

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 14 JUNE 2017

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

MINUTES

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

PART ONE

Council Statement - Grenfell Tower fire

The Chair read out the following statement.

“Our thoughts are with the people affected by the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower and we thank the London Fire Brigade, the London Ambulance Service, all medical staff and council colleagues for their responses; and their bravery.

The safety of our residents is of paramount importance to us. All council owned high rise blocks are inspected by the council each year to ensure they are compliant with current standards.

We work closely with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service through our Housing Fire Health & Safety Board to review and oversee compliance with current fire safety regulations in our housing stock, in particular high rise blocks. The board has met this morning and has discussed the Grenfell Tower fire.

A pilot sprinkler system – funded by Brighton & Hove City Council and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service – was completed in 2016 at Somerset Point – a high rise seniors housing scheme in the city.

Working closely with our partners we have been able to increase the housing capital budget for works to reduce fire risk. We’re proposing sprinkler systems in two further high rise blocks in the city, subject to resident consultation in the blocks concerned.

As is the case with any major incident, we – along with our partners – will review processes and systems, but until the results of investigations into Grenfell Tower fire are available we cannot speculate on the potential cause or causes.

Officers would provide a report to the Committee after the enquiry.”

Following the statement the Committee held a minute's silence.

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1a) Declarations of Substitutes

1.1 Councillor Phillips substituted for Councillor Druitt.

1b) Declarations of Interests

1.2 There were none.

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 not be excluded from the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 66.4 and referred to the HRA contribution to youth services agreed at full council. She considered it was important to have a report back to the Committee. The Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing confirmed that this was being organised by the Executive Director, Families, Children & Learning. A written response would be sent to all the Committee members. The response from the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing is set out below:

"I have been advised that the funding is part of the grants programme which is currently in progress. Once it has been completed a report will come to Housing and New Homes Committee for information."

2.2 Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 66.7 in relation to a Task and Finish Working Group. The Head of Housing replied that there would be consultation with tenants in November 2017. She would confirm dates.

2.3 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committee held on 15 March 2017 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair stated that she had informed opposition members attending the pre-meeting that as there were a large number of items on the agenda for this meeting, she would be restricting the number of questions members could ask to three questions per councillor on each item. The Senior Lawyer confirmed that the role of the Chair was to ensure that business was properly transacted. Procedural rules allowed the Chair to organise the meeting as she saw fit and this was not a matter for a vote.

3.2 The Chair informed members that she was looking forward to officiating at the topping out ceremony at Hobby Place, Whitehawk Road on Friday, to celebrate the completion of the concrete frame for the 29 new council flats being built there under the Council's New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme. Afterwards, the Chair would have the pleasure of awarding the prizes to the pupils at Community Academy Whitehawk, next door, who produced the winning designs for the site hoardings in the programme's latest art competition.

3.3 The Chair was pleased to advise that the council's submission to Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to secure the full funding allocation available under the new Community Housing Fund was successful and work was now underway to set up the Community Housing Hub. This initiative would be led by the community housing sector in the city with council involvement on the Programme Board of the Hub.

3.4 The Hub would provide both technical and funding support to local groups who were seeking to develop alternative housing solutions for the city. It would also aim to promote the sector and increase engagement from the wider community. This was in line with commitments in the council's Housing Strategy and the Fairness Commission action plan.

3.5 The Chair was also pleased to advise that the Strategic Housing Partnership had agreed to refresh the city's Student Housing Strategy, which was written in 2009. Initial discussions had started with the universities to scope out the requirements for a new strategy. A report would be brought to Housing & New Homes Committee in September 2017 outlining the evidence and options for the strategy, and permission would be sought to go out to consultation on the strategy in the autumn. The results of the consultation would then be brought back to committee and approval would be sought for a new strategy for the city.

3.6 The Chair reported that as previously mentioned in Chairs' Communications, Brighton & Hove was joining a project partnership alongside a number of other housing providers in the region to demonstrate a new approach to delivering net zero energy homes. Based

on the Dutch model 'Energiesprong' the partnership had been successful in the first round submission of an outline bid for European Structural Investment Funding via the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership. The final business case would be submitted in the autumn and if it was successful the Council would identify a number of properties within its own housing stock to receive a significant retrofit of 'built off site' energy saving and energy generating measures. The aim of the project was to pilot this approach across the partnership with the ultimate aim to deliver this level of energy improvement at greater scale, ultimately without subsidy. This was an exciting opportunity, not currently being carried out anywhere in the UK. Further updates would be provided to committee in due course.

4 CALL OVER

- 4.1 It was agreed that items 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 be reserved for discussion. Items 11 and 13 were agreed without discussion.

5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Petitions

- 5.1 There were none.

Questions

- 5.2 The following question had been submitted by Daniel Harris who was not in attendance:

"Can you confirm if there are still cases being investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman around revenge evictions?"

- 5.3 The Chair gave her response as follows:

"There is currently one eviction case being considered by the local government ombudsman, however the details are confidential and we are unable to discuss ongoing cases. However the Ombudsman anonymises then publishes all decisions made. These can be found on their website www.lgo.org.uk

There is a report on the agenda today which has investigated evictions from Emergency accommodation."

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

Deputation

- 5.5 There were no deputations.

6 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

- 6.1 There were no Petitions, Written Questions or Letters from Councillors.

6.2 The Committee considered the following Notice of Motion agreed at full Council on 6th April 2017:

“This council notes the Government changes to welfare benefits, including the introduction of the benefit cap and proposed removal of entitlement to housing benefit for 18-21 year olds.

In view of the potential impact of these changes and the number of individuals likely to fall into rent arrears and possible eviction, the Council resolves to:

Request the Housing & New Homes Committee to call for a report outlining how the risk of evictions caused by the housing benefit changes and benefit cap will be minimised. The report will take into consideration the following actions:

- Where it is possible to clearly identify that arrears are solely due to the benefit cap or removal of entitlement, that officers use all means other than evictions and bailiffs to recover rent due;
- That the Council work with partners to ensure all those affected by benefit changes are, wherever possible, prevented from eviction and homelessness; in particular recognition of the fact that a disproportionate number of LGBT young people find themselves at risk of homelessness, and as such may be adversely impacted by the changes”.

