

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.00pm 4 MARCH 2015

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Randall (Chair) Councillor Phillips (Deputy Chair), Barnett, Meadows, Kennedy, Mears, Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson), Rufus and Wilson (Group Spokesperson)

PART ONE

65 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

65(a) Declarations of Substitute Members

65.1 There were none.

65(b) Declarations of Interests

65.2 There were none.

65(c) Exclusion of the Press and Public

65.3 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.

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

66 MINUTES

66.1 Councillor Meadows referred to paragraph 57.6 in relation to a request for an updated report on the Discretionary Licensing Scheme for HMOs. She had asked to see HMO figures for new wards. The Chair replied that he would ensure that updated figures were sent to Councillor Meadows.

- 66.2 Councillor Wilson was grateful for the information received in response to her question about the cumulative effect of increases to rents and service charges on tenants.
- 66.3 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 47.3 regarding the audit on the Whitehawk Library Site. She had not received a report as requested. Councillor Mears referred to the item on Living Rent on page 8 of the agenda. Work had been carried out in this area and the information was available. Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 52.3 with regard to the reduction in charges in relation to the decrease in planned major works during 2014/15 to blocks containing leaseholders. Councillor Mears felt that the Housing Committee had been bypassed on this issue.
- 66.4 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 53.4 in relation to the grant required for cladding. Councillor Mears stressed that the communal boiler scheme would pay for cladding. She asked why the two schemes could not be joined together. The Chair replied that two district heating schemes were being investigated. The Interim Head of Housing assured Councillor Mears that she would receive an answers to these questions.
- 66.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 53.6 in relation to the rising costs of the Brooke Mead scheme. The intent was that information reported to Policy & Resources Committee could be reported to Housing Committee.
- 66.6 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the minutes of the Housing Committee held on 14 January 2015 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

67 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 67.1 The Chair reported that The Oxford St housing office closed on Friday 28 November, and the face-to-face service was set up at Bartholomew House from Monday 8 December. The service was being used regularly by tenants who appeared happy to visit Bartholomew House, although the Chair appreciated that this was not on such a convenient bus route as the Oxford St office. Figures were not yet available for the number of tenants visiting Bartholomew House, but officers reported that there had been an increase as people found out about the service.
- 67.2 Of the 1,414 tenants who had paid rent at Oxford Street in the six months before it closed, 97% of them had made payments since it closed, or were covered by full Housing Benefit. Only 3% (41) had not paid since the closure, of which 28 were in arrears. Officers had tried to make contact with them all. Most of the 28 already had significant arrears prior to the closure (£470 on average), and officers were in touch with these tenants.
- 67.3 The average arrears of tenants who had paid rent at Oxford Street in the last six months before it closed had increased by 4% since the end of November, compared to 2% for tenants as a whole. Most affected tenants had paid using alternative methods, with only 114 (9%) using the cash desk at Lavender Street. The most popular alternative payment methods were swipe card - ie Paypoint (48%), over the phone (22%), online (8%) and direct debit (7%).
- 67.4 The Chair reported that he had spoken at the Southern Landlords Association about the plan for a city wide register of landlords and other matters including having 3 to 5 year

tenancies and the registration of HMOs and the extension of the registration of HMOs. It was a positive meeting and the Chair would also be speaking to the National Landlords Association.

- 67.5 The Chair reported that he would be attending a meeting in London regarding Housing First, a model developed to support and house the street homeless.
- 67.6 The Chair reported that a Recovery Café had opened in Baker Street two weeks ago aimed at people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. The Chair stated that it was a great idea and he hoped Members would take the time to visit the café.
- 67.7 The Chair reported that he had met with Hyde to look at the possibility of regeneration in the City.
- 67.8 The Chair had attended another meeting with Warwick Mount residents to work on the issues there. The Chair of the tenants had carried out a great deal of work.
- 67.9 The Chair had attended two meetings on 3 March. The first meeting was at Leonard Cheshire Disability where he talked about lifetime homes. They had been very impressed by work being carried out in the city. It had been reported that 75% of people lived in homes in which the front door was inaccessible to people in wheelchairs. The second meeting was Essential Living; a developer and operator of private rented homes. They were carrying out a scheme in London and were interested in working in the city and giving a presentation to the Planning Committee.

