

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 23 JUNE 2021**

**HOVE TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBER**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Gibson (Joint Chair), Williams (Opposition Spokesperson) and Meadows

**Other Members present:** Councillors

**PART ONE**

**1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

- (a) Declaration of Substitutes:** Councillor Meadows attended as substitute for Councillor Mears.
- (b) Declarations of Interest:** Councillor Williams declared she was a member of ACORN.
- (c) Exclusion of Press and Public:** To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

The Press and public were not excluded from the meeting.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 2.1 The minutes of the Housing Committee held on 17 March 2021 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**3 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS**

- 3.1 The Chair stated the following: I welcome everyone to the housing committee meeting taking place in a reduced attendance face to at Hove Town hall and via electronic link. This is the first time Housing committee has met like this and is intended to be a one off. It is limited by safety considerations and this means group leaders have agreed that for all committees before September debate will sadly be confined to 3 people, one from each group and will also be restricted to items for decision only. Items to note have been published in full for the public and members not able to attend in person to scrutinise and ask questions. It is pleasing to see that from the public engagement items later in this meeting -questions and deputations - residents have taken this opportunity to raise some important points and ask challenging questions. Nevertheless, we are keeping

everything crossed that the next meeting in September will have full involvement of councillors and officers. Today's agenda reflects our desire to progress the goals of the joint housing and homelessness programme as quickly as recovery from the pandemic allows. There are 4 decision items. Two reports, investment in the development of the Old Steine and Palace Place and the Windlesham House site, seek to progress towards our goal of 800 additional council homes to help address the desperate housing need in the city. The homes will be refurbished and built to ever higher sustainability standards in line with the carbon neutral 2030 goal. It should be noted that after 18 months of pandemic our challenging goal of 800 additional homes has been blown off course, but we are urgently exploring ways to get back on track.

In housing we are pleased to welcome our new colleagues who have joined the service from the former Mears Home Improvement Agency which we have now insourced following the Housing Committee decision in November 2020. These services are a lifeline for some of the most vulnerable households in the City. They enable older and disabled people to make choices that reflect lifestyle and circumstances and to remain living safely at home for as long as possible. Over 260 households were assisted with grant funding in 2019/2020. The range of services provided helping to prevent higher needs arising, promote health and wellbeing and independent living and are closely aligned to both Housing and Better Care Plan strategies and priorities.

We also welcome the fact that this summer should see the council's independently procured IT system 'go live' enable direct procurement of housing subcontractors to proceed, meaning that we will no longer be relying on the Mears Waiver in order to enter into contracts for additional services required by the Repairs and Maintenance team (which came in-house in April last year). The Contractors Framework Report asks members to agree to eight lots per work-type with, in all but a couple of cases, multiple contractors for each. We anticipate that this will encourage interest from local SMEs, in line with our commitment to community wealth-building.

Also, of interest in relation to the Repairs and Maintenance team is the Fleet Procurement report. As members will be aware, when the team came in-house, the council retained the use of vehicles from the Mears fleet via a waiver. However, to continue to use these vehicles would not be consistent with this council's commitment to reducing its carbon emissions. We also wish to move away from reliance on this waiver. We are therefore proposing to move to an interim position under which we hire a fleet of the cleanest conventional vehicles available while at the same time testing a range of e-vehicles (six leased and one purchased). This means we can monitor their performance across all trades and better understand the associated charging infrastructure requirements – meaning officers will be better informed ahead of the purchase of a new fleet of electric vehicles.

Not for discussion today but of interest to leaseholders is the report on leaseholder payment options. We are aware that capital works often leave leaseholders facing large bills, so the report sets out a potential suite of payment options the council could make available to certain leaseholders who might otherwise struggle to pay. Our intention is to use the intervening months to discuss the proposals with the Leaseholder Action Group and other residents - indeed, we are grateful to those leaseholders who have already submitted comments since the committee papers were published. We intend to bring an updated report back to September Committee for decision.

Also, not for discussion is the Private Sector Housing update which attempts to set out progress. We are aware of and share the frustration of groups like ACORN and the Living Rent Campaign on progress with selective licensing but remain committed to achieving the pledges in our joint Labour-Green programme on housing and homelessness on

introducing selective licensing, a council run ethical lettings agency and providing greater resources for enforcement.

We agree with ACORNs view that urgent improvements are needed to some private sector rented accommodation in the city. We also agree that several landlords need to do more to address this issue. This is why we have implemented additional landlord licensing resulting in over 4,000 houses in multiple occupation licensed or awaiting a licence. These HMO licenses have enabled successes in driving up fire safety, thermal comfort and housing conditions over the last few years. We have also invested in providing extra staffing resources to enhance our Private Sector Housing team's enforcement capacity, including funding to enable enforcement of energy performance standards. This should, in time, mean reduced heating bills for renters as the homes they live in become more energy-efficient.

