

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 19 MARCH 2012

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Randall (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Mears, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Robins and Summers

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), Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), David Avery (West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel), Roy Crowhurst (West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel), John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network).

Apologies: Councillor Wakefield (away on council business) and Jean Davis, Central Area Housing Management Panel.

PART ONE

82. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

82A Declarations of Substitute Members

82.1 Councillor Mears declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wells. Roy Crowhurst declared that he was attending as a substitute for Beverley Weaver. Dave Avery declared that he was attending as a substitute for Tina Urquhart.

82B Declarations of Interests

82.2 Councillor Randall, Councillor Summers, Roy Crowhurst, 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). Councillor Duncan declared a personal interest in any discussion on the Credit Union as he was a member of the East Sussex Credit Union.

82C Exclusion of the Press and Public

82.3 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.

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

83. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGAmendments to the minutes

83.1 *Innovation Group – Paragraph 67.1* - Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted that the minutes referred to Friday 21 March. This should read Wednesday 21 March.

Comments on the minutes

83.2 *Detail of Flood Management Issues – Paragraph 66.7*- Rachel Chasseaud confirmed that she had emailed Tom Whiting about this subject and would be meeting with him on Friday 23 March. Councillor Farrow asked for any additional information to be sent to him.

83.3 *Closure of Public Toilets – Paragraph 66.8* - The Chair reported that Stewart Gover had been provided with a note about public toilet provision.

83.4 *Innovation Group – Paragraph 67.1* - Councillor Farrow informed the Committee that he had received an invitation to the meeting on 21 March as Local Action Team Chair of the Woodingdean Tenants' and Residents' Association. He had understood that that all councillors on the HMCC were to be invited to this meeting and stressed the importance of councillors having access to this information.

83.5 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that the meeting on Wednesday 21 March had been arranged for tenant representatives. Another meeting would be arranged for councillors before the next HMCC. A report on the Innovations Group would be submitted to the HMCC following these meetings.

83.6 *Decent Homes Standards – Paragraph 74.7* – An A4 paper explaining the Standard was circulated to Members. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion informed members that in future, briefing papers would be circulated with the agenda. John Melson mentioned that he could only read electronic copies of papers. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion undertook to send John an electronic version.

83.7 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meeting held on 6 February 2012 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

84. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**CIH conference / Lunch reception**

- 84.1 The Chair informed the Committee that the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference had taken place in Brighton this month. After the conference there had been a reception at the Royal Pavilion which had been sponsored by Hyde Housing.

Brighton & Hove Seaside & Community Homes

- 84.2 The Chair reported that he was on the Board of BHSCCH and was pleased that the transfer of homes on 40 year leases from the Council to Seaside was proceeding apace and ahead of schedule. The first batch of properties was leased to Seaside on the 1st November with a second batch leased on the 1st February and a third batch being leased on 30th March. By the 1st April a total of 150 properties would have been leased to Seaside. The sale of the first two batches had produced a capital receipt of £5,124,550 for 48 fully refurbished homes for Brighton & Hove residents in need, almost all of which had now been leased.

Affordable Housing Development Programme

- 84.3 The Chair reported that the Council, Registered Providers & Homes and Communities Agency were supporting a programme of 515 new affordable homes in the council's development pipeline 2011 – 14. This included recent Planning permissions such as Brighton Station site J (53 new homes). The development pipeline included homes where funding & Planning agreed and some schemes were still subject to Planning permission.

Estates regeneration / garage sites

- 84.4 The Chair reported that as part of the council's aim to build more new council homes the HRA Capital programme included £5.3m to support building new Council homes over the next two years. As part of this, the council was seeking to develop a business case for the development of council housing on unused and derelict garage sites on Council estates. The council would be seeking to draw up to £417k of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency to cover the cost of preparing these sites for development. It was currently anticipated that this would deliver up to 35 new council homes.

HCA Empty Homes Programme

- 84.5 The Chair reported that the relationship the council had been building up with the Homes and Communities Agency over the last 10 months was paying off. The HCA had confirmed that the council were to receive £675k of funding from their Empty Homes programme to bring 45 empty homes back into use, which was a tremendous achievement given the HCA were 3 times over bid for funding to this programme. Work would be ongoing on bringing these homes into occupation over the next 2-3 years.

HCA empty homes programme funding

84.6 The Chair reported that the Homes & Communities Agency had previously indicated that they had £2m of unallocated funds from their Affordable Housing Programme available for investment in the South East Region which the council were eligible to bid for.

