

Items from the Tenant Only meeting held on 14/02/17

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**1. Resident Involvement Review**

*Discussion of the Resident Involvement Review (RIR) was postponed from the December Area Panels to the March Area Panels to allow more time for discussion. Residents involved in the Review were pleased that this was agreed but are concerned that their views are still not being taken into account, particularly over the three key issues of:*

- *Continued use of the Blue Pages*
- *Resource Centre support for Resident Only meetings*
- *Continuation of the four Area Panels*

*The meeting felt that Housing is attempting to impose a new resident involvement structure that is not supported by residents and which disregards the views of those who have participated in the review.*

*The review is still being re-drafted by the Resident Involvement Team and will not be available until the papers for the Area Panel are distributed.*

*Those present felt that this didn't give them any opportunity to discuss the RIR before the Area Panel meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March.*

*The meeting also felt that all aspects of resident involvement had been addressed in the RIR except the role and effectiveness of RIOs.*

*A motion of no confidence in the Resident Involvement Review was proposed by Bob Spacie and seconded by Terrence Hill.*

*A vote was taken which was passed unanimously.*

*Action:*

*It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel to record the vote of no confidence in the Resident Involvement Review*

*Those attending other meetings will also bring this to the attention of their local councillors.*

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No response requested

## **2. Laburnum Grove Estate Development Budget bid**

*Laburnum Grove Residents Association submitted an EDB bid for £2000 for a new sound system for their downstairs lounge. They carried out full consultation with Residents and submitted a bid that would ensure they could have good quality equipment to make sure it will be clear for residents and will last at least 5 years.*

*The bid is in line with EDB guidelines but the Resident Involvement Team has asked the Association to price up the equipment they need, which is outside of the normal EDB procedures.*

*Action:*

*It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel to ask why this bid has been queried.*

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### **Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293022**

Any EDB bids received by the council need to have met with the consultation requirements and the guidance states that it is important to involve as many tenants as possible in the EDB process. The Resident Involvement Team has written to all the residents in Laburnum Grove to explain that a note asking for any objections to be raised is not sufficient consultation. A questionnaire was included with the letter asking residents to give their feedback on both EDB bids with an option of bidding for a stereo that costs under £1,000 and space to add a suggested model. Making the best value of resources is a corporate responsibility.

May I also refer you to the North blue pages response from December 2015?

### **Response from Martin Reid, Head of Service, Tel: 01273 290507**

The EDB budget has always been a resident led budget where tenant representatives can bid for items or work to improve the community and estates across the city. In the majority of cases EDB bids are approved and can go ahead without any intervention. However, there are some situations where the work requested may not be feasible. They are as follows:

- If a bid changes or alters the structure of the building
- Where the bid has any health and safety implications
- Where a bid requires future ongoing maintenance or repairs for which the council will then require a budget to sustain
- Where leaseholders are required to contribute towards work but replacement is not necessary
- The work does not represent value for money

In these instances the council can and should advise that this is not the best way forward – where possible giving an alternative option in case the association may prefer to consider changing their bids.

### **3. New lettings policy**

*Under the new lettings policy applicants can only bid for one property, and if they then turn it down they go back to the bottom of the list.*

*The meeting felt that this is not being made clear to applicants and some people are losing their opportunity to be housed as a result.*

*In addition, each empty property is now being designated to one of the following categories:*

- a . Home seeker*
- b . Homeless person*
- c . Transfer*

*The meeting was concerned that this may result in fewer sheltered housing properties being available for internal transfer in contravention of the established practice of giving priority to a resident in a scheme who needs to move within that scheme.*

*Many people have moved into studio flats in Laburnum Grove on the understanding that they will be able to transfer to a 1 bedroom flat in the future.*

*Residents at Laburnum Grove have asked for clarification on this matter but have not yet received a clear response.*

*Action:*

*It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel to request clarification on whether people in sheltered housing will still be given priority for transfers within their scheme.*

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### **Response from James Crane, Service Improvement Manager, Temporary Accommodation & Allocations and Housing Needs, Tel: 01273 293316**

Following on from the discussion regarding the seniors lettings plan I have some action points that I need to share with you all. There is no reason that these cannot go to the SHAG meeting in March for comments.

1. New allocations policy in place from 8 December 2017
2. Need to reassess all sheltered applications
3. Applications will be assessed in line with the new allocations policy
4. If someone is affected ( i.e. remove Band D or removed Band C Minor medical) applicants have the right of review
5. When we have finished the reassessments we will take stock on the number now on the register and why
6. Take findings to SHAG ( would hope to be for the May Meeting)
7. Have a discussion with SHAG about options.