We are developing a not-for-profit ethical lettings agency and looking to expand and promote a good landlord scheme. As part of this, we are open to working with ACORN and landlords' representatives to adopt an ethical landlord charter.

With regards to selective licensing, the big problem is not any lack of desire on our part to improve things or a lack of belief that licensing can contribute to our actions improving private rented housing. The problem is that the thresholds the government has set for allowing such schemes are very high. The government withdrew approval for our previously proposed selective licensing scheme, citing a lack of specific evidence showing these thresholds have been met. We do not yet have the evidence we need, but we are continuing to collect evidence and work towards being able to apply for such a scheme. We are committed to working with groups in the city, such as ACORN, who may have additional evidence that could support a selective licensing scheme and would like to invite representatives of such groups to meet us at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the evidence we need in order to progress licensing. We hope to bring a further report to September's Housing committee for decision on at least some of the pledges in the joint programme on an Ethical lettings scheme, enforcement and licensing.

Another report for noting reports on the progress achieving move on for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping housed in the pandemic. The report makes clear that in line with the aspirations in the recently adopted Homeless Bill of Rights that wherever we have the power we are seeking to sustain our "Everyone In " approach for all verified rough sleepers in order to consolidate the reductions in rough sleeper numbers, which so far have been greater than most other councils across the country.

We have funding until October to achieve longer-term move-on accommodation for those people we have accommodated under "Everyone In". It is pleasing that our work continues to be recognised with increased funding allocations and we have now acquired the 30 additional properties and let 12 of them for Housing First for complex

needs rough sleepers and are going beyond our work programme target of trebling Housing First provision.

Finally, there is a performance update which covers progress against the work programme and housing management performance report showing the figures for the whole of the last year. As mentioned earlier whilst the pandemic has set back many of our targets there are some pleasing achievements, for example in 202/21 we achieved the largest number of additional council homes (144) for decades and the rough sleeper count/estimate was the lowest it has been for around 10 years.

The challenge now is to sustain progress in these areas and recover as fast as possible from the areas that suffered a setback during lockdowns. To that end, we are prioritising repairs to reduce the number of empty council properties (voids), aiming to return to pre-pandemic void levels. We are looking to bolster the repairs team by recruiting more people in part to assist with this. Home move is another area where a combination of IT and the pandemic have left a backlog and our service is not back up to what we would expect. We have taken on more staff to overcome the backlog as quickly as possible. We all hope that by the next housing committee in September we will no longer be operating under restrictions. We have a massive backlog of delayed reports from our original joint programme timetable. While we hope to catch up on some of these reports whilst still dealing with regular items, we need to take stock and review the joint work programme 2 years on and in the light of the delays caused by the pandemic. This will be a step towards agreeing a revised work programme for 2022 and beyond at a future housing committee.

So, we welcome people's thoughts and feedback about our priorities for the future.

#### **4 CALL OVER**

- 4.1 All agenda items (items 7, 8, 9, and 10) requiring decisions were called for discussion by the committee.

#### **5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

**(a) Petitions:** None

**(b) Written Questions:** 6 public questions were submitted.

##### **5.1 Jim Deans:**

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2020/somewhere-safe-stay-rough-sleepers>

Press release stated on 6th April 2020... 200 meals a day were distributed by a group coordinated by BHCC to the street, this was completely untrue, a mere read at the press release shows it to be silly at best, 200 meals on the street to 50 rough sleepers? I would ask Cllr Williams who signed this off to have it retracted. These meals were "distributed to accommodation". As a voluntary group Sussex Homeless Support worked tirelessly through the last 18 months unfunded by BHCC but FAKE credit to others is not what the volunteers wish to read.

Jim Deans (Founder) Sussex Homeless Support

Response:

Thank you for your question. The article you refer to relates to April 2020 when we are still at the early stages of the pandemic and arranging food to both people we had been able to bring into accommodation from the street; those from congregate accommodation and also provide food to those still on the street, in addition to others in emergency accommodation who did not have access to cooking facilities.

In that first lockdown people had to stay at home as much as possible and we facilitated this as quickly as possible working with partners and others in the city in a combined effort. This was a colossal mobilisation to arrange both accommodation and food for a substantial amount of people under challenging conditions and was significant achievement.

## 5.2 Beki Turner

Are there any plans for BHCC to reinstate the sanctuary scheme in the near future?