6.3 The Notice of Motion was unanimously agreed.

6.4 **RESOLVED:-**

(1) That officers prepare a report outlining how the risk of evictions caused by the housing benefit changes and benefit cap will be minimised. The report will take into consideration the following actions:

- Where it is possible to clearly identify that arrears are solely due to the benefit cap or removal of entitlement, that officers use all means other than evictions and bailiffs to recover rent due;
- That the Council work with partners to ensure all those affected by benefit changes are, wherever possible, prevented from eviction and homelessness; in particular recognition of the fact that a disproportionate number of LGBT young people find themselves at risk of homelessness, and as such may be adversely impacted by the changes.

7 PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR LICENSING SCHEMES

7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which outlined the proposed fee structure for a Selective Licensing Scheme and an updated fee structure for the Mandatory and Additional Licensing Schemes; outlined proposals to harmonise the current HMO fee structures; presented conditions for a Selective Licensing Scheme and updated conditions for the Mandatory and Additional Licensing Schemes and highlighted the approach to

consultation due to take place in Summer 2017. The report was presented by the Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment.

7.2 Councillor Gibson set out an amendment from the Green Group as follows:

“That the recommendation 2.4 be added, with text added as shown in ***bold italics***, and the original 2.4 be re-ordered to 2.4 and 2.5, so that the report reads as follows:

That the Housing & New Homes Committee:

2.3 Approve the updated fee structure for the National Mandatory Scheme.

2.4 That subject to consultation with landlords, allow for an option of reduced fees for those landlords who are signed up to a ‘good landlord accreditation scheme,’ with reductions made on the basis that ‘good landlord’ licenses will be less costly to administer and enforce.

2.5 Note for consultation the draft Selective Licensing Scheme conditions attached at Appendix 1.

2.6 Note for consultation the draft updated Additional HMO Licensing Scheme conditions attached at Appendix 2.”

7.3 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Phillips.

7.4 Councillor Hill commented that the objective of the amendment was already covered in paragraph 3.15 of the report. The Council was very open to offering such a discount. However, there was a need to demonstrate that it would save the council money.

7.5 Councillor Mears supported the amendment and stressed that it was important to encourage good landlords. The proposal needed to be stated more clearly than in paragraph 3.15.

7.6 Councillor Moonan welcomed the report and considered it was an excellent piece of work. She referred to the consultation and stressed that the residents the council most wanted to hear from were likely to be the hardest to reach and the least likely to take part. These were people in rented accommodation which was not up to these standards. How would officers ensure that their voice was heard? The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment explained that there was an open portal to take feedback. Officers wanted to go out to residents’ groups. In addition to that, officers would carry out door to door surveys as well as leaflet drops to encourage responses. In the past officers had spoken to interested parties such as Local Action Teams and to the universities and students unions to get feedback from different groups of people. Officers would listen to councillors if they felt officers were not talking to the right people.

7.7 Councillor Atkinson welcomed the report. Selective licensing would be of enormous benefit to local people. He had read the concerns of the Landlord’s Association and he was sure their concerns could be fed into the consultation. Councillor Atkinson stressed that many other professions required registration and he mentioned nursing as an example.

7.8 Councillor Gibson appreciated the hard work in delivering the report. Landlord licensing was a good way to improve standards and he wholeheartedly supported the proposals. Councillor Gibson queried paragraph 1.1 and 1.2 in Appendix One on page 33 of the agenda concerning references for prospective tenants. The report stated an example of where it might not be possible to obtain a reference. Councillor Gibson considered that there were other examples and he would like to hear of these as well. Councillor Gibson referred to Appendix 1, paragraph 10.1 on page 35 which stated that “the licence holder must ensure all reasonable and practical steps are taken to respond to repair and maintenance issues...” It would be helpful to give more guidance as to what was considered reasonable. The Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment replied that he would take on board these comments and would look at how the council could be clearer with regard to these issues.

7.9 The Committee unanimously agreed the recommendations as amended in paragraph 7.2 above.

7.10 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That approval is granted for consultation on the proposed fee structure for a Selective Licensing Scheme.
- (2) That consultation for the updated fee structure for an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme is approved.
- (3) That the updated fee structure for the National Mandatory Scheme is approved.
- (4) That subject to consultation with landlords, allow for an option of reduced fees for those landlords who are signed up to a ‘good landlord accreditation scheme’, with reductions made on the basis that ‘good landlord’ licenses will be less costly to administer and enforce.
- (5) That the draft Selective Licensing Scheme conditions attached at Appendix 1 be noted for consultation.
- (6) That the draft updated Additional HMO Licensing Scheme conditions attached at Appendix 2 be noted for consultation.

8 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - SCHEME APPROVAL - LYNCHET CLOSE

8.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Culture which included the findings of the business case for eight new council homes for rent at a primary HRA owned, grassed site at Lynchet Close, Hollingdean and sought scheme and budget approval to develop them. Being an exceptionally easy site to develop for the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme, this scheme is projected to be self financing over 40 years and could generate a significant surplus to cross subsidise other and future schemes in the programme. The implications of various rent options, including those requested in members’ proposed amendment to the report circulated for the March Housing and New Homes Committee, were included in order for members to agree the rent levels. The report also requested approval to appropriate a

small strip of land from the council's Environmental Services department to the HRA in order to let the development proceed. The report was presented by the Estate Regeneration Project Manager.

8.2 The Estate Regeneration Project Manager gave a slide presentation and stressed the following:

- The council's Strategic Construction Partnership had worked with the Estate Regeneration Team since inception of this scheme to work up a cost efficient but robust design that would meet the council's standards for affordable housing and would be cost efficient to maintain.
- Three different construction options were modelled and costed and the cross party Estate Regeneration Member Board was consulted. They concurred with the decision to use timber frame rather than traditional block and brick construction – which brought some cost savings – and to comply with the space and accessibility standards required by the council's Affordable Housing Brief, rather than the lower standards generally delivered by volume house builders.
- This would be the last housing scheme to be delivered through the current partnership – which was coming to the end of its procured life - and officers needed the committee's scheme approval today in order to be able to progress it with those partners and get on site by early autumn.
- In order to avoid delays, an application for planning consent was submitted after the last Housing & New Homes Committee meeting and officers were expecting consent imminently.