Tribute to the Chair

- 67.10 Councillor Phillips paid tribute to Councillor Bill Randall as this would be his last meeting as both Chair and member of the Housing Committee. Councillor Randall had made a huge contribution to the city in his distinguished 12 years as a councillor. He had been the City's first Green Party Chair and the first Green Mayor. Councillor Randall had been an award winning journalist and had enjoyed a lifelong love of art and culture. He was known as an entertaining raconteur. Councillor Phillips wished Councillor Randall well in his next phase of life which would include being a trustee of the Artist Open Houses. Councillor Phillips thanked Councillor Randall for his work as Chair of the Housing Committee.
- 67.11 The Chair replied that he had enjoyed being a councillor. He was privileged to have worked with good councillors of all parties. The best officers in his experience were ones who responded to councillors in the same way whether they were background councillors or Chair of a Committee.
- 67.12 Councillor Pelzer Dunn stated that Councillor Randall had been a very fair Chair and in the majority of instances, he had been in agreement with him. Councillor Peltzer Dunn was sorry that the Chair was not continuing as a councillor.

68 CALL OVER

- 68.1 It was agreed that all items be reserved for discussion.

69 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

69.1 There were no petitions, written questions or deputations.

69.2 Mr David Gibson asked the following public question:

“I appreciate the positive response to the living rent campaign deputation to the last Housing Committee when the chair stated “the council would look into ways of reducing rents on the homes it was building” adding that “if there is a way of bringing rents down, the council would like to see this happen”.

Please can you provide an update of the progress made since January’s meeting on looking into ways of reducing rents - along with any associated calculations undertaken to confirm the annual cost of charging a living rent to the HRA per 100 new council homes”.

69.3 The Chair replied as follows:

“Council on 23 October 2014 considered a Living Rent Petition. Recommendations as amended were carried in the vote and referred to Housing committee for consideration, these included:

- Developing a licensing scheme for all private landlords as has happened in Newham;
- Supporting the building of homes at a living rent rate so that affordability is based on people's incomes and not the market rate.

Housing Committee on 4 January:

- Considered the Living Rent Campaign deputation – with the Chair’s agreement that the council would look to see how it would develop a calculation of what a Living Rent would be and also how to reduce rents on the homes it was building;
- Approved consultation on designation of a further discretionary licensing scheme in relation to smaller HMOs in an additional 7 wards in the City.

Following Housing Committee:

We have commenced consultation on further discretionary licensing of smaller HMOs in an additional seven wards in the City. Consultation closes on 20 April 2015.

To date, we have focused on maximising delivery of new Affordable Rented to financial year end, in particular where aligned to Homes & Communities Agency funding agreements.

All new Affordable Rented homes in the City have rents capped at Local Housing Allowance levels. When LHA is compared to the market rents above, this equates to 78% and 64% of market rent for one bedroom flats and three bedroom houses respectively. We currently have 239 new homes in our 2014/15 Affordable Housing Programme with Registered Housing Providers and the Homes and Communities Agency, 82 of which are at Affordable Rent. In addition, we currently have 225 homes for Affordable Rent approved under our New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme (taken from most recent Affordable Housing Development Programme & including

Brooke Mead). Following financial year end we will be taking forward Living Rent calculations on new Council schemes and report back to a future Housing Committee. “

- 69.4 Mr Gibson repeated his desire to see calculations. The key issue was timescale and how long it would take.
- 69.5 The Interim Head of Housing explained that financial modelling had to be carried out for each scheme. It was a fairly complex financial model which involved a great deal of work. The process would take some time. Officers would be able to report to the Committee as the process progressed. The Head of Housing Strategy & Development stated that he would be able to report to the next Committee in June.
- 69.6 **RESOLVED-** That the Public question be noted.
- 69.7 There were no deputations.

