the city. He looked forward to seeing details of other sites in the city for the provision of 800 other homes that had been promised.
- 11.4 Stewart Gover reported that the Ainsworth House was in his area. The planning for the development had been wonderfully carried out by tenants and residents, who considered it to be an excellent scheme. He hoped it would prove to be a flagship scheme. The Head of Housing Management & Development and Private Sector Housing thanked everyone who had worked on the scheme.
- 11.5 Chris Kift thought it was a great scheme and stressed the importance of looking for further suitable sites for housing. Tenants would be on the look out for further sites and would report back to the HMCC.
- 11.6 Tom Whiting stressed the need for sheltered housing. This was just as financially viable as other housing. The Chair concurred and stressed that the council would definitely want to provide sheltered housing.
- 11.7 Councillor Randall considered the proposed scheme to be excellent. He informed members that a report would be prepared on further housing provision, including extra care housing and housing for older people. Meanwhile, enquiries were being made to ascertain the latest developments with regard to an Anchor housing scheme.
- 11.8 Councillor G Theobald stressed that the scheme and other excellent schemes were developed under the previous administration. The Chair stated that she recognised the work carried out by the previous administration.
- 11.9 An indicative vote was carried out by tenants. The tenants unanimously supported the recommendations.
- 11.10 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the HMCC supports the proposal that the Cabinet Member for Housing delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Place to award and enter into the design and build contract for Ainsworth House. This requires awarding and entering into a contract with a delivery partner following a competitive procurement process via the Homes and Communities Agencies Delivery Partner Panel. The approximate contract value is £1.6m.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 4 - END OF YEAR)

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion which set out the Housing Management Performance for the year 2010-2011.
- 12.2 Members were informed that this report would be the final one to use the current style of presentation. Members would have the opportunity to both comment on and influence the proposed new style of report which would be presented to the 26 September meeting.
- 12.3 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement presented the report and highlighted some of the achievements. She congratulated the work of the various teams in achieving or exceeding their targets. The target for 2010/11 for Rent collected as a % of rent owed was 98.68%. End of year performance was 98.70%. This was an additional £10,000 income.
- 12.4 All empty properties had been let and Repairs and Improvements had exceeded their target.
- 12.5 A total of 34,275 responsive repairs were completed in 2010/11, which was an average of 94 per day.
- 12.6 This year saw the partnership achieve its target of 74% of the council's stock meeting the decent homes standard. The target was 88% for the current year. 984 new boilers had been fitted in the last year which would make significant reductions in heating costs to residents. The result for the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) (a measure for energy efficiency for the housing stock) was 76.6 out of 120. For 2011/12 the council were moving to the new government measure (SAP) 2005 which used a score out of 100. This explained why the target had been revised to 71.
- 12.7 20 properties were waiting for a gas safety certificate and this was being actioned.
- 12.8 Performance and targets for the Estate Service were set out in paragraph 3.4. The Neighbourhood Response Team had now taken on the role of carrying out minor housing adaptations, which resulted in a speedier service for residents. The adaptations included grab rails, lever taps and stair rails.
- 12.9 Referrals of anti-social behaviour to the Social Inclusion Team had reduced slightly in the last quarter. The Social Inclusion Team had managed to successfully close 17 cases. One led to an eviction. Turning the Tide had been successfully rolled out city wide. This work had resulted in a reduction of evictions and seen increased satisfaction with that team.
- 12.10 Barry Kent made the point that gas prices would be increased by 20% this winter. Meanwhile, he expressed concern about the cleaning service in Woburn Place. Cleaning was not carried out properly. For example, the lights inside and outside the property had not been cleaned for months.
- 12.11 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that national fuel price rises were a concern. Housing had a financial inclusion strategy and this would focus on more

financial inclusion matters in the coming months in order to help local residents. Meanwhile, he would ask the Estate Services Team to look at the cleaning of Woburn Place.

- 12.12 Tina Urquhart reported that at Downland Court, three bin areas needed locks on doors. The hall was untidy and she did not agree with the figures for cleaning quoted in the report. The Chair replied that these matters would be investigated.
- 12.13 Stewart Gover referred to paragraph 3.2.1 of the report. (Empty property turnaround time). He considered that the turn around time of 42 days for sheltered housing was unacceptable. With regard to the price of gas, he considered that the city was obsessed with combination boilers. He urged Mears Ltd to consider alternatives. If economy 7 systems were fitted, they could be reloaded with energy by Baxi boilers. Worcester boilers would not be suitable for the Baxi system.
- 12.14 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that because of the nature of sheltered housing it could take longer to let. This enabled the properties to be bid for and refused and then go through the cycle again. There might be a need to provide support for redecoration.
- 12.15 Councillor Robins asked what support was given to tenants who fell into arrears with their rent. He considered the figures for repairs and improvements to be high and asked how the figures were collected.
- 12.16 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement replied that officers tried to prevent arrears arising in the first place. Tenants were contacted as soon as possible after they fell into arrears. They would be offered ways of paying off the arrears and would be put in touch with local organisations who might be able to help.
- 12.17 The Partnering and Performance Manager reported that an IT system recorded repairs carried out. The target time depended on the priority. The system recorded the time and date the job was completed. This information was checked for accuracy.
- 12.18 Beverley Weaver stressed the need for a breakdown of tenant satisfaction on the figures quoted in the report. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion agreed that with regard to the information on repairs, there was a lot of different information that could be reported to the HMCC. The last City Assembly had been used to obtain feedback. An action plan would be presented to the Repairs and Monitoring Group on 22 June. This information could then be shared with the HMCC.
- 12.19 Chris Kift informed the Committee that he would like to see electric combination boilers in blocks. People in blocks with communal boilers would not benefit from the savings gas combination boilers would bring.
- 12.20 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the issue of communal heating was a challenge in high rise blocks. However there were proposals for a solution to meet these challenges.
- 12.21 Councillor Randall reported that after the City Assembly he had met with representatives of Mears Ltd to discuss issues raised on the day. He considered that there should be