The report to this meeting included:

- The reasons for the rent policy that had been adopted by Committee in setting rents for all homes in the New Homes for Neighbourhoods new build programme to date – at the lower of 80% Market Rent or Local Housing Allowance in accordance with the Tenancy Strategy approved by Housing Committee in 2013. In practice the vast majority had been set at LHA rates, which were lower than 80% market rate.
- Details of 6 rent options for the first 4 bedroom homes to be built under this programme, and the 2 bed flats, and their implications - in response to members' request.
- Evidence of need and demand for 4 bedroom affordable rented homes - including households currently over occupying council homes and not receiving Housing Benefit or affected by the government's Benefit Cap who could be eligible to bid for the houses.
- Members were recommended to approve the scheme and Option 1 or 2 for the rent levels, which were the most advantageous to the HRA. There was every indication that the 4 bed houses could be let to households in housing need at both those rents. The 2 bedroom rents would be set on the same basis as the rents for the 60+ 2 bedroom homes the Committee had already approved in the New Homes for Neighbourhoods Programme.

- If members wished to change the council's rent setting policy for all new build homes moving forward, then a separate report would be required that reviewed the implications of that for the whole programme and the limitations it could place on the council's ability to develop more homes in future.

8.3 Councillor Gibson set out an amendment from the Green Group as follows:

"That the recommendation ii be amended with text added as shown in ***bold italics***, so that the report reads as follows:

2.1 That Housing and New Homes Committee approves:

i. The proposed scheme of eight new council homes at Lynchet Close, Brighton under the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme;

ii. ***To select one of Either-Options 4 or Option 2 Four, Five and Six*** of the six options for scheme rent levels as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, as follows:

~~Option 1: All homes at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels of Housing Benefit or 80% market levels if lower, in accordance with rent policy for the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme to date~~

~~Option 2: 65% Market Rate for the four bedroom houses and LHA rate for the two bedroom flats.~~

Option 4: Rents at the same level proposed for the joint venture with Hyde Housing; projected to produce a surplus of £193,000 (£2,850 per unit) for the first 40 years modelled;

Option 5: Rents estimated and based on a budget showing 'break even' over the first 40 years modelled;

Option 6: A social target rent which would entail an estimated £1,033m subsidy over the first 40 years modelled."

8.4 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Phillips.

8.5 Councillor Gibson explained the reasons for the amendment. In relation to the 4 bed houses, Options 1 was proposing a rent of £17,000 a year, and Option 2 was proposing a rent of just under £15,000. The middle income of people living and working in Brighton was reckoned in the Affordability Study to be about £24,000. In the report the middle income of everyone including those working in London was around £29,000. Councillor Gibson stressed that the council was a social landlord and he believed it was the Committee's social responsibility to provide housing that was affordable for people on low incomes. Option 4 still provided a surplus for the HRA. Options 4 and 5 provided rent affordability for working households but still required an income approaching a middle income. He proposed these options be investigated.

8.6 Councillor Mears stated that she would not support either Option 1 or 2. She would also not support Option 6 as it would require a £1m subsidy from the HRA. She considered

that the council had a building programme that was far too expensive, and resulted in these kinds of rent levels.

- 8.7 Councillor Bell expressed concern at the high cost of the build compared to schemes in the private sector, and stated that he would only support schemes that got people off the streets and into housing. The Estate Regeneration Project Manager replied that the evidence of need and demand indicated that Options 1 and 2 would still house people in housing need. The decision to be made on rents related to rent policy, not construction costs. Only rent Option 5 was calculated on the cost of building the scheme.
- 8.8 Councillor Hill suggested an amendment to the amendment. She requested that the Committee consider Option 3 as the 4 bed rent level was substantially less than Option 2, but the 2 bed rents would be the same as other 2 beds in the programme. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Moonan.
- 8.9 At this point in the proceedings (5.00pm) the Committee agreed to adjourn to discuss the proposed amendments. The Committee reconvened at 5.27pm.
- 8.10 Councillor Moonan asked if officers were able to clarify what the timescales of the existing procurement framework were and what the implications would be if a decision was made today or whether it was delayed. The Lead City Regeneration Programme Manager explained that he believed that the current partnership came to an end at the end of July 2017. As long as everything was in place by then, officers would be able to progress the scheme. If a decision was made after that date it would mean going back to the drawing board and there would be costs for abortive work, and a significant delay to the scheme.
- 8.11 Councillor Mears considered that it was safer to have a special meeting to discuss this matter. Councillor Hill commented that the report had already been delayed once already and stressed that this was the last scheme that was part of the current partnership and there was an urgent need to make a decision. She proposed an amendment for a hybrid Option 4 which would result in a reduced rent for the 4 bed houses but keep the LHA rate for the 2 bed flats. This was seconded by Councillor Moonan.
- 8.12 Councillor Gibson accepted that there was a need to make a decision before Policy, Resources & Growth Committee on 13th July 2017 which was required to approve the scheme budget and appropriation of some Environmental Services land to the HRA. However, he objected to the rent levels proposed in the hybrid Option 4 amendment. He asked why the original Option 4 was not acceptable.
- 8.13 The Estate Regeneration Project Manager replied that Option 4 was a different approach to setting rent from the rent policy which the Committee had followed to date for all the New Homes for Neighbourhood new build schemes. Option 4 would lead the rent for 4 bed houses to be £11pw below the rents tenants were currently paying on new build 3 bedroom homes. It would also mean that tenants in the 2 bedroom flats would pay rent £28pw below what other tenants are already paying in other 2 bedroom flats that had been built through the programme. The Committee needed to consider whether this would be seen as reasonable and fair, particularly by tenants. There had been a great deal of support from tenants for higher rent levels for the new build. Option 4

might possibly be open to challenge. It could also make it more difficult to encourage tenants to downsize if they started to under occupy new homes. It did not make best use of the projected surpluses to the HRA from this unique site that was relatively easy to develop to cross subsidise the rest of the programme. Options 4 to 6 caused inconsistencies with rents that were already being charged to tenants in new build properties. Options 1 to 3 maintained the rate for the 2 bed flats and would allow the 4 bed rents to remain above the 3 bed rents, up to the LHA rate.