Whilst the council anticipated being successful in bidding for £417k of funds for garage sites, the HCA had indicated that no further funding would be made available to Brighton & Hove from this programme in the remainder of this financial year despite proposals from the council for further funding allocations. However, the HCA had expressed a very strong interest in supporting estate regeneration over the remainder of the current Spending Review period.

84.7 In addition to the Council's successful bid for HCA empty homes funding it was supporting a housing co-op bid under the Communities element of this programme..

85. CALLOVER

85.1 The Chair asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.

85.2 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for debate and determination.

86. PETITIONS

86.1 There were none.

87. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

87.1 The Chair reported that a public question had been received from Stewart Gover.

87.2 Stewart Gover asked the following question:

"Cyclists and disabled residents are dismayed at the proposal to forbid the secure storage of their bicycles and disabled conveyances in the council tenanted garages that they have rented, sometimes for years. My appreciation of the efforts of Councillor Davey and I suspect others in this chamber tells me that to approve the proposal mentioned above would be as illogical and unthinkable for them as it is to hundreds if not thousands of our cycling students and working people. We ask that you tell the department to leave well alone."

87.3 The Chair gave the following response:

"Thank you for your question which I understand is about potential changes to the letting of garages owned by Housing.

It appears that there might have been some confusion about the work currently being undertaken by the tenant Car Park & Garages Working Group. Within that group, tenants have been looking at the issue of using garages for storage. Some tenants have raised concern about garage licence holders using their garage to store

belongings, or for business purposes, when there is a waiting list of people wishing to use them for their intended purpose – ie storing a vehicle.

There has been no discussion about banning mobility scooters from council garages. In fact, officers and tenants have been looking at how the use of garages can assist our fire safety work by providing suitable storage for mobility scooters. There are currently some garages that have been rented specifically for the use of mobility scooters and wheelchairs where it is difficult for tenants to house them elsewhere. In addition, work is underway to convert some garages at Clarke Court for mobility scooter storage with recharging facilities.

We also have a situation where there many different licence agreements covering car park spaces and garages from both the former Brighton Borough Council and the former Hove Council as well as the Brighton & Hove licence agreements. The tenant Working Group have been looking at how these licences can now be harmonised and brought up to date. Draft licences have been produced and agreed within the group, and referred for advice to our colleagues in Legal. As part of this work we will also produce updated information for garage licence holders to clarify the circumstances when storage of a mobility scooter or a bicycle would be acceptable.

This work has not yet been completed, and it is intended to consult with tenants and prepare an equalities impact assessment once there is more clarity on the proposals.”

- 87.4 Ted Harman reported that at a Car Parks and Garages Working Group meeting, Stewart had been informed that bikes had to be removed from garages.
- 87.5 Tom Whiting suggested a recommendation that would support the inclusion of bikes as well as mobility scooters.
- 87.6 Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that pedal bikes, motor cycles, mobility scooters and wheelchairs should be included.
- 87.7 **RESOLVED** – That it is recommended that tenants should be allowed to store pedal bikes, motor cycles, mobility scooters and wheelchairs in council garages.

88. DEPUTATIONS

- 88.1 There were none.

89. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 89.1 There were none.

90. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 90.1 There were none.

91. HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW

- 91.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place and the Strategic Director People which explained that the current Housing Register Allocations Policy was approved by the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting on 22 March 2011. Under the current policy young people leaving care (care leavers) were not automatically awarded Band A priority for social housing (Council & Registered Provider), but were assessed for housing depending on their housing need in the same way as other applicants. The current Allocation policy, however, did give the Lead Commissioner for Housing discretion to award priority in exceptional circumstances. There was also a quota system in place for Children's Services to grant up to 15 cases Band A status per annum as decided by Children's Services. This was normally used for re-housing young people from local families.
- 91.2 Care leavers and their representatives had raised concerns with the Council regarding the current policy and had suggested that automatic Band A status should be reinstated for young people leaving care.
- 91.3 To ensure that the council were reflecting both the need to make best use of limited housing resources and fulfil the corporate parent role to young people leaving care, a review of the policy had been undertaken including public consultation over 12 weeks (7 November 2011 - 29 January 2012). A list of consultees was attached in Appendix 1.
- 91.4 Consequently, the report set out recommendations for revising the Allocations policy and its operation reflecting a stronger consideration of the Council's role as corporate parent to young people leaving care.
- 91.5 An amendment to the recommendation was submitted by the Labour & Co-operative and Green Groups. This was circulated to members.
- 91.6 The amendment recommended amending recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 listed in the report, so that:
- (i) Paragraph 3.22 was replaced by a new paragraph 3.22;
 - (ii) Three new paragraphs at 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25 be inserted; and
 - (iii) The existing paragraphs 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25 become paragraphs 3.26, 3.27 and 3.28 as detailed below and shown in bold italics:

The new recommendation would be that Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- 2.1 *That the proposals set out in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 and also Appendix 3 to the report be approved;***
- 2.2 The Strategic Director; Place be authorised to amend the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to reflect the above changes; and
- 2.3 *The Strategic Director; Place and the Strategic Director; People be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the proposals in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28.***

Paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 to read as follows:

- 3.22** *That Band A priority should be available as one of a range of housing options offered to young people leaving care. Allocation of Band A priority should be based on individual need following a case conference involving the young person and all relevant parties.*
- 3.23** *That a case conference panel or board is set up to facilitate the above at 3.22.*
- 3.24** *That robust support packages are created with the involvement of the young person in advance of their leaving care.*
- 3.25** *That the implementation of support packages and the sustainability and success of tenancies on the part of care leavers is monitored by the newly created Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.*
- 3.26** Where a care leaver seeks to appeal an assessment decision and/or agreement cannot be reached by professional assessors, the matter is to be referred to the Strategic Director; People to arbitrate as the delegated corporate parent for the Council.
- 3.27** In addition, the Strategic Director; People and the Strategic Director; Place, will provide an annual report to the Council through a proposed Corporate Parent (sub) Committee on the impact of housing allocations on the management of council housing stock and the well being of care leavers.
- 3.28** With regard to other issues raised as part of the consultation as set out in Appendix 3, officers recommend that these changes are also accepted by Cabinet and subsequently recommended by Cabinet to ~~Full Council for approval on 26 April 2012 to the nearest full-Council for approval.)~~
- 91.7 It was agreed that 3.28 (last line) above should be amended to read “by Cabinet to the nearest full Council for approval.”
- 91.8 Councillor Farrow stressed that care leavers were among the most vulnerable residents of the city. He stated that he could not support the original recommendations in the report, which he felt did not give enough emphasise on a support package. He moved the above amendment.
- 91.9 Stewart Gover expressed concern that that every time a care leaver was placed in Band A, someone in poor accommodation was moved down the waiting list. He was concerned that there was no mention of people on the waiting list who were living in poor conditions.
- 91.10 Councillor Robins recounted his personal experience of coping as a young person without a family. He had been able live with friends and get work. He expressed concern for young people who did not have a job, friends or a community to help them. He stressed the need for robust support packages.

- 91.11 John Melson expressed concern about the way the Allocations Policy was being handled and stressed that there were people with desperate housing needs in the Band A category. He welcomed the amendment but felt that paragraph 3.22 was a bit vague. He considered that there was a need to look at packages available to care leavers and the provision made by the CYPT. Mr Melson noted that in Appendix 7, the only unitary authority that used Band A for Care leavers was Northumberland Council. Of the total number of authorities listed, only 5 allocated Band A automatically.
- 91.12 Councillor Mears expressed grave concerns about the proposals in the report. She noted that homeless people and people in hostels were placed in Band C. She considered that the proposal to place care leavers in Band A was worrying. Councillor Mears stressed that the current Allocations Policy was lawful and any suggestion that it was not lawful was factually incorrect.
- 91.13 Councillor Mears emphasised that Children's Services already had 15 allocations per year for Care Leavers and did not fill up their quota. She queried the funding of the proposals and asked if it was a budget cut. Councillor Mears referred to the Sustainability Implications in paragraph 5.4 and stated that this paragraph did not agree with the financial implications. Councillor Mears thought the paper was badly thought out and unnecessary and she would not support the proposals.
- 91.14 Roy Crowhurst stated that he failed to see how the proposals would help. The Care Leavers in question were people who needed other kinds of support in addition to housing. Mr Crowhurst stressed that there were many young people in their late 20s still living with their parents due to the shortage of housing.
- 91.15 Councillor Duncan supported the amendment. He stressed that the council were trying to improve the housing stock in order to offer more Band A property.
- 91.16 The Chair formally seconded the amended proposals. He considered that the Band A priority was one of a range of options and the amendment gave greater clarity.
- 91.17 A proposal was put that the tenants' representative should take a vote on the amended proposals and that councillors should accept their decision. The Senior Lawyer stressed that councillors on the Committee were required to use their own judgement when casting a vote.
- 91.18 An indicative vote from tenants was taken. 2 voted for the amended proposals and 8 voted against.
- 91.19 A vote of councillors was taken. The amended proposal was carried by 5 votes to 0.
- 91.20 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the comments of the HMCC as set out above be noted.
- (2) That Cabinet recommends to Council that:
- (i) That the proposals set out in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 and also Appendix 3 to the report be approved;