70 ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

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

71 HEALTH, HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE

- 71.1 The Committee received a presentation from Denise D'Souza, Executive Director of Adult Services and Geraldine Hoban, Chief Operating Officer, Clinical Commissioning Group which provided an overview on the Care Act 2014 and Better Care. Denise D'Souza briefed Members on the Care Act. She listed some key changes in April 2015, and spoke about funding of care, implementation, finance, information and advice, advocacy, assessment, charging and workforce. Geraldine Hoban briefed Members on the Better Care Fund. There was a pooled budget of just over £19m for the city and this was overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The aim was to facilitate more integrated holistic care for the most frail including homeless people. Ms Hoban provided information on Better Care outcomes, the composition of the pooled fund and the direction of travel.
- 71.2 The Chair stated that Members were interested in hearing how the Care Act and the Better Care Fund related to the work of the Housing Committee.
- 71.3 Councillor Mears concurred. She noted that no-one on the Housing Committee was a member of the Health & Wellbeing Board and there was no way of monitoring the Better Care Fund or having any impact on these matters. Councillor Mears stressed that Supporting People was no longer the responsibility of the Housing Committee. The Housing Committee had never seen a report about the transfer of Supporting People from Housing to Adult Social Care.
- 71.4 The Executive Director, Adult Services reported that the decision about Supporting People had been made at the Policy & Resources Committee. Part of the homeless

aspect of the budget was housing related. Some new money had come from the Clinical Commissioning Group.

- 71.5 The Chief Operating Officer explained that at the moment there was not a good realignment with Housing. There was a need to explore how work could be joined up in a more co-ordinated way.
- 71.6 The Chair stated that there was not enough clarity with regard to the Disabled Facilities Grant which was still administered by Housing. There also needed to be clarity about homelessness. More information was required about roles.
- 71.7 The Executive Director, Adult Services explained that the Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing was a member of the Better Care Board. There was a sub-group on homelessness which had representation from housing, public health and other agencies. Budgets were from a range of provision.
- 71.8 The Chair stressed that there was a need to bring budgets together. It made sense for Adult Social Care and health colleagues to help with homelessness.
- 71.9 The Chief Operating Officer reported that people were working in multi disciplinary teams for the first time, in order to help people who were registered homeless via the Morley Street practice. The Chair stressed that not all homelessness was dealt with by the Health & Wellbeing Board. There was a need for clarity regarding the definition.
- 71.10 The Executive Director mentioned that the management of hostels was the responsibility of Adult Social Care. However, Adult Social Care was not involved in allocations. This was carried out by Housing.
- 71.11 The Chair asked if interest on deferred charges was new. The Executive Director explained that there was new guidance which stated that a charge could be made. This would affect a self funder who had to sell a property.
- 71.12 The Chair stated that he hoped 'Moneyworks, Brighton & Hove' would be involved in this work. He was interested in hearing about GP clusters which seemed a good idea.

72 HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AND INVESTMENT UPDATE

- 72.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing which provided an update on council and private sector housing adaptations investment highlighting capital funding pressures and action taken to mitigate these following Housing Committee approved recommendations on 10 September 2014.
- 72.2 The report also provided an update on the proactive work being done to better manage the demand for major adaptations in council and private sector homes in the context of the rising demand enabling disabled adults and children to live as independently as possible at home for as long as possible, and the cost benefit of timely adaptations (Better Outcomes, Lower Costs – ODI/University of Bristol). The report was presented by the Operations Manager, Housing Adaptations OT Team.

