

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

2.00pm 22 MARCH 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Caulfield (Chairman); Fallon-Khan, Mears, Pidgeon and Simson

Tenant Representatives: Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Jean Davis (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (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), David Avery (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Chris Kift (Hi Rise Action Group), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group) and Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group)

PART ONE

99. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

99A Declarations of Substitute Members

99.1 Councillor Fallon-Khan declared that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Barnett. Trish Barnard declared that she was attending as a substitute for John Melson. Dave Avery declared that he was attending as a substitute for Beverley Weaver. Tony Worsfold declared that he was attending as a substitute for Muriel Briault.

99B Declarations of Interests

99.2 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).

99C Exclusion of the Press and Public

99.3 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.

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

100. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

Commendation from "The First Year Annual Report to Tenants"

100.1 Members were informed that the council's first year Annual Report to Tenants had been commended in a report by the four national Tenant Organisations reviewing the first year "annual reports to tenants" produced by Housing Associations, councils and ALMOs. Brighton & Hove City Council was mentioned four times as a good example of how to present an annual report. Brighton & Hove were described as having given a "comprehensive and honest assessment". The report had credited consultation with tenants and had mentioned the HMCC. The report was available on the TSA's website.

Empty Properties and Squatters

100.2 The Chairman reported that Brighton & Hove had been hailed as one of the best authorities in the South East for dealing with empty properties. She thanked officers for their hard work which had been recognised nationally. Part of this work had been helped by Hove MP Mike Weatherley who had worked on legislation on dealing with squatters.

101. CALLOVER

101.1 The Chairman asked the Committee to consider whether to debate and determine item 107.

101.2 **RESOLVED** - That item number 107 be reserved for debate and determination.

102. PETITIONS

102.1 There were none.

103. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

103.1 There were none.

104. DEPUTATIONS

104.1 There were none.

105. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

105.1 There were none.

106. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

106.1 There were none.

107. SERVICE PLEDGES FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS IN COUNCIL MANAGED HOUSING

- 107.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which provided an overview of the development of service pledges with residents and included the service pledges that had been agreed with residents in the appendices. The service pledges met the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) requirement to produce local service offers by 1 April 2011, which was still a requirement of all councils who are landlords.
- 107.2 A wide range of consultation was carried out with residents on the development of the service pledges and this was detailed in 3.1 to 3.7 of the report.
- 107.3 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that over 670 questionnaires had been returned. Appendix 1 summarised the service pledges. Appendix 2 detailed the service pledges. Appendix 3 set out the Brighton & Hove Standard, a local version of the Decent Homes Standard.
- 107.4 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion stressed the importance of tenants holding the council to account. He thanked tenants and staff who had been involved in developing the service pledges. Over 100 members of staff had been involved in this work and the council would continue to strive to improve. The Service Pledges would be renewed each year.
- 107.5 Ted Harman considered the report to be very good. However, he stressed that it would only be good if it was put into practice. He referred to page 9 of the report which stated that "100% of homes will meet the Decent Homes Standard by April 2014". Mr Harman did not think that 100% was achievable.
- 107.6 The Chairman agreed that there was no-where in the country that achieved 100% for meeting the Decent Homes Standard.
- 107.7 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that that section of the report would be amended to a more realistic percentage.
- 107.8 Stewart Gover considered the report to be interesting and full of promises. It was an aspirational document. Mr Gover stated that he could not find any mention of damp in the report. He stressed that there were many problems of damp in the city. Mr Gover could not find any mention about the connection between tenancy of garages and the tenancy of dwellings which had been unanimously agreed by the Car Parks and Garages Group.
- 107.9 The Committee were informed that work was being carried out to deal with damp caused by condensation. It was acknowledged that there were structural damp problems and a programme of works was planned. There would be a presentation to tenants in the next few weeks. Feedback would be obtained from tenants, and the programme of works would be commenced.