Designed to prevent some survivors of domestic abuse from becoming homeless through the provision of security works, local authorities nationally are currently able to increase security in homes through a range of measures. This includes lock changes, fire safety measures and security maintenance.

I am aware that BHCC's sanctuary scheme has not been running for over two years now, meaning that for those who wish to stay in their home, there is often no option but to flee.

This can sometimes be extremely detrimental in terms of leaving behind informal/formal support networks, for example.

Additionally, the cost of emergency accommodation or alternative accommodation can be potentially very costly for BHCC in comparison to funding these safety measures.

Response:

Thank you for your question. Brighton & Hove City Council did operate a sanctuary scheme designed to install or enhance security measures in order to keep someone safe in their home.

The council are currently undertaking a needs assessment to identify gaps in service provision in relation to safe accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

Thank you for highlighting the sanctuary approach and we will certainly consider the benefits of a sanctuary scheme as part of that piece of work.

Supplementary question: With regard to the domestic abuse bill what plans the council have to support survivors in their own home.

Response: The Executive Director – Housing Neighbourhoods & Communities commented that the subject of the domestic abuse bill needs to be assessed and the council will be looking at all aspects of the issue.

### 5.3 Lara Hockman:

I understand that since October 2020 four individuals, who have been moved by BHCC Housing to accommodation in Eastbourne, have died.

Can the council confirm that a mortality review of these deaths has, or will, take place in line with Point 13 of the Homeless Bill of Rights (recently adopted within the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25), quoted as: *"The right to life requires public authorities to take measures to preserve life. When people who are homeless (including people in emergency accommodation) die, the Council is committed to ensuring that their deaths are recorded as such, and that in each case there is a reasonably public investigation in order to understand the causes of death and what might have prevented it"*, and in line with the council's previous commitments to mortality reviews of homeless deaths as outlined by Cllr Brennan in 2019 *"We [BHCC] are one of the first local authorities to set up a mortality review process which began in April this year. An investigation is now carried out following the death of anyone who rough sleeping, accommodated in emergency or temporary accommodation or living in supported housing designed to meet the needs of single homeless and previously rough sleeping people. We will make sure the findings are used to develop help for those in need."*

If reviews have not taken place or not intended to take place can you explain why?

Response:

Thank you for your question.

Brighton and Hove has one of the highest levels of homelessness and rough sleeping in the country. The shortfall in available suitable accommodation means that the council must look outside of the city for additional emergency accommodation. These factors have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The response to 'Everyone In' resulted in the city taking responsibility for around an extra 400 single people in emergency accommodation, above our normal numbers. We currently have over 800 households in emergency accommodation in total. In our drive to improve conditions we are providing more and more emergency homeless accommodation ourselves and enhancing the contractual requirements for other providers in the next contract

As of 18 June, we have 119 clients in emergency accommodation in Eastbourne, a figure we are committed to reduce. This has fallen from a figure of over 200 in February 2021.

Sadly, owing to the number of clients accommodated, some of whom have multiple and complex needs, and despite support available from our Welfare Officers and other agencies, there have been some deaths in this emergency accommodation.

Deaths of clients placed in emergency accommodation through the 'Everyone In' policy are referred via the Homeless Adult Mortality Review procedure so that we can understand the circumstances and any lessons to be learned.

The reviews themselves are also reported to the Safeguarding Adult Board. Unfortunately, during the Covid-19 pandemic there have been delays in reviewing cases. As we move into the post-Covid recovery phase, these case reviews will be revisited, including the individuals you note above. There will be a report reviewing evictions from emergency homeless accommodation at September's housing committee and this will provide an opportunity to update on case review progress then.

#### 5.4 Sally Duffy

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a duty on the council to develop and agree with all persons which are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, a personalised plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness. It is our understanding there are individuals housed in temporary or emergency accommodation since March 2020 who still have not received a personalised plan.

Can the council tell us how many people are currently regarded homeless or at risk of homelessness in Brighton & Hove, and of those people how many have been provided and supported with a personalised support plan. Could the council outline the current process of putting these plans together (e.g. what contact is there between 'client' and local authority, particularly in cases of vulnerable people with multiple and complex needs) and what the turnaround time for implementing these personalised plans is?

Does the council feel that the current process and turnaround time is appropriate to fulfil their statutory duty, if not, what is being done to address this?

Response:

Thank you for your question. We currently have over 2,000 households in placed temporary and emergency accommodation. These households will be at various stages of the council assessment process, up to and including acceptance of a duty to accommodate. In accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requirements, a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) is developed between the client presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness and the council; effectively a road map to stop the client becoming homeless or find housing if they've already lost their home. The PHP is a collaborative process and is dependent on the client agreeing and signing up to their individual pathway.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the majority of PHPs were conducted by phone or email, and for those clients accommodated as part of 'Everyone In' conducted face-to-face in a Covid secure environment in the hotels. As the lockdowns have eased, we have returned to limited appointment only face-to-face casework in the customer service centre at Bartholomew House, again in a Covid safe environment.