- 72.3 The Operations Manager, Housing Adaptations, referred to the table in paragraph 3.12 of the report. All eight of the council's housing association partners in the city had been contacted with the proposals to seek a contribution from them towards the cost of major adaptations. The council was on track to spend £1.150m on HRA adaptations in 2014/15.
- 72.4 Councillor Wilson asked if there was any possibility of negotiating retrospective payments. The Operations Manager replied that officers had considered this but thought it would be difficult given that the associations would not have had the opportunity to make any capital provision. However, in future the associations would be invoiced quarterly in arrears.
- 72.5 Councillor Meadows agreed with the report. Several of her residents had been in touch with her to say that it had not been explained to them why they are not receiving their adaptations as expected. She had to explain the process to them. Councillor Meadows asked if officers explained the step by step process to residents. The Operations Manager, Adaptations explained the initial assessment was carried out by Adult Social Care. An Occupational Therapist would visit the client and have a conversation with them. There was close working with the Homemove Team. They would contact residents when adaptations were not reasonable or practical to carry out. Occupational Therapists would happily talk to people if this was needed.
- 72.6 The Chair stated that the Occupational Therapists' job was to talk to tenants about these matters. He asked Councillor Meadows to give the Operations Manager details of specific cases.
- 72.7 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.10 of the report which reported that the Health & Wellbeing Board had agreed that the allocation for the Disabled Facilities Grant will be monitored by the Health & Wellbeing Board as part of the governance arrangements for all schemes in the Better Care Fund. Councillor Mears hoped this would include someone with a suitable housing background. The Operations Manager replied that the Better Care Board did accept the recommendations of the Housing Committee. How that would happen was not known.
- 72.8 Councillor Mears stressed that it was important that whoever monitored the scheme would be a suitable person with a housing background. This should be embedded in Health and Wellbeing Board monitoring.
- 72.9 The Interim Head of Housing stated that although the Health and Wellbeing Board monitored the allocation for the Disabled Facilities Grant as part of the governance arrangements for all schemes in the Better Care Fund, there was no reason why the Housing Committee could not monitor it as well. Reports on this matter could still be submitted to Housing Committee.
- 72.10 Councillor Kennedy echoed Councillor Mear's concerns that the Disabled Facilities Grant would not be monitored or scrutinised by the Committee and that the Housing Committee would not be involved in formulating policy in discharging the budget. It was helpful to know that the committee could still request reports and updates, however she wanted to highlight her concern about this as a committee member. She hoped that the committee members who stayed on the committee would pursue this matter with vigour.

Councillor Kennedy stressed that the interests of the Health and Wellbeing Board were not necessarily the interests of the Housing Committee.

- 72.11 Councillor Kennedy noted that the team had carried out good work on pooling different budgets. She welcomed in particular the comments about working with planning colleagues to ensure that new homes could be tackled at planning level before they were given planning permission and built to ensure they met accessibility and life time standards. Councillor Kennedy thought it would be helpful if the committee could receive an update at a future meeting from planning colleagues explaining how the council's commitment in this area could be fulfilled through planning policy and the planning process.
- 72.12 **RESOLVED** (1) That the capital expenditure to date and commitments going forward, the action taken to mitigate pressures this year and next and the role of the Better Care Board in monitoring the allocation to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from 2015/16 is noted.
- (2) That the proactive work being done to better manage demand in both Council and private sector housing and the role of the Housing Adaptations Service in making the best use of the Council's existing housing stock and opportunities to increase the supply of accessible Council housing is noted.
- (3) That the Housing Committee continue to monitor and scrutinise the Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations.

73 INCREASING SECURITY AT COUNCIL OWNED HIGH RISE BLOCKS OF FLATS

- 73.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which provided information on the steps already taken to manage and reduce unwanted visitors accessing both high and low rise blocks of flats in the city. Recommendations were provided on how the issue could be managed in the future, including taking a more sustainable approach opposed to reactive measures. The report was presented by the Head of Tenancy Services.
- 73.2 The Head of Tenancy Services reported that since the report had been written, officers were looking at other low cost measures to improve security. A visit would be made to Islington where work was being carried out on this issue.
- 73.3 Councillor Meadows considered that steel doors were an excellent idea and understood why residents had asked for this action. However, she was concerned that residents would feel more isolated and would miss out on personal contact. For example, community newsletters and leaflets would not be delivered. Councillor Meadows mentioned a situation in Camden where blocks had a special lock. It had been discovered that keys for these blocks could be bought on eBay. Councillor Meadows noted that different age groups held different points of view about this issue.
- 73.4 Councillor Wilson concurred with Councillor Meadows. She noted that 18 people responded in Essex Place and that 14 out of 107 people had said that they wanted this action to take place. Councillor Wilson felt that 12 months was a long time for a review

to take place, if the pilot did not work. Councillor Wilson suggested that recommendations 2.2 and 2.5 should be amended.