figures for the number of repairs and improvements that were right first time. Quality was important with regard to cleaning tasks. There was a need to revise standards. Meanwhile, a proposal for a financial inclusion plan was supported.

- 12.22 Councillor Randall noted that there was no information about the management of open spaces under the Estate Service. The issue of boilers would be investigated. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that officers carried out financial health checks at the start of each tenancy. He undertook to look at cleaning, ground maintenance and the measure of performance. The figures of right first time were available and could be put into the report.
- 12.23 Tom Whiting stressed the need to have a strategy for dealing with properties when they became vacant. He considered that more attention should be paid to the foyer areas which needed to be painted. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that officers did move very quickly with regard to letting a property. He would listen to Tom's feedback and would work with residents to re-let more quickly and improve performance.
- 12.24 The Chair informed the Committee that she and Councillor Randall were very happy to talk to tenants about any ideas and new ways of working.
- 12.25 Ted Harman suggested recording customer satisfaction in the report. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that complaints and compliments were recorded and could be put into the report.
- 12.26 David Murtagh stated that he had visited a number of properties as a member of the Choice Based Lettings Group. There were some places being let that he would not live in. They were not finished properly and the work was not to the required standard. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that a group had been established to look at lettable standards and consider costs. There needed to be a discussion with tenants to determine whether they would like more to be spent on decoration to bring properties up to a higher standard. He agreed that work needed to be carried out to a good standard. Meanwhile, there was a special needs scheme for older people who required decoration works.
- 12.27 Councillor Farrow considered that the communications that Mears Ltd had established with tenants representatives needed to be improved to enable tenants to obtain the information they required.
- 12.28 The Chair reported that she had had a meeting with Mears Ltd and had spoken to them about communications and new ways of communicating such as social media.
- 12.29 Councillor Farrow asked for an item on Communications to be submitted to the next HMCC meeting. The Chair agreed to this request.
- 12.30 Chris Kift raised the issue of letting standards. He knew of a young couple who had been offered a council flat but had to let it go as it was not in a condition to let. The Chair agreed that that this was not good enough and questioned why it was on the list if it was not suitable for habitation.

- 12.31 Beverley Weaver reported that she had visited several properties with the lettings team. Some properties still had possessions in them. Some were supposed to have decent homes bathrooms when they were not decent (due to an error on the form). She suggested that damage to the properties should be paid for by the previous tenants. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that there was a strong rechargeable repairs process. When damage was carried out to properties the council charged the tenant or previous tenant as appropriate.
- 12.32 Councillor G Theobald considered the figures in the report to be excellent. When the format was changed he considered it very important that the Committee were able to compare this quarter and the previous quarter with the new target. It was confirmed that this would be the case.
- 12.33 Barry Kent mentioned that he had been in properties where the work to bathrooms and kitchens was less than acceptable. The Head of Housing and Social inclusion agreed that this was not good enough. He asked tenants to report poor quality work, or take the issue to the Repairs and Monitoring Group. The Chair asked members to report problems to ward councillors.
- 12.34 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the report and the above comments be noted.

13. HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT OPTIONS

- 13.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing. Members were informed that one of the key strategic priorities outlined in the City-wide wide Housing Strategy 2009-14 was to improve housing quality and make sure that residents were able to live in decent homes suitable to their needs. Strategic goals under this priority included reducing fuel poverty, minimising CO2 emissions and improving tenants' homes ensuring they are of high quality and well maintained.
- 13.2 With less central government funding available energy companies were becoming the main source of funding. This could be obtained from Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP), Feed In Tariffs, The 'Green Deal' and Renewable Heat Initiatives. The presentation detailed these options.
- 13.3 Chris Kift referred to the statement in the presentation that there were approximately 1600 council housing properties that would be suitable for the installation of solar PV panels on roofs. He stated that he was 100% behind the idea of having solar panels.
- 13.4 Councillor Randall asked whether this work would be affected by proposals to change the FIT scheme. He further asked whether there were any proposals to subsidise the work or have cheap deals. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing replied that with regard to the "Green Deal" there was an obligation on the energy companies to support vulnerable households. The review of the FIT scheme would be targeted at large solar farms and would not affect domestic schemes.

- 13.5 Stewart Gover expressed concern about wastage in the city. Security lights and street lights were often left on all day due to poor maintenance. He considered that photo voltaic installations were not always the best way of saving energy.
- 13.6 The Strategic Director Place stated that this matter could be investigated and that there could be a report back to the Committee on how to make the cities lights more efficient.
- 13.7 Councillor Randall agreed that there needed to be more efficient lights in the city.

The meeting concluded at 4.58pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of