- (ii) That the Strategic Director; Place be authorised to amend the Council's Housing Allocations Policy to reflect the above changes; and
- (iii) The Strategic Director; Place and the Strategic Director; People be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the proposals in paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28.

Paragraphs 3.22 to 3.28 to read as follows:

- 3.22** *That Band A priority should be available as one of a range of housing options offered to young people leaving care. Allocation of Band A priority should be based on individual need following a case conference involving the young person and all relevant parties.*
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- 3.24** *That robust support packages are created with the involvement of the young person in advance of their leaving care.*
- 3.25** *That the implementation of support packages and the sustainability and success of tenancies on the part of care leavers is monitored by the newly created Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.*
- 3.26** *Where a care leaver seeks to appeal an assessment decision and/or agreement cannot be reached by professional assessors, the matter is to be referred to the Strategic Director; People to arbitrate as the delegated corporate parent for the Council.*
- 3.27** *In addition, the Strategic Director; People and the Strategic Director; Place, will provide an annual report to the Council through a proposed Corporate Parent (sub) Committee on the impact of housing allocations on the management of council housing stock and the well being of care leavers.*
- 3.28** *With regard to other issues raised as part of the consultation as set out in Appendix 3, officers recommend that these changes are also accepted by Cabinet and subsequently recommended by Cabinet to the nearest full-Council for approval.*

92. 2011 SURVEY OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS (STAR)

- 92.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which provided feedback from a satisfaction survey of a sample of residents carried out by the Council's Policy, Performance & Analysis Team on behalf of Housing & Social Inclusion.
- 92.2 The Chair reported that the feedback was positive news. The report showed that the general satisfaction with services had improved. This improvement was the result of a lot of hard work from tenant representatives and officers and demonstrated the positive impact that tenants' representatives had.

- 92.3 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement presented the report and informed members that the STAR survey, was discretionary, and replaced the formerly obligatory STATUS survey. The survey results provided an up-to-date and statistically significant indication of customer satisfaction on a range of housing services.
- 92.4 John Melson acknowledged that there was a great deal for which the council could be congratulated. Much of this work had been carried out over the last 3 or 4 years.
- 92.5 Tony Worsfold referred to the satisfaction percentages in the executive summary of the report. These were different from the percentages quoted in section 3.5.0 in report 96 – Housing & Social Inclusion Performance Report. The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement explained that the two separate surveys were different in the questions and survey methodology.
- 92.6 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that the STAR survey had been carried out by Housemark, and had been taken from a sample of tenants.
- 92.7 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 4.2 in relation to 16-24 year olds. He remarked that 16 & 17 year olds could not be tenants. The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement explained that there were one or two tenants whose tenancy was held in trust.
- 92.8 Councillor Peltzer Dunn queried why the age range was not the same in paragraph 5 (age range) and paragraph 4.2 (age). The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that in all of the figures, a number of questions had been completed but not all the questions had been answered. It was a random sample. If a question was unanswered it was not followed up.
- 92.9 Councillor Mears reported that 16 year olds were put into council tenancies and social workers were involved. It was a satisfactory report but she stressed that officers should not be complacent.
- 92.10 The Chair noted that tenants living in houses were less likely to be satisfied than tenants living in flats. David Murtagh suggested that this was because most flats were built in the 1960s and 1970s whereas most houses were pre-war. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion stressed that flats were subject of visible investment and most tenants of flats were more aware of services due to the sharing of communal areas.
- 92.11 Tom Whiting referred to the statistic that 96% of tenants in sheltered accommodation were satisfied with housing services. He felt that this figure was too high. He stressed that there was a need to monitor the most vulnerable in sheltered housing. The Chair said he would speak to Mr Whiting about this issue.
- 92.12 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3 – Methodology. This stated that all leaseholders and empty properties had been excluded from the survey. Officers confirmed that the STAR survey did not include leaseholders. A satisfaction survey of leaseholders was carried out every two years. The last survey was carried out in 2010 and another survey would be carried out shortly.