- 73.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 6.2 which stated that the idea was well received by the majority attending Area Panel meetings. He stated that two people out of three had voted against the proposals. Councillor Pelzer Dunn felt that officers should listen to the Tenants'/ Residents' Associations. He was very disappointed with the final part of recommendation 2.2 which stated "...and if successful, continue with prioritising the low rise blocks that could benefit." Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for these words to be deleted. If the action was successful, a future Housing Committee should consider whether to include low rise blocks.
- 73.6 The Head of Tenancy Services stressed that there would be a consultation with every block. Officers would not roll out the proposals without consultation and had no interest in forcing something onto tenants.
- 73.7 The Interim Head of Housing stated that he was happy to accept the deletion requested by Councillor Peltzer Dunn in relation to recommendation 2.2.
- 73.8 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 4.7 in relation to the Concierge Service. She suggested that housing benefit could pay for a 24 hour concierge service in sheltered blocks. This could be carried out as a pilot project. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that officers were already thinking about this suggestion and it was in the business plan for investigation in 2015/16.
- 73.9 Councillor Wilson asked for the recommendations to be amended as suggested for 2.2. Recommendation 2.3 should be deleted and 2.5 should be altered to state 'To carry out a review, 6 months after the trades button has been switched off.' These changes were agreed.
- 73.10 **RESOLVED** – That the following recommendations be approved:
- (i) To disable the trades button facility at all high rise blocks of flats city wide where agreed after consultation with residents. Provide Royal Mail with fobs for access to continue with postal deliveries.
 - (ii) To install Multi Steel doors or doors that are Secure by Design as the main front door of a block of flats as standard, as part of the existing capital investment door replacement programme. This would be a change from using timber style doors, which are vulnerable to damage and require more maintenance.
 - (iii) To carry out a review, 6 months after the trade's button has been switched off.

74 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

- 74.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which sought to inform Members about the new provisions for tackling anti-social behaviour contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. A digest of the report would be produced for tenants and residents. The report was presented by the Head of Tenancy Services.
- 74.2 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the changes to anti-social behaviour tools brought about by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 as described in the report, be noted.

75 SHELTERED HOUSING - SERVICE OFFER

- 75.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which explained that following a review of the sheltered housing service conducted in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Housing in 2013, recommendations were being made to better define the aims and purposes of the sheltered housing service by having a clear service offer for residents. Furthermore, a name change was being proposed to reflect the new offer. The report was presented by the Older Peoples Housing Manager.
- 75.2 Councillor Meadows expressed some doubt about the name change and said she would have preferred the name 'Senior Citizens Housing'. The Chair stressed that there had been a long discussion about the name change which had been agreed by the Senior Housing Action Group.
- 75.3 Councillor Barnett mentioned that there were a number of empty properties in senior blocks. She asked if the age group of those entitled to live in the blocks would be lowered. Councillor Barnett stressed that many people under 60 required sheltered homes. She asked if councillors in individual wards could be told of empty properties in blocks so they could work with the community to help move people into them.
- 75.4 The Older Peoples Housing Manager agreed that there was an issue regarding the letting of sheltered housing. The first project the Senior Housing Action Group asked officers to compete was to look at this issue. The Older Peoples Housing Manager stated that officers would like to work more closely with ward councillors and welcomed Councillor Barnett's suggestion.
- 75.5 The Head of Tenancy Services reported that 20 sheltered flats were empty across the City as of the 2nd February 2015. Studio flats were particularly hard to let. As a result, there was a project to convert them to one bedroom flats. Meanwhile, housing officers were having conversations with Adult Social Care regarding this issue. Adult Social Care was identifying suitable people. This information was reported in Homemove magazine. The Head of Tenancy Services stated that she would ensure Councillor Barnett received the link to the online magazine. Councillors could always contact officers if they were aware of someone in need of sheltered housing.