The PHP is the foundation of early homelessness prevention and is key to successful intervention & tenancy sustainment. The turnaround time for completion of PHPs varies, as it relies upon positive and timely engagement by the client, and the council is

committed to supporting clients with multiple and complex needs throughout this process.

We are currently reviewing our systems and recording of Personal Housing Plans, including as a percentage of people housed, to enable us to report on this in future.

We have responded to the unprecedented housing demand caused during the Everyone In period and are currently reviewing all clients to ensure their casework is complete and they have a positive move-on pathway. Resources are being made available to undertake this review and complete this task.

If you are aware of clients who you believe are eligible but have either not completed their PHPs or not signed them, I would be grateful if the details of these clients are passed to the council in order for these cases to be reviewed.

## 5.5 David Thomas

At a national level, the number of people found by local authorities to be homeless **increased** slightly in April 2020-March 2021 compared to the same period before the pandemic<sup>1</sup>, despite the eviction ban and other pandemic protections for renters. It is disappointing therefore to note that homelessness preventions in Brighton & Hove decreased over the same period from 791 in the previous year to 598 (item 57 3.8).

With the end of these protections and of furlough predicted to produce a massive increase in numbers becoming homeless, can you assure us that prevention is now the priority?

<sup>1</sup> Observer 13 June

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/13/at-least-130000-households-in-england-madehomeless-in-pandemic>

Response:

Thank you for your question.

Homelessness prevention is a key workstream within the Homelessness Reduction Act and is a priority within the Housing Service. Given the challenges presented during the Covid lockdowns the prevention numbers in 20/21 are a remarkable achievement. The Housing Service is now gearing up to deal with the challenges of the post pandemic housing market. This includes collaborative working with the Department of Work & Pensions and partner agencies within the city to ensure every opportunity is taken to sustain households in their current accommodation and prevent homelessness.

In discussion with landlords and agents throughout the city, we are working to ensure there is no significant increase in evictions with the ending of the moratorium on private rented sector eviction proceedings. The Housing Service work with both landlords, tenants and other agencies to sustain tenancies, and have plans in place specific to the issue of arrears built up during the Covid-19 lockdown period. These plans include looking at options for developing a scheme that may underwrite help with arrears in return for a commitment from the landlord not to evict



Supplementary question: When will bulletins be reinstated by the council.

Response: The Assistant Director of Housing commented that it is proposed that bulletins will be reinstated as soon as possible.

## 5.6 Daniel Harris

In agenda item 13 the council quote Covid 1 and Covid 2 verified rough sleepers assisted, from the everyone in and the extension of this provision.

Could the council please provide full details of all grants the council has received?

\*please note: These should include the name of the fund how much was provided and from where and a brief summary of what the money is provided for, please can you be clear and break the figures down into the two categories mentioned above.

Response:

Thank you for your question.

There is no grant for those people termed as Covid 2. We named them Covid 1 and 2 to differentiate those which we received grant funding for and those which we didn't. Covid 1 are defined under the grant awarded by MHCLG which was ringfenced for those people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness up until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and those subsequently verified as rough sleepers. Covid 2 are those who were assessed as at risk of rough sleeping after 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and hence are not covered by the grant. This grant information has been comprehensively detailed in our regular reports to Housing Committee with an update provided in the Next steps - Rough Sleeping and Accommodation during Covid 19 Pandemic and Recovery report which has been circulated to note ahead of this Housing Committee.

The Covid related grants are:

- Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) 2020/21: £3,426,766 revenue funding. The council were also awarded a grant of £500,000 to contribute towards the on-going costs of emergency short term accommodation at the start of 2021/22.
- The council agreed at P&R on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to use £2.043m of Containment Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant to go towards the ongoing costs of housing those bought in under the 'Everyone In' initiative in hotels.
- The council has also applied for the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (round 1) funds and expects confirmation of a grant over the next few weeks

The council have received no other grants to date specifically directed for people accommodated due to Covid-19.

Supplementary question: Can the council confirm that everyone in the Everyone In programme was spoken to and surveyed for needs and support.

Response: Councillor Gibson considered that each individual's journey was important, and the Homeless Reduction Board will consider this matter. The council are over stretched; however, the council are committed to support all.

The Assistant Director of Housing commented that the council were looking at all resources and taking a Covid safe approach.