- 8.14 Councillor Mears asked who would be likely to challenge the decision. The Senior Lawyer stated that the legal requirement was “a local housing authority may make such reasonable charges as they determine for the tenancy or occupation of their houses”. The challenge would come if somebody considered that the rents the council set for particular types of accommodation are not reasonable. Challenge was likely to come by way of judicial review. To determine what was reasonable, the Committee needed to consider relevant factors and ignore irrelevant ones. The legislation did not state that the council could not charge different rents for different types of property but members needed to be careful in giving reasons for so doing.
- 8.15 Councillor Mears stated again that she considered that the build costs were too high. She suggested that there should be an independent cost review to clarify that the council were getting value for money. She considered that there was time to defer the report.
- 8.16 Councillor Gibson referred to relevant factors. A relevant factor could be that a site can be developed in a more cost effective way and can achieve one of the objectives of the council which is to provide truly affordable housing. The Senior Lawyer replied that judicial review would be a matter for a judge. Her view was that it was relevant but all the factors needed to be identified.
- 8.17 Councillor Lewry asked about the rent comparisons in Appendix 3. Where were they compared from? The Estate Regeneration Project Manager explained that the policy to date on new build homes was to set affordable rents following the Tenancy Strategy which the council published in 2013. That stated that in order for affordable rents to be truly affordable they should be set at the lower of 80% of market rent or the Local Housing Allowance rate of Housing Benefit. So Option 4 would mean a tenant of a 4 bed house at Lynchet Close would pay £11.05 pw less than a tenant of a 3 bed flat at Kite Place.
- 8.18 Councillor Hill pointed out that this was the last scheme with the current partners, after which time the council would be entering a procurement process to find a new partner, which would include some examination of build costs on future schemes. She suggested that the council could be in a position to offer members some detailed input into the process for future schemes, based on allowing the current scheme to go ahead on the current costs.
- 8.19 Councillor Phillips asked for the report to be deferred to a Special Housing & New Homes Committee to be called in two weeks’ time which would facilitate the officers to do the work with opposition and group leads, so that a palatable option could be brought forward ahead of PR&G Committee, which reduced the build cost and the rent costs.

That work needed to be done together with opposition groups so that a consensus could be reached.

- 8.20 The Lead City Regeneration Programme Manager reported that build costs had been assured by an independent quantity surveyor. Officers had also undertaken extensive value engineering. Officers had reported to the Member Board in terms of different options for going forward. He therefore thought that in two weeks' time with the current arrangement and the current scheme it was unlikely that officers could significantly reduce the costs of the scheme.
- 8.21 The Estate Regeneration Project Manager referred to the report that went to the Estate Regeneration Member Board in January with three construction options and costings. The report went through all the reasons why the council's build could not be compared with costs of volume house builders. It also specifically reported that the independent cost consultants to the Strategic Construction Partnership advised that the costs for the option accepted by members - the timber framed construction - were comparable to those for a four unit private timber framed development they were engaged in, and also housing associations current costs. The homes would be built to a larger and more robust standard than the private sector, in line with the council's Affordable Housing Brief. Meanwhile, The Lead City Regeneration Programme Manager stated that it would be helpful to arrange a workshop with members in order for officers to be open about construction costs.
- 8.22 At this point in the proceedings there was a second adjournment starting at 5.55pm and re-convening at 6.21pm.
- 8.23 Councillor Mears requested a two week adjournment. Councillor Gibson supported this proposal in order to have a Special meeting within the timeframe for the report to be forwarded to Policy, Resources and Growth Committee. Officers should focus on any possible savings in the build costs and use the opportunity to check the legal implications of Option 4, the hybrid Option 4 and Option 5. The priority should be to keep rents as low as possible in the city.
- 8.24 The Chair asked officers what new information would be brought to the Committee if there was to be a reconvened Committee. The Lead City Regeneration Programme Manager replied that officers had looked extensively at costs and the value engineering around this scheme. There was no additional cost information that could bring to the reconvened meeting. Councillor Moonan commented that it was clear that costs could not be brought down on this project. When there was a new procurement partnership, there could be cross party consideration of build costs.
- 8.25 The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing stated that in relation to the costs, the council had been advised by an independent review. If costs were different from the independent review there would be a question as to why the council had agreed different costs. The Executive Director stressed that the only information that could be considered for a reconvened meeting was potential legal aspects of the discussion so far. She stressed that in any judicial review the outcome was based on the view of a judge, and it would be difficult to identify all of the legal aspects within such a short time.