- 107.10 The Chairman confirmed that this matter would be discussed at a future HMCC meeting. She also confirmed that the Head of Housing Management (East Area) would be producing a report on garages.
- 107.11 Tom Whiting referred to Item F (Sheltered Housing) on page 14 of the report. "The sheltered housing service aims to provide older people with a high quality of accommodation and support services, meeting a wide range of needs that enable older people to live independently and in comfort." He considered this statement was more than aspirational. It had been achieved. Officers and tenants were working well together. Multi agency health and care was a fact and was not aspirational.
- 107.12 Councillor Mears considered the report to be excellent. She accepted that the service pledges needed to be monitored and remarked that the best monitors in the city were the tenants. Councillor Mears stated that the council expected Mears Ltd to provide a high quality of repairs in the city. In some parts of the city the standard of works was good for which Mears Ltd should be congratulated. In other parts of the city, works were not carried out to the standard the council would expect. Councillor Mears suggested that sub contractors needed to have discussions with Mears Ltd regarding standards. Councillor Mears stated that it would be good to review the pledges with the tenants in one years time to see what had worked and what had not worked.
- 107.13 Councillor Simson thought the report was very good and the pledges clear. She asked for an explanation of paragraph 4.1 on page 21, relating to modern facilities and services, and stressed the need for clarity on this section dealing with the standard of bathrooms, kitchens, insulation, space and layout.
- 107.14 James Cryer, Mears Ltd explained that two of the items mentioned needed to fail. The wording would be presented in a clearer way.
- 107.15 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that officers would ensure this section was re-worded and made clear in plain English.
- 107.16 Councillor Fallon-Khan referred to the section on boilers in paragraph 3.10 on page 21 of the agenda. The wording concerned him and he was mindful of elderly tenants. A boiler might not require major repairs but it might require a number of minor repairs. He asked for reassurance that tenants would receive new boilers if they kept breaking down.
- 107.17 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that the programme of replacement boilers was flexible and addresses could be added into the programme if needed.
- 107.18 Heather Hayes referred to page 21 of the report relating to kitchens and bathrooms. She remarked that in the past kitchens and bathrooms had to be over 15 years old in order to qualify for replacements. She asked why the service pledges now stated a much longer period.
- 107.19 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that there had not been any change in the age of kitchens and bathrooms in order to qualify for replacements. James

Cryer stated that the criteria was set with officers and the scores were based on a number of criteria including health and safety.

- 107.20 Stewart Gover referred to an email he had sent the Chairman regarding sheltered schemes being told that seating placed near to the main entrances to the buildings would have to be removed as potential trip hazards. Mr Gover was concerned about the impact of this directive on the elderly and infirm who needed to wait for transport for hospital appointments.
- 107.21 Tom Whiting reported that this matter was being addressed. A Health and Safety Working Party headed up by Roy Crowhurst had been set up to look at this issue. The working party had made a few suggestions to the Fire Officer to solve this problem. Mr Whiting had seen some examples of fold up chairs which could be fitted near to the main entrances of sheltered schemes.
- 107.22 The Chairman suggested that Mr Gover could feed comments to Mr Whiting.
- 107.23 Stewart Gover expressed his concern that the chairs would be removed before the new chairs were fitted. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that there were some schemes where the chairs would remain. There were other schemes where the chairs would be moved when the new chairs were fitted. In some cases the old chairs would need to be moved before the new ones were fitted as they were a serious obstruction and a fire hazard.
- 107.24 Tony Worsford asked if leaseholders were subject to the same service standards as tenants. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that leaseholders were responsible for servicing their own homes.
- 107.25 Chris Kift expressed concern that all locks on electrical cupboards had disappeared in St James House. He was particularly worried for people on dialysis and oxygen. He wanted the main switch to be enclosed. The Chairman asked for an update at the next HMCC.
- 107.26 Councillor Mears expressed concern about vulnerable tenants and stressed that something needed to be done as a matter of urgency. Switches should be encased and should not be assessable.
- 107.27 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Services Pledges attached to appendices 1, 2 and 3 be commended to the Housing Cabinet Member for approval, subject to the wording being checked at paragraph 4 in appendix 3 (Brighton & Hove Standard).

The meeting concluded at 2.50pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of