**(c) Deputations** – Three deputations have been received.

**1. Deputation concerning Student Rent Strikes and Student Accommodation**

Spokesperson Billie Krish withdrew the deputation before the meeting after the agenda had been published.

**2. Deputation concerning the Homeless Bill of Rights for Brighton & Hove**

Spokesperson David Thomas

The Homeless Bill of Rights movement started in the USA ten years or more ago. In Europe, FEANTSA, the umbrella organisation for homelessness organisations, became increasingly concerned by trends towards criminalising and excluding homeless people, and they launched their own version in 2017.

We, Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition, very much liked the European Homeless Bill of Rights, which was drawn up in consultation with organisations of homeless people. It is a compilation of basic rights from European and international human rights law made highly specific to the situation of homeless people. It starts with Article 1, which is a restatement of the right to a home. It does not seek to accept or institutionalise homelessness; that there is homelessness is already a breach of this fundamental right.

It also contains some highly specific rights. No-one should ever be forced to sleep rough. Everyone should have access to sanitary facilities and fresh water. Homeless people should have the same right of access to public spaces as everyone else. There should be respect for their privacy and data, and they should not be discriminated against.

After consultation with our local rough sleepers, with FEANTSA's agreement, we amended the European document a little to make the English more colloquial without changing the meaning, and we added two extra Articles; the right to respect for belongings and the right to have the deaths of homeless people recorded and investigated.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2018 the Brighton & Hove Homeless Bill of Rights was launched, at the Sunday Street Kitchen and at Brighthelm Centre. All three local MPs and Arch Healthcare sent supportive messages and Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP joined us at the

Street Kitchen. Our much missed chair, Steve Parry, chaired the launch, and Maria Jose Aldanas of FEANTSA and Jamie Burton of Just Fair came and spoke in support. Many of the councillors presently serving the city were present, from Labour, Green and Conservative parties. Both the Green and Labour Parties pledged to adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights in their manifestos. Following the election, we presented a petition with more than 2,500 signatures to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019, which was welcomed by speeches from all three parties. Accordingly, the Council Plan 2019-23 states that “We will ... adopt a Bill of Rights for homeless people”. The Homeless Bill of Rights was incorporated into the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 as an aspiration and a standard against which the Council and its partners will judge its policies and practices.

The Homeless Bill of Rights comes before Full Council now for adoption. It has been accepted by officers, the legal department, and the Housing Committee. Last autumn, it had been adopted by nine European cities, including Barcelona and Santiago de Compostela in Spain and Gdansk in Poland. Since then, it has been sweeping through Greece, where 35 cities (including Thessaloniki and Korinthos) have so far adopted it; as they say, “for these municipalities, endorsing the bill is only a starting point for continuous commitment, improvement, and engagement to defend rights of homeless people”.

Councillors, it is time for the City of Brighton & Hove to become the first UK city to adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights!

Response:

The Chair thanked the spokesperson and invited David Thomas to address the committee.

David Thomas noted the deputation was not heard at the last full council, although the bill was adopted on 25 March 2021. It was considered that the bill needs to be used as a standard and noted that the bill was not referred to in the Next Steps report on the agenda for noting. The Homeless Reduction Board need also to use the bill. It was also stated that the bill handbook should be used to assist the council.

The Chair confirmed to Councillor Meadows that the council has adopted the bill and noted that tents occupied by the homeless were an issue and agreed that personal belongings should be respected. Tents would be stored safely is a person was removed for any reason.

### **3. Deputation ‘I need my own front door’.**

Spokespersons: Rebecca Rieley, Gemma Harfleet

*Lived Experience from female living in supported accommodation, her voice shared.*

I was placed in a large mixed hostel in Brighton after leaving rehab, at the time I was grateful to not be rough sleeping but after 3 years hostel living ruined my life. I am writing this from prison after feeling the only way out was to commit crime. I had been on

a waiting list for lower support housing for over a year but had had enough and no longer felt able to cope living in a hostel.

As a female I was often surrounded by men that scared me and had to share living space, bathrooms and dining rooms with. I was scared to show feminine side of myself as this would have drawn more attention to me and felt unsafe. I constantly felt on edge and this is exhausting, the only way I knew to survive was to use drugs to block this out, but this would lead to more danger. I felt conditioned, it took my identity and privacy. I lost my living skills as I didn't need to cook and had little responsibility so felt all I had was drugs and it is detrimental to people. I was a young carer for my mum and brother as a child and had my own accommodation after, so I have always had responsibility until placed in hostel. Living in a hostel took away my belief that I could be independent again and institutionalized me.