- 75.6 Councillor Barnett mentioned that there were homeless people in their late 50s and 60s living in hostels that would be grateful for a flat.
- 75.7 The Chair stressed that 20 properties out of 800 were empty. Some were hard to let flats. Work was being carried out at Evelyn Court and Sanders House to convert studios into one bedroom flats. He was pleased to hear the work being carried out with Adult Social Care. The Chair mentioned that there was a problem with people needing a great deal of support being moved into mainstream housing projects. This was a complex issue. He agreed that there was a need to talk to local councillors.
- 75.8 The Older Peoples Housing Manager stated that he would ensure that local councillors were kept informed. Information was reported in Homemove and there would be a Hard to let Sheltered Scheme Open Day at Laburnham Grove.
- 75.9 Councillor Mears mentioned that there were vulnerable people in sheltered housing. Councillors had been told that they would have a support package. It appeared this was not the case. She stressed that this was causing a cost to the HRA while other directorates were saving money.
- 75.10 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.4 relating to the financial pressure on health and social care services at a time of increasing demand and the savings required by the council. She stressed that there was a need to proactively deliver housing.
- 75.11 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 5.3 regarding the pilot to convert studio flats into one bedroom flats. She stressed the need to be flexible. Some properties might need two bedrooms to accommodate a carer. Meanwhile, there were low rise homes with no lift. If lifts were fitted people could stay in their homes. There needed to be a mix of different types of properties.
- 75.12 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the service offer is agreed.
- (2) That the name of the service be changed from 'Sheltered housing' to 'Seniors Housing – Independent and Community Living'.

76 PILOT OF LEVEL ACCESS SHOWER INSTALLATIONS: UPDATE

- 76.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which provided an update following the 12 month pilot enabling one bed ground floor flats that become empty and require a bathroom replacement, to be considered for the installation of a level access shower instead of a bath. The report was presented by the Performance Manager.
- 76.2 Councillor Mears commented that it was a very good report. However she highlighted that there would be circumstances when people with carers would need a two bedroom property. The Performance Manager replied that officers were currently reviewing the policy and criteria of the loft conversions and extensions programme and it is likely that one of the recommendations will be to identify a range of property sizes via the empty homes process.

- 76.3 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the positive impact this pilot has had, in terms of increasing the number of accessible council owned properties for people in housing need in Brighton & Hove is noted.
- (2) That the work to proactively deliver the installation of level access showers by identifying suitable one bedroom ground floor properties when they become empty, be continued.

77 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2014/15

- 77.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which set out the performance for the third quarter of the financial year 2014/15. The report was presented by the Head of Tenancy Services.
- 77.2 Members were informed that there was an error on item 6 of paragraph 4.2 – Property & Investment. Q3 2013/14 should read 93.51% (1,195 of 1278). There were two red symbols relating to re-let times as set out in paragraph 4.1. Paragraph 4.1.1 explained the reasons for the red symbols. Meanwhile Appendix 2 of the report showed that long term empty properties had reduced from an average of 20 properties a year to 5 a year. There were 6 amber symbols which were explained in paragraphs 4.2.1 and 4.3.1.
- 77.3 The Chair mentioned that there were circumstances where properties were empty long term. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that more than two thirds of empty properties were the result of court action (people in arrears). Officers actively worked on all these cases.
- 77.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that he was grateful for the expanded information with regard to paragraph 4.0.2 – Tenants in arrears by amount. However he found it depressing that there were arrears of £1000 or more in relation to 187 tenants. He felt that questions needed to be asked regarding the range of arrears and the action that was being taken. Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report in relation to dwellings meeting decent homes standard. He noted that 3 properties were no longer decent. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that the three properties required new external doors.
- 77.5 Councillor Mears was aware that some tenants were moving out of properties which they sub-let to students. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that an additional member of staff had been added to the Tenancy Fraud Team. Any queries regarding fraud should be emailed to Tony Barnard, Corporate Fraud Manager.
- 77.6 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the report, a summary of which went to the Area Panels in January and February 2015 be noted, along with the comments of the Committee.

78 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

- 78.1 No items were referred to the next Council meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of