- 8.26 Councillor Phillips proposed that there should be a vote on holding a Special meeting. Councillor Phillips did not think the Committee had all the legal information to hand to make a decision at today's meeting. The Senior Lawyer advised that the constitution only allowed the Chair or Deputy Chair to call a Special meeting. There was no clear mechanism for the Committee to call for a Special meeting. It was not clear what additional information could be brought to the Committee. She had already explained about the legal requirements, the risks, and the discretion that the committee needed to exercise reasonably. She had explained that the charges that were adopted needed to be reasonable. She had read out the relevant legislation. It was clear from previous case law that the council could have differential rates but a decision had to be taken as to whether that was reasonable. She could not advise if this would be vulnerable to challenge.
- 8.27 Councillor Gibson commented that a deferral would allow members to ask a number of questions, in order to make a more informed decision.
- 8.28 The Chair asked if there was additional legal information that could be provided. The Senior Lawyer replied that precedent had been mentioned. She could look up old case law on whether differential rates could be charged and present them to the meeting.
- 8.29 Councillor Hill stated that the purpose of the hybrid Option 4 proposal was to respond to the possible legal challenge. There could be a challenge if there were different rates for the 2 bed homes. Councillor Mears express the view that the Conservative Group had not been properly consulted on the hybrid Option 4 proposal during the adjournments.
- 8.30 Councillor Gibson commented that the council had previously passed an amendment about having a policy of seeking living rents and lower rents. He thought this was in the Asset Management Strategy. He asked what difference did a commitment in an official council policy and strategy that was agreed at a meeting make to the defensibility of making a decision, for example, to support Option 4. The Senior Lawyer responded that that this was probably something that should be taken into account.
- 8.31 At this point in the proceedings it was agreed to have a short adjournment in order for the Labour amendment to be photocopied and circulated to members.
- 8.32 Following the adjournment the Chair took the amendments. Members considered the Labour amendment which was worded as follows:
- “2.1 To select Option 3 for the 2-bed flats and Option 4 for the 4-bed houses for the scheme rent levels.”**
- 8.33 Members voted on the amendment by four votes for the amendment and 5 votes against. There was one abstention. The amendment was not agreed.
- 8.34 Councillor Gibson informed members that he would withdraw Option 6 from the Green amendment, in order that no option would require any subsidy from the HRA.
- 8.35 The Chair asked for legal advice on Options 4 & 5. The Senior Lawyer explained that the council could charge different rents for different properties but the committee had discretion and that had to be exercised reasonably. That would take into account

relevant considerations. She was not convinced that the differential levels would be easy to justify should the council be challenged in legal proceedings. However, the decision would not be illegal until a court declared it illegal. That would require a challenge probably by way of judicial review.

- 8.36 Councillor Mears asked again for another meeting to enable members to have all the legal advice so that everybody was clear on what was legal and what was not legal. She urged the Chair to use her discretion to take the matter forward in a way in which the committee could come back and reach a consensus.
- 8.37 The Chair responded that she would consider another meeting if she felt that members would not vote in exactly the same way as they had voted at this meeting. That would negate the point of having another meeting. Councillor Bell commented that if there was another meeting and he was presented with the facts as laid down by the Lead City Regeneration Programme Manager he would change his point of view and how he might potentially vote. Councillor Gibson stated that he was enthusiastic about building new council homes. He saw having another meeting a way of achieving that aim. He wanted to support a majority view that would enable those council houses to be built.
- 8.38 The Chair stressed that if there was to be another meeting it was important to have the same membership as today's meeting.
- 8.39 Members voted on having a reconvened meeting this was unanimously agreed.
- 8.40 **RESOLVED**
- (1) That a decision be deferred for consideration at a reconvened meeting of the Housing & New Homes Committee. This reconvened meeting is to be scheduled to take place in time for the decision to be considered by the Policy, Resources and Growth Committee meeting on 13 July 2017.

9 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS MODULAR PILOT - Y:CUBE PROPOSAL

- 9.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Culture which sought approval to lease the Eastergate Road site to YMCA DownsLink Group in order for it to develop (subject to planning) 21 Y:Cube homes to let within affordable rent levels as transitional accommodation to help young, single young people from Brighton & Hove move towards fully independent living and to which the council would have 50% nomination rights. The report was presented by the Estate Regeneration Project Manager who showed slides of the site and proposed scheme.
- 9.2 Councillor Mears considered it an excellent scheme which her group would support. She acknowledged that the site was challenging but considered that the proposal from the YMCA was ideal for young people and would give them a sense of purpose.
- 9.3 Councillor Moonan thanked officers for the report. She considered it an excellent scheme and an exciting partnership with the YMCA.
- 9.4 Councillor Gibson commented that he had visited the Y:Cube scheme in Mitcham and found it very pleasant accommodation. His group supported the scheme

wholeheartedly. Councillor Gibson stated that he would like to see more non-traditional design. It would be even better if the schemes were produced by the council. Councillor Gibson noted that there had been good consultation with the community.

9.5 The Chair stated that she was a ward councillor and welcomed this new innovative way of housing young people in the city.

9.6 **RESOLVED:-**

That Housing & New Homes Committee recommend to Policy, Resources and Growth Committee:

- (1) That the land at Eastergate Road, Brighton as identified in the plan at Appendix 1 be made available for leasing for the development of affordable rented housing.
- (2) That there be delegated authority to the Executive Directors for Economy, Environment & Culture, Finance and Resources and Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing (in consultation with each other) to enter into the necessary contracts with YMCA DownsLink Group to lease the largely cleared council housing garage site at Eastergate Road, Brighton in order to secure the building of modular Y:Cube homes for affordable rent by the YMCA. The granting of the lease is subject to YMCA DownsLink Group obtaining planning consent, funding and entering into a nominations agreement with the council.

10 HOUSING MANAGEMENT IT SYSTEM PROCUREMENT

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which sought formal permission for Brighton & Hove City Council to conduct a procurement process and award a new housing management IT system contract for a period of 5 years with an option to extend by 2 years. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement accompanied by the Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager.
- 10.2 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement referred to paragraph 5.3 which stated that once a system was procured, council tenants and leaseholders would be invited to work with the council on the customer online portal to ensure that it provided the functionality and transactions that would be of most value to residents accessing council information and services online. In addition it was suggested that there should be a cross party group of members to look at what councillors would want with regard to IT systems, along with focus groups with residents.
- 10.3 Councillor Mears asked for clarification regarding changes in the investment figure. If there were any changes through the procurement process, the Committee should be informed. Councillor Mears considered cross party involvement was a good way forward.
- 10.4 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the report was seeking budget approval for £1.2m which would come from reserves and that the £1.2m would meet the cost of the software and licencing plus the implementation of the system. In paragraph 7.3 officers were highlighting that the HRA currently funded the annual

support costs and the maintenance costs – the day to day costs of the current system - which officers believed would be similar and translate into the new system. If the project costs changed officers would report back to Committee.