My drug use really increased in hostel and this become barrier to moving on but the only way to survive hostel living is to block it out. I witnessed regular fights and violence, self-harm, deaths, overdoses and severe mental health which was a trigger for me. There is so much sadness, grief and trauma felt by everyone and we are all pit together and its chaos. I am very triggered by anger and violence so at times would hide in my room for days as it felt so unsafe to go out. I felt like I lost my voice as no one was listening to my struggles or had quick solution to situation as there are few options.

Housing ask people to be stable and reduce/stop drug use before they can move on, but have you ever tried to live in this nightmare. At night you can hear shouting, crying and people in distress just like in the day and you feel vulnerable all the time and can't sleep or relax so you take something to help you sleep. I hate confrontation but was surrounded by it all the time and people changing in and out of hostel with their own struggles and agendas.

I did things I never thought I would in order to stay safe and survive hostel, since being in prison I have had time to reflect and think about what I want. I have been able to re-connect with family with support and am re-locating out of Brighton for my recovery. I never want to go back to hostel living, I have got my life back on track. I am now re-gaining my identity and able to be feminine again as I am not around lots of males. I am not using drugs and starting to think about future volunteering and supporting other women with similar experience.

What I feel would have worked better is housing first model, where I would have had a home and own front door. This would have given me privacy and ability to say who comes in, I would have kept my living skills and receive support. It's so sad that I felt my only way out was prison, but it has worked for me but have added to criminal record. If I had my own place sooner, I could have got my recovery so much sooner and reconnected with family, who have also witnessed my addiction and struggles.

Please consider this experience, which I know is shared by most women living in hostels when housing women and their safety. I would love to see the end of large hostels as they ruin lives not support them as people end up stuck for years giving up hope of a better life.

Thank you for giving me a voice.

Response:

Thank you for bringing this deputation. It raises some really important points about the kind of accommodation that is used by the council and how suitable it is, particularly for women in mixed hostels. It is concerning to hear a woman's perspective of the experience of living in such supported accommodation in the city. Thank you for sharing this with Committee today. It is difficult to comment in detail without knowing specific details of the accommodation in question and the needs of the individual.

We would be happy to follow this up with the client direct to understand more about her experience and lessons we can learn from this.

We do commission 19 units specifically for women, these came online in 2017 specifically to address the needs of women being supported in a single-sex environment.

With regard to Housing First. Our Housing Committee Work Plan recognises the value of having your own private space and commits the council to treble Housing First provision.

We are making good progress with this. We have and are commissioning more Housing First and Housing led supported accommodation. Last year we purchased 30 flats under the Home Purchase Scheme using grant from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme for use as Housing First. The first 12 of these have been let and the remaining 18 are just having refurbishment completed and will be ready for letting at the end of June/early July. We are also looking to purchase a further 18 properties over the next 12 months funded through the Housing Revenue Account and are hoping for an additional 12 if successful for additional capital grant from government under the Rough Sleepers Accommodation programme – with revenue funding for support for all 30 properties as Housing led support until 2023/24.

This will provide a total of 60 units in addition to those that are provided through our existing social housing. Whilst Housing First and Housing led support models we are committed to; they are not suitable for meeting the needs of all our clients and so we will still need supported accommodation with on-site support staff so that we can provide for the range of needs of single people that become homeless.

We will be shortly starting to consider the commissioning plan for future years and identifying what we need to provide differently to reflect the changing landscape of need, particularly post pandemic. The experiences expressed in the deputation will help us in the process, thank you.

## **6 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS**

- a) Petitions – None
- b) Written Questions – None.

- c) Letters – None.
- d) Notices of Motion – Two motions were submitted.

#### 6.1 Covid Related Rent Debt

There is mounting evidence that as direct consequence of Covid, a significant number of Brighton and Hove residents are in rent arrears. This is resulting in poverty, insecurity and inevitably for many, homelessness. It is critical that this is addressed urgently.

Housing Committee instructs the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities to

1 - prioritise the current investigation into the use of additional approaches to alleviating rent debt, such as extending housing discretionary payments and/or providing no interest loans, and report back to members of the Housing Committee as a matter of urgency

2 - write to Robert Jenrick MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to request Government funding and support to fund the alleviation of Covid-related rent debt.

Proposer - Councillor David Gibson  
Seconder - Councillor Gill Williams

6.2 Councillor Williams introduced the Notice of Motion.

6.3 Councillor Meadows noted that £50m has been paid to the council during the pandemic and that some people had been furloughed and some had lost their jobs and the benefits recovery was ongoing. The councillor asked that those who lost their jobs be considered first.