92.13 Councillor Mears referred to the financial implications in paragraph 5.1. She asked how much the survey had cost. The Chair stated that costs could be provided over the last 5 years. This would be provided for members of the HMCC.

92.14 **RESOLVED** - That the contents of this report and the views of the HMCC as detailed above be noted.

93. PROMOTING FINANCIAL INCLUSION AMONGST COUNCIL HOUSING RESIDENTS

93.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which outlined proposals for investment in services to promote financial inclusion amongst council housing residents. The report built upon the successful financial inclusion work undertaken by the Housing & Social Inclusion delivery unit and outlined proposals for delivering a step change in the availability of services which promoted financial inclusion amongst council housing residents.

93.2 Councillor Duncan welcomed the proposals and stated that he would like to see a further report in a year's time.

93.3 Councillor Mears questioned whether the report was appropriate to housing as only 25% of residents lived in council housing. She thought that it should be considered in a more corporate context.

93.4 The Chair stressed that housing organisations were taking these initiatives to protect rents and help people in arrears. There was separate funding allocated from last year's budget for non council tenants in the city.

93.5 Councillor Farrow considered the report was excellent. He drew attention to paragraph 3.5 of the report and stressed that when universal credit was introduced, it would result in benefit payments for housing costs being paid directly to tenants. Councillor Farrow referred to paragraph 4.4 which related to specialist debt and money advice. He considered that £80,000 was not enough money for specialist caseworker interventions. He hoped this could be reviewed in a year's time.

93.6 John Melson referred to paragraph 3.3 in the report and stressed that the proposal for a financial inclusion strategy needed to be implemented in a sensitive manner.

93.7 Roy Crowhurst thought the report was excellent. He asked if the council had spoken to any banks in the city and pointed out that some banks were very choosy about who received bank accounts.

93.8 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that officers had been speaking to Barclays and the Co-operative Bank. Both carried out financial inclusion work. It was important to target interventions.

93.9 Stewart Gover noted that there was no mention of pensioners or people on fixed incomes in the report. Many people on pensions paid through Paypoint who were not quick in transferring money.

93.10 **RESOLVED** - That the approach proposed for the delivery of new services to promote financial inclusion in Council housing, as outlined in the report, be endorsed.

94. EXTENDING PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL LEASEHOLDERS

94.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which set out the financial assistance that was currently available to leaseholders and recommended that the council extended the payment options available, for high cost works where there were payment difficulties.

94.2 The Leasehold Manager confirmed that loans would only be available to council leaseholders who were resident in their properties. 40% of properties were sub let at the moment and owners of these properties would be excluded from the scheme.

94.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraphs 1.1, 1.3 and 3.9 in the report. He queried whether leaseholders should be responsible for improvements to a property in addition to the repair of a property. Over cladding for example was an improvement. He considered that if the council was carrying out works to improve a block to meet Decent Homes Standards, that was a responsibility to tenants and should not be the responsibility of leaseholders.

94.4 The Leasehold Manager reported that Brighton & Hove leases allowed for works of improvement. Costs must be reasonably incurred.

94.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked what would be considered reasonable. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that some blocks required some cladding to ensure the property was water tight and met Decent Homes Standards. The council would need to prove that the cost to leaseholders was reasonable.

94.6 Councillor Duncan asked why there were already loans of up to 10 years for non resident leaseholders. He asked if it was reasonable that tenants should subsidise leaseholders.

94.7 The Leasehold Manager explained that 10 year loans had been a feature of what the council gives in its payment options. The council was not looking to reduce options for leaseholders. All costs were recovered with interest bearing loans.

94.8 Tony Worsfold thanked the Leasehold Manager. He stated that leaseholders wanted to see the proposals implemented. However, Mr Worsfold said he would like to discuss the proposals with his members before they became council policy.

94.9 Councillor Mears expressed concern about the 12 month period proposed for an interest free loan (for amounts up to £2,000). She felt this should be extended. She stressed that many of the council's leaseholders were elderly and works had a major implication on their finances. Councillor Mears considered that some of the contracts were not best value for money.

94.10 John Melson considered the report to be excellent. He reported that Hi Rise welcomed it. However, he had reservations about interest free loans. He had doubts about the 5 year period and said he would like to see interest free loans of 2 years or less.