- 10.5 Councillor Phillips asked if the supplier would report back to the Committee after five years to see whether the contract had been successful or not before potentially being extended for another two years. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that officers could report back on how the system was working at any time.
- 10.6 Councillor Gibson stated although there was a budget of £1.2m which would come out of reserves, it was intended that £150,000 of that sum would be spent this financial year. Councillor Gibson was concerned that the council did not run down reserves unnecessarily in future years as a result of this decision. He asked if the money not spent this year would be included in the budget to be agreed in January or February. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the estimated £150,000 would be taken from reserves this year and when officers prepared the budget for next year they would specify the remaining amount.

10.7 RESOLVED:-

That Housing & New Homes Committee recommend to Policy, Resources & Growth Committee that:

- (1) The Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing is granted delegated authority to:
- (i) Carry out a procurement of a new housing management IT system for council housing services and;
 - (ii) Award and let a contract with the preferred supplier for a period of 5 years with an option to extend by 2 years.
- (2) A budget of £1.200m for a contract for a new housing management IT system, funded by Housing Revenue Account reserves, is approved.

11 PROCUREMENT OF A NEW CONTRACT TO SERVICE AND INSTALL WARDEN CALL SYSTEMS IN SENIORS HOUSING

- 11.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which sought approval to tender a contract for the supply, installation, servicing and repair of Warden Call system equipment throughout the council's Seniors Housing properties, of which there are currently 22 schemes. The current contract would expire in January 2018. The proposal was to procure a new contract with a term of 4 years and an option to extend the arrangement for an additional 2 years. The new contract would continue to be managed by Housing Services. It was estimated that the value of the new contract over the total 6 year term would be between £850,000 and £950,000. The report was not called for discussion.

11.2 RESOLVED:-

- (1) That Housing & New Homes Committee recommends to Policy, Resources & Growth Committee that delegated authority is granted to the Executive Director with responsibility for Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing, following consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Resources to:
- (i) Launch a competitive procurement process to secure a contractor to supply, install, service and repair all equipment needed to provide Warden Call systems in Seniors Housing;
 - (ii) Award a contract with a term of 4 years to the bidder offering the best value in terms of price and quality;
 - (iii) Approve an extension (or extensions) of the contract for up to a further period of 2 years if required and dependant on performance.

12 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT REVIEW

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which provided an overview of the resident involvement review and made recommendations based on its findings to broaden resident engagement in Housing's landlord services. The report was presented by the Housing Services Operations Manager.
- 12.2 Councillor Moonan thanked all the residents for their valuable work on the report. As Chair of one of the Area Panels she looked forward to seeing how the review would result in improving meetings and setting agendas. Councillor Moonan commented that Chairs of the Area Panels should think of how they measured the success of the Panels and how they achieved what they set out to do.
- 12.3 Councillor Mears concurred with Councillor Moonan's comments. She was pleased to see that the Area Panels would be ongoing and stressed the importance of the review. Councillor Mears referred to Page 128, paragraph 3.13 of the report concerning the Tenant Scrutiny Panel. The Panel had been set up after the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee had been disbanded with the idea that tenants would be active in reviewing and scrutinising housing management and that they would be fully engaged. Councillor Mears and former Councillor Randall had attended a meeting with tenants and the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel where tenants had expressed the view that they were very unhappy with the way Scrutiny was being serviced. Tenants had expected to be fully engaged in scrutinising housing management and this never happened. The Panel had been serviced by one particular officer who worked really hard to help the tenants carry out this work. Tenants would have liked there to have been more than three service reviews but this was not possible.
- 12.4 Councillor Gibson set out an amendment from the Green Group as follows:
- "That the recommendation 2.2 is amended, with text added as shown in ***bold italics***, so that the report reads as follows:
- 2.2 Action 1 – a recommendation to ***continue with, and*** review the four Area Panels for the remainder of the municipal year, to develop more engaging agendas and to make

recommendations at the end of this period to strengthen the formal resident involvement structure.”

- 12.5 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Phillips. The amendments were later accepted without a vote.
- 12.6 Councillor Gibson appreciated the hard work that had gone into the review, particularly by the tenants. The recommendations from the review needed to be taken very seriously. Councillor Gibson referred to Recommendation 34 – Star Survey. He commented that this was an important opportunity for the Task and Finish Group to analyse the findings of the Star Survey and identify where service improvements could be made. Councillor Gibson noted that unhappiness with neighbourhood should be looked at. He suggested widening this to include the energies of the Area Panels as well. This would achieve a meaningful and measurable change by the time of the next Star Survey. He supported Councillor Moonan’s comments about agreeing the outcomes.
- 12.7 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the recommendations set out in the resident involvement review action plan in Appendix 1 of this report are agreed. These can be considered in two groups:
 - (2) Action 1 – a recommendation to continue with, and review the four Area Panels for the remainder of the municipal year, to develop more engaging agendas and to make recommendations at the end of this period to strengthen the formal resident involvement structure.
 - (3) Actions 2 – 34 a body of recommendations covering all aspects of resident involvement work.

13 ANNUAL REPORT 2017

- 13.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which presented the draft Annual Report 2017. An Annual Report had been provided to council tenants and leaseholders since 2010. The regulatory framework for social housing in England from the Homes and Communities Agency set out the requirements for the areas that must be covered in the report, these included, information on the repairs and maintenance budget, timely and relevant information, and support for tenants to build capacity and be more effectively involved. The report was not called for discussion.

13.2 RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the draft Annual Report 2017 to council tenants and leaseholders (attached as Appendix 1) is approved. The report will be sent to all residents with the summer edition of Homing In and will also be available to view on the council’s website.