Vote

6.4 The Notice of Motion was agreed unanimously.

#### 6.5 Private Rental Sector Improving Conditions and Standards

The private rented sector is a disproportionately large sector and is an important source of accommodation for a large number of households covering many different income scales, from basic accommodation through to luxury end. There is a major concern that some of the accommodation, particularly at the lower end of the market where vulnerable households may reside, is not safe and not well managed. Therefore, it is imperative that we take steps to address this.

This motion moves that:

1 - the Committee restates its commitment in the joint housing and homelessness programme to work towards introducing selective landlord licencing in the City of

Brighton and Hove as soon as is possible. We note that a previous licensing scheme was blocked by the secretary of state, but we believe the need for a scheme remains.

We will therefore ask officers to seek evidence and learn from other local authorities where selective licencing schemes have been introduced and will invite tenants'

6.6 Councillor Williams introduced the Notice of Motion.

6.7 Councillor Meadows noted that ACORN was not part of the council and was informed that the motion was to let people see that the council are working on the issue. Landlords across the city who have not been achieving will be encouraged. It was noted that ACORN are not developing the council's policies. The council are supported by other organisations.

Vote

6.8 The Notice of Motion was agreed by a vote of 2 with 1 abstention.

## **7 HOUSING REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS**

7.1 The Head of Repairs & Maintenance introduced the report to the committee.

Questions

7.2 Councillor Meadows was informed that the Northgate Housing contract will be going live on 19 July 2021. It was noted that access to empty properties has not been possible during lockdown, lack of supplies and social distancing guidelines have also had an impact. Only urgent items have been attended to which has created a backlog which is being managed. Performance of contractors is monitored by the council Maintenance & Repair service. Contractors need to be in place to start void works. The Procurement Advisory Board (PAB) have considered the item and the committee are the decision makers. The councillor was also informed that the limit of spending was not set by PAB and that emergency sub committees can be called to investigate overspends.

7.3 Councillor Williams was informed that works carried out on properties were overseen by the council and a review is to commence soon so quality can be looked at and standards raised.

Vote

7.4 A vote was taken, and by 2 to 1 the committee agreed the recommendations.

### **RESOLVED:**

2.1 That Committee approves the procurement and award of a four-year multi contractor framework agreement for the specialist works as described in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 below.

- 2.2 That Committee grants delegated authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities to take all necessary steps to implement recommendation 2.1 and to award call-off contracts using the framework.
- 2.3 That Committee approves the tendering of Asbestos Surveys via the Council's Construction Related Consultancy Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).
- 2.4 That Committee approves the use of the Council Highways Works Framework for road surfacing works required in Council managed Housing car parks and garages.

## **8 HOUSING REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE FLEET PROCUREMENT**

- 8.1 The Head of Repairs & Maintenance introduced the report to the committee.

### Questions

- 8.2 Councillor Meadows was informed that the 122 vehicles to be leased included 6 'E' vehicles. It was noted that total costs come in at less than Mears and the annual costs were shown in the report added together.

### Vote

- 8.3 A vote was taken, and by 2 to 1 the recommendations were agreed.

## **RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee approve the proposal to lease an interim fleet of up to 119 vehicles for a period of a minimum of 1 year.
- 2.2 That Housing Committee agrees to purchase three specialist drainage vehicles, including associated fittings and equipment.

## **9 OLD STEINE AND PALACE PLACE APPROPRIATION FROM GENERAL FUND TO HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

- 9.1 The Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement introduced the report to the committee.

### Questions

- 9.2 Councillor Williams was informed that the engagement process in July would include vulnerable people and the engagement process would be on going through out the development of the site. Lettings will be carried out carefully through the management plan and security will be installed via CCTV.
- 9.3 Councillor Meadows was informed that the building was considered to be dilapidated at the moment. The building has been within the council ownership for some time and the condition will be looked at via a full structural survey. The structural survey report, confirming the building to be acceptable, will be shared with the committee. The alleyway to the rear of the building will be looked at in the near future and will be covered by the local letting plan. CCTV will be around the whole building. It was noted



that the General Fund will receive money back from the project. The build costs and price of the property are included in the £2.660m stated in the recommendations. The high costs will be reflected in the high quality of the units in development.

#### Debate

- 9.4 Councillor Williams stated they supported the recommendations.
- 9.5 Councillor Meadows noted there was a shortage of materials due to the pandemic and the costs were going up. The councillor requested that the build is looked at carefully with regard to costs.
- 9.6 Councillor Gibson stated that each unit in the development would cost approximately £240,000 and they would be constructed to a high standard. The councillor hoped the units would not cost more. The councillor supported the recommendations.

#### Vote

- 9.7 A vote was taken, and by a vote of 2 to 1 the committee agreed the recommendations.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 The Housing Committee:

Recommends to Policy & Resources Committee that it agrees to proceed with Option A (the appropriation and development of a 100% affordable, 11-home housing scheme to meet demand for temporary accommodation).