- 94.11 Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that the wording of paragraph 3.14 should be changed to read “It is also proposed that Brighton & Hove extends the interest-free repayment period, *for leaseholders who are residents only*, from 12 months to the periods set out in the table below”. This was agreed.
- 94.12 Councillor Robins asked about the fitting of fire doors for leaseholders. The Leasehold Manager explained all exterior doors had to be fire and smoke proof for 30 minutes. With regard to the fitting of fire doors there were different situations for leaseholders in Brighton and Hove. It was agreed that a written note on this matter should be made available to all HMCC members.
- 94.13 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the following proposals are noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing or the relevant committee be recommended to agree the following proposals after they have been considered by the Leaseholder Action Group.
- (i) Brighton & Hove City Council offers additional payment options in the form of equity loans, maturity loans, and monthly repayment loans over 25 years to leaseholders who are in financial difficulty and struggling to pay high major works bills as outlined in this report.
- (ii) The council increases the interest-free repayment limit from 12 months to a sliding scale with a maximum of 5 years for resident leaseholders. (See table at 3.14 of the report).
- (iii) The specific criteria to be met when offering these additional loans will be agreed by the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion and the Chief Finance Officer after consultation with the Cabinet Member or relevant committee chair.

95. REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS HANDBOOK

- 95.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Place and Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which presented an updated proposal for a new “Repairs and Improvements Handbook”. The handbook gave details and advice to all tenants on the repairs service and improvements to their homes and had been designed to complement the existing tenant handbook.
- 95.2 Members were informed that the Property & Investment Team had involved residents in a number of different ways whilst developing, producing and agreeing the revised Repairs and Improvements Handbook. Further to recommendations made at a previous HMCC meeting on 19 December 2011, the draft handbook was discussed at all Area Housing Panel meetings and the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group.
- 95.3 David Murtagh recommended that the handbook be accepted. John Melson reported that Hi Rise Action Group welcomed the revised handbook.
- 95.4 Councillor Robins mentioned that the advice about condensation was often contradictory. For example, people were advised to keep a constant level of heat throughout the home, and to open windows. Councillor Robins thought that washing

mould off with bleach was not a good solution. Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that the reference to bleach should be re-worded.

95.5 The Head of Property & Investment explained that tenants were advised to keep windows open for short periods to deal with condensation. The Condensation and Damp Working Group would be revived to discuss this matter.

95.6 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the new updated version of the Repairs and Improvements Handbook as attached at appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

96. HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 3)

96.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which presented the performance report for Housing & Social Inclusion for the third quarter of the financial year 2011-2012. The report followed the format for presenting information agreed at previous meetings and incorporated changes suggested at the last meeting.

96.2 An amended page setting out paragraph 3.5.0 was circulated to members before the meeting.

96.3 Councillor Mears referred to the appendix relating to empty properties requiring major repairs. She stated that the HMCC should have a clear report on what was happening to these properties.

96.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3.3 – Rent Collection and Current Arrears. He noted that the percentage of households evicted because of rent arrears was 0.10%, whereas 494 tenants had been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession for rent arrears. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that each indicator was provided with a definition and they were each measuring different areas.

96.5 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the report and the above comments be noted.

97. MOBILITY SCOOTER STORAGE AND OTHER FIRE SAFETY WORK

97.1 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from Tom Gillham, Head of Property & Investment and Rachel Chasseaud, Head of Tenancy Services. Slides of the presentation were circulated to members.

97.2 The presentation informed members that fire safety was a legal requirement. Work on fire safety was reported along with specific fire safety measures in sheltered schemes.

97.3 Members were informed of pilot schemes in Leach Court and Clarke Court. A planning application had been submitted for a scooter storage scheme in Leach Court. The scheme at Clarke Court was completed.

97.4 Agreement was required for further schemes, and consultation would be carried out with local residents.

- 97.5 Barry Kent mentioned that he was a member of the Tenants Disability Network and a Mobility Scooter Group. He reported that there had not been a meeting of the Mobility Scooter Group for some time.
- 97.6 The Head of Tenancy Services replied that consultation with the Mobility Scooter Group needed to continue. There was a need to ensure that more frequent updates were brought to the Group.
- 97.7 Councillor Robins mentioned that one of the most combustible items in common ways was the build up of paint coats on walls. He was able to give advice on fire retardant coatings/paints if necessary.

The meeting concluded at 6.55pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