14 HOUSING FIRST

- 14.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Health & Adult Social Care which explained how the council was currently implementing the Housing First model and how this could be developed in the future. The report was presented by the Commissioning & Performance Manager.
- 14.2 Councillor Atkinson stated that Housing First was a model of supported housing that needed to be considered but he needed to know more about how it could work locally. For example, would there be a local resident requirement? Councillor Atkinson commented that Brighton Housing Trust operated a very successful model with engagement and rehabilitation with the residents they took on board and they had a basic code of conduct around behaviour. Councillor Atkinson was concerned at the unconditional aspect of Housing First. He suggested that there should be some limit on whether someone's behaviour was acceptable or not. The Commissioning & Performance Manager confirmed that all people involved in Housing First had to demonstrate a local connection and would be known to many services across the city. The rehabilitation model was one model for dealing with substance misuse. The harm reduction model had to be used for many of the very chaotic homeless clients presented to the council. They needed to be stabilised before they were able to take part in the Rehabilitation model. If they were living in stable accommodation they would be more likely to be stabilised.
- 14.3 Councillor Gibson commented he had seen figures that suggested that Brighton & Hove had around 98 rough sleepers with a local connection who the council should be accommodating and were waiting for a hostel place. The average wait was 10 months. Those rough sleepers on the street were deteriorating in that time. He asked if officers had any thoughts on how this could be overcome and how this desperate situation had been reached. Councillor Gibson stated that he was aware that Housing First was primarily targeted at entrenched rough sleepers. He had heard that Housing First had been quite successful in Canada with non-entrenched people. He asked for comments about that. Councillor Gibson further asked if the officer agreed that the fundamental problem was access to accommodation in which people could stabilise. He asked how something could be done about this. The Commissioning & Performance Manager explained that in terms of waiting list for hostels, demand had increased significantly as rough sleeping numbers had increased significantly since 2010. Officers were looking at various models and options. Officers were working with partners in trying to improve moving people on so people don't get stuck in hostels. Officers were also trying to ensure hostels received clients that were the best fit for them. By the end of the year hostels would be different supported accommodation services with specialist criteria. They would work in a very different way with clients. Demand outstripped the supply and she could not answer how this was dealt with. Canada and other places in America and Scandinavia had used Housing First to accommodate all their rough sleepers. In some cases they had eradicated rough sleeping. The Commissioning & Performance Manager thought that they had a different housing market. Some of it could be replicated but not all of it. If the government was keen on this as a model she would expect there would be funding to follow. She agreed that access to accommodation was difficult to all groups.
- 14.4 Councillor Mears asked how many hostel beds there were in the city. It was agreed that detailed figures be sent to the Committee. The wording appears below.

"The number of hostel beds in the city:

We currently commission the following 24 hour high support services: 25 beds for people with mental health issues and complex needs, 43 beds for young people, 273 bed spaces for single homeless people and rough sleepers.”

14.5 Councillor Gibson set out an amendment from the Green Group as follows:

That the report recommendations be amended to insert the words as shown in ***bold italics***:

2.2 Report back in to the committee in a year’s time outlining the effectiveness and progress with the Housing First approach to housing rough sleepers.

2.3 That a further report be undertaken to identify the potential savings across the Council and other public service providers that are achievable from using additional properties for Housing First;

- That such a report is completed by November, in order that any savings identified can inform the budget process of 2018/19.

14.6 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Phillips.

14.7 The Executive Director, Neighbourhood, Communities & Housing requested that the report should be completed in January 2018 to allow enough time to provide the information required. This was agreed by members and Councillor Gibson stressed that the key aim was to inform the budget process.

14.8 The Committee voted on the Green amendment (further amended to state the report is completed by January 2018). This was unanimously agreed. The Committee then voted on the original recommendation which was agreed unanimously as amended.

14.9 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Committee note the content of the report which is provided for information only.
- (2) That there be a report back to the Committee in a year’s time outlining the effectiveness and progress with the Housing First approach to housing rough sleepers.
- (3) That a further report be undertaken to identify the potential savings across the Council and other public service providers that are achievable from using additional properties in Housing First;
 - That such a report is completed by January 2018, in order that any savings identified can inform the budget process of 2018/19.

15 EXPLORING THE OPTION OF A TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION BOARD

15.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which explored the options of creating a Temporary Accommodation Board to support residents in unsupported Temporary Accommodation, following a report produced by Justlife entitled ‘Nowhere fast – the journey in and out of

Unsupported Temporary Accommodation.’ The report was presented by the Head of Temporary Accommodation & Allocations.

- 15.2 Councillor Mears thanked the Head of Temporary Accommodation & Allocations for the report. She had attended one of the meetings attended by senior officers; cross party members; health services and providers. It had been very helpful to see different organisations identifying the need to work more closely together.
- 15.3 Councillor Gibson commented that it was a welcome initiative. There was now a Temporary Accommodation Action Group that had a positive action focused agenda. He had attended the first meeting and thought it a very positive start. This was a real opportunity for the council to make very good use of the feedback from residents, input from providers, and from the agencies that were working to support residents.
- 15.4 Councillor Gibson proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Phillips:
- “That the recommendations are amended to insert the words as shown in ***bold italics***:
- 2.1 That Housing and New Homes Committee note progress ***and endorse the newly formed action group.***”
- 15.5 Councillor Moonan echoed the previous comments. It was good to see the process had started and she had high hopes for the meeting going forward. The Labour Group would be accepting the amendment.
- 15.6 The Chair stated that it was a very positive process and Justlife, who were taking the lead in setting up the Temporary Accommodation Action Group, were an excellent organisation who were able to support the residents in temporary accommodation.
- 15.7 Members voted on the Green amendment set out in paragraph 15.4. The amendment was unanimously agreed.
- 15.8 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the Housing & New Homes Committee note progress and endorse the newly formed action group.

16 EVICTIONS FROM TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

- 16.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which looked into evictions from Temporary Accommodation and whether there is evidence to support the assertion that residents in temporary accommodation that lodge complaints about disrepair or staff conduct at their temporary accommodation are vulnerable to evictions. The report was presented by Head of Temporary Accommodation and Allocations, accompanied by the Housing Options Manager (Homelessness).