Recommends to Policy & Resources Committee that it approves a budget of up to £2.660m to be included in the HRA capital programme for 2021/22 financed by HRA borrowing, right to buy Receipts, general capital receipts and HRA reserves.

Recommends to Policy & Resources Committee that it delegates authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities to appropriate 62-63 Old Steine & 3-4 Palace Place from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account and agrees that the General Fund is compensated by £0.890m.

- 2.2 The Policy & Resources Committee:

Agrees to proceed with Option A (the appropriation and development of a 100% affordable, 11-home housing scheme to meet demand for temporary accommodation).

Approves a budget of up to £2.660m to be included in the HRA capital programme for 2021/22 financed by HRA borrowing, right to buy Receipts, general capital receipts and HRA reserves.

Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities to appropriate 62-63 Old Steine & 3-4 Palace Place from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account and agrees that the General Fund is compensated by £0.890m.

**10 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - WINDLESHAM HOUSE**

10.1 The Estate Regeneration Project Manager introduced the report to the committee.

## Questions

10.2 Councillor Williams was informed that parking and one unit would be lost to the development if a community space was included in the proposals. The viability of the project would be affected if the number of units were reduced. It was noted that there are several community spaces in the area.

10.3 Councillor Meadows was informed that the rents would not be decided at this committee meeting and the local rents were cost effective regarding the business plan model.

## Vote

10.4 A vote was taken, and unanimously the committee agreed the recommendations.

**RESOLVED:**

## Housing Committee:

- 2.1 That the proposals to demolish Windlesham House and develop 17 new council homes at Windlesham Close, Portslade, under the NHFN programme be approved; and
- 2.2 That it be agreed that the project proceeds through the City Build Partnership, the council's Strategic Construction Partnership with Morgan Sindall.
- 2.3 That Policy & Resources Committee be recommended to approve a capital budget of up to £5.300m to be included in the 2021/22 HRA Capital Programme and financed by HRA Borrowing, Land Release Grant funding and HRA capital receipts.

## Policy &amp; Resources Committee:

- 2.4 That a HRA Capital budget of up to £5.300m financed by HRA Borrowing, Land Release Grant funding and HRA capital receipts be approved, to be included in the 2021/22 HRA Capital Programme.

**11 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE**

(All items for noting were not called for discussion. This item was not called for discussion)

11.1 Councillor Meadows asked with regard to Community engagement – landlords and ACORN. Is the implementation by ACORN?

Once the response has been collated it will be sent to Councillor Meadows.

**RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 Housing Committee note the update on progress against key elements of the Housing Committee Work Plan objectives to improve the quality and management of homes in the private rented sector as set out in this report and that a further report for decision on these actions (as outlined in paragraph 1.1), is scheduled for Housing Committee in September.

## **12 LEASEHOLD PAYMENT OPTIONS AND UPDATES**

(All items for noting were not called for discussion. This item was not called for discussion)

- 12.1 Councillor Meadows asked that with regard to Equity loans – what happens if the leaseholder doesn't live in the property and dies and leaves to a relative? Is this a loss to HRA? Is there a time limit on equity loans? 64 new rough sleepers – are these listed under COVID 1 or COVID 2? Why are there so many? Are the council robust enough in re-connecting?

Once the response has been collated it will be sent to Councillor Meadows.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That committee notes the proposal to develop and consult with residents on any changes to the leaseholder payment options.
- 2.2 That committee notes the progress in other areas of leasehold management as detailed in section 5 of this report.

## **13 NEXT STEPS - ROUGH SLEEPING AND ACCOMMODATION DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND RECOVERY**

(All items for noting were not called for discussion. This item was not called for discussion)

### **RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the progress to date.

## **14 HOUSING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN PROGRESS UPDATE AND HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR 2020/21**

(All items for noting were not called for discussion. This item was not called for discussion)

- 14.1 Councillor Meadows asked that with regard to the Performance report (p.207 of agenda) – 1.2: 92 properties from Kings House. Is this correct? (p.213 of agenda) – 4.1: £4.010m for making the city carbon neutral by 2030. Is this possible, as there seems to be a long way to go. Will the HRA pay for this? Does the council have the EPC for all properties? This would allow calculations to be corrected made and the true spending.

Once a response has been collated it will be sent to Councillor Meadows.

**RESOLVED:**

2.1 That Housing Committee notes the report.

**15 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL**

15.1 There were no items referred to full council.

**16 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS**

16.1 There were no Part Two proceedings.

The meeting concluded at 6.42pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of