- 16.2 Councillor Atkinson thanked officers for the report. The evidence was comprehensive and it needed to be clear that abusive behaviour to staff was unacceptable.
- 16.3 Councillor Bell concurred with Councillor Atkinson. He endorsed the report.
- 16.4 Councillor Moonan referred to the previous report and asked how the two were linked. Meanwhile she hoped some of the issues could be addressed at the Temporary Accommodation Board.
- 16.5 Councillor Gibson agreed that it was a very helpful report that went into a great deal of detail. Councillor Gibson referred to the table on page 194 of the agenda which showed an analysis of evictions. He expressed concern that the number of evictions in the last quarter had increased significantly. He recommended that the table be replicated in one year's time in order to compare the tables and see if this trend could be stemmed. Councillor Gibson expressed concern that people were possibly lacking support at a vulnerable period of their lives. Councillor Gibson had received answers to questions he put to officers before the Committee. Some of these questions were asking about more details on the evictions and what was clear was that over the period of the year out of 398 properties, there had been 50 evictions (12.5%) which he felt was quite high. Councillor Gibson wanted to see that figure reduced. Councillor Gibson was concerned that two photographs attached to the report were the worst possible examples and they might be introducing a certain amount of bias into people's minds. He was also concerned that the case studies were not representative in the sense that they did not reflect the split between the cases where housing duty was discharged and housing duty was not discharged. They tended to be the worst cases.
- 16.6 Councillor Gibson set out an amendment from the Green Group as follows:

"That the recommendations are amended to insert the words as shown in ***bold italics***:

2.2 To continue to monitor and update the eviction figures, with a follow up report to be produced in a year's time including an analysis of any trends in data

2.3 That the Temporary Accommodation Action Group is asked to consider concerns from tenants that their involvement with the media has been a contributing factor in eviction, with any findings reported back to Housing and New Homes Committee.

- 16.7 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Phillips.
- 16.8 The Head of Temporary Accommodation and Allocations explained that there were 900 plus placements. There had been 50 evictions from those 900 plus placements, not out of the 398 properties. Councillor Gibson took that point but stressed that the point he was making was over a period of a year in 398 properties there were 50 evictions and the eviction rate per property over a year was 12.5%.
- 16.9 The Housing Options Manager (Homelessness) confirmed that the photos were a typical sample and not the worst examples.

- 16.10 Councillor Hill confirmed that surgeries had been held for people in emergency accommodation in Windsor Court and Percival Terrace, along with ward councillors. There was one visitor to the first session and three or four attended the second surgery. That was an opportunity for people to raise particular issues.
- 16.11 The Director, Neighbourhood, Communities & Housing referred to 2.3 of the amendment. She was keen that the Temporary Accommodation Action Group was not seen as a council group. The Director expressed concern that if the Committee asked the group to do something, it might not be what the group and Justlife wanted to do. The council's involvement was to be part of the group and listen. Councillor Gibson stated that the amendment was worded to ask the Board to consider. The Committee would not be demanding action.
- 16.12 Councillor Moonan asked if there was a comparator with any other local authority with regard to evictions. This was something that could go into future reports to give a benchmark. The Head of Temporary Accommodation and Allocations replied that the local authority did not have these figures. Brighton & Hove were very different in the way it provided temporary accommodation. This was not a matter in which local authorities reported on a regular basis and it was unlikely these figures would be available.
- 16.13 The Committee voted on the original recommendation which was agreed unanimously. The Committee then voted on the amendment as set out in paragraph 16.6 above. This was agreed unanimously.
- 16.14 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the findings of the report are noted.
 - (2) That officers continue to monitor and update the eviction figures, with a follow up report to be produced in a year's time including an analysis of any trends in data.
 - (3) That the Temporary Accommodation Action Group is asked to consider concerns from tenants that their involvement with the media has been a contributing factor in eviction, with any findings reported back to Housing and New Homes Committee.

17 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR 2016/17

- 17.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which covered Quarter 4 of the financial year 2016/17, alongside year end results. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement, accompanied by the Business & Performance Manager.
- 17.2 Councillor Barnett asked for an explanation of the role of a field officer. The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing explained that the proposal to have field officers was part of the neighbourhoods programme. The latest report on this matter would be submitted to the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities and Equalities Committee on 3rd July. Field officers would be geographically based officers who undertook low level enforcement. The Director could arrange for the Head of

Libraries and Information Services to give a briefing or Councillor Barnett could be sent the papers. There was nothing that was agreed that would have any implication for any service at the moment, but potentially there would be implications for City Clean, Housing Services, Planning, Regulatory Services and Community Safety. Councillor Barnett stated that she would like the papers to be sent to her.

- 17.3 Councillor Bell commented on page 234, paragraph 4.3 – Average time to complete routine repairs (calendar days). This showed 21 days in Q4 and 20 at year end. Councillor Bell asked for an update and was sorry to see there was no Mears Ltd representative at the meeting. The Business & Performance Manager explained that this information related up to the end of March 2017. The figures for April and May had much improved. The April figure was 17 days and the May figure was 15 days. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement commented that when officers looked at the benchmarking data it was noted that the end of year performance was two days slower than the average performance for other organisations that the council benchmarked against. It was three days slower than the top quartile.
- 17.4 Councillor Gibson thanked officers for the report and noted that it included many good results. He referred to paragraph 7.2 on the Tenancy Sustainment work which he thought was excellent and vitally important. Councillor Gibson commented that much of the value in performance monitoring was the benchmarking and comparing the city to similar councils. His concern remained that the city was not quite doing that. He would be seeking reassurance about that. There was a group of 10 other councils with a stock size of 10,000 dwellings or more. His concern was that the city was only just over that 10,000 and he was interested to know the average stock size of all the benchmarking groups. He noted that the benchmarking group included four London boroughs. He knew costs in London councils were higher and the issues were different. Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 2.2 – Customer satisfaction figures which were reasonably below target. He asked for an update. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that she could provide the information regarding the average stock size of the benchmarking group. Meanwhile, she stressed that there were many ways of benchmarking and the figures were to give an indication. It had been mentioned that costs were higher in London, but she stressed that wages were not necessarily higher. If the council was looking at employment or contract matters then there were similarities. For as many differences you might see in any benchmarking group there would be some similarities. In terms of Customer Service, there was not a current figure available as the survey was carried out every six months. The next survey would be carried out in September and officers could come back with that information.
- 17.5 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the report which was circulated to Area Panel members on 25 May 2017 be noted along with the comments of the committee.

18 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

- 18.1 No items were referred for information to Full Council.

The meeting concluded at 8.37pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of