In developing the local lettings plan we have to have clear evidence that there is a need for a lettings plan. If we do not this is then open to legal challenge. The evidence must look at the actual impact to ensure that it complies with our overarching duty to give reasonable

preference to other groups and also that it complies with the Council's Equalities Act duties (unless we can prove that it is proportionate to do so).

This is a complex process and has to take account the number of older people that find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness who are in need of sheltered accommodation. The number of older people applying as homeless has risen and we have to give them a reasonable preference under the allocations policy and this was one of the drivers for change under the new policy.

Some other points to raise at the meeting

1. Studio flats count as having a bedroom under the policy
2. Band C Sheltered accommodation with no other housing need is only available to no sheltered cases
3. Tenants should be encouraged to apply for a mutual exchange

Please pass on my apologies that I am not able to attend this meeting in person as I will unfortunately be on leave.

**Three star items from the East Area Tenant Only meeting held on 9 February 201**

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**1. Trades buttons and resident involvement**

*Following the decision to remove trades buttons throughout the city there was concern about how resident associations will be able to access blocks to deliver flyers, put up posters, or consult with residents.*

*Action (\*\* 3 stars):*

*It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel to ask what provision will be made for resident association's access to locked blocks and whether associations will be provided with keys or fobs to facilitate their role of involving local residents.*

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**Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Housing,**

**Tel: 01273 293022**

We encourage the associations to get to know their neighbours and identify one person in each block as a block representative who can help deliver flyers or let committee members in. It is possible to issue fobs as these can be cancelled. However we have had some cases where former committee members have not returned keys. This undermines the principle of increasing the safety of the blocks that turning off the trades buttons is trying to achieve.

## 2. New Housing Management Teams

*There is some confusion about whether the new Housing Management structure has been implemented.*

### *Estate Inspections*

*Alan reported that there hasn't been an Estate Inspection in Craven Vale for some time, and it is not clear whether these will continue under the new Housing Management structure, or which officers will be responsible for carrying them out.*

*Action (\*\* 3 stars):*

*It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel to ask:*

- a. That residents associations and local residents be informed about the new Housing Teams with guidance on who to contact about different issues.*
  - b. Whether Estate Inspections will continue and who will be responsible for them?*
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### **Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293022**

a. A three star response regarding the Housing restructure from the West Blue Pages was circulated in the November / December Area Panel reports. It reproduced briefing notes regarding the restructure that were sent to Chairs and Secretaries in September and again in October and gave details of who to contact in Housing and the names of the Housing Area Team staff. The Area Panel reports are available on the council website and paper copies were distributed before the meetings.

### **Response from Housing East, Telephone 01273 293030**

b. All information on estate inspections can be found on the council website;

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/east-brighton-estate-inspections>

This information is on the inspection page.

Your Housing Officers are Alex Barton, Caz Boaks, Maggie Chamberlain, Tina Hambly, Cheryl Moss and Toya Regan. Your Housing Manager is Rachelle Metcalfe.

If you have any issues or concerns regarding your neighbourhood, please get in touch:

Housing Customer Services Team (for all general housing/tenancy related enquiries)

Telephone 01273 293030

Email [housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

To see the details of the inspections in your street, please take a look at the East Brighton Estate Inspections document 2016-2018. Estate inspections are now six monthly.

There are two inspections in Craven Vale area;

East Brighton 15 - the latest report is dated 15/02/17 and the next inspection will be on Wednesday 16 August

East Brighton 17 - the latest report is dated 09/01/17 the next inspection will be Monday 10 July

Toya Regan is currently the Housing Officer for inspections in Craven Vale. If anyone would like to attend the next inspections please let Toya know by contacting the Customer Service team to pass on the message that you are coming. The meeting points are on the website.

Each Housing Officer is responsible for the estate inspections and general tenancy check visits in their area. All other tenancy or case related ASB work is shared out across the East Brighton area Housing Officers and trainee Housing Officers ie they are not dealing with everything on their patch as the former Housing Officers did in the past. The first contact point is always the Housing Customer Services Team not the individual Housing Officer.

### 3. Estate Development Budget 2017/2018

*There has been concern that funding for EDB may be cut. Chris confirmed that the budget for the coming year will remain the same, with some reserves being used to make up a potential shortfall, but that this is not guaranteed to be the case in future years.*

*It can be difficult for Associations to know what land belongs to Housing in their area and this can often lead to proposals being rejected because they are for work on land that doesn't belong to Housing. The meeting felt it would be useful for Associations to be provided with a map of their area which clearly shows where all the Housing land is.*

*Action (\*\* 3 stars):*

*It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel to ask that Residents Associations be provided with a map of their area which clearly shows where all the Housing land is.*

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#### **Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293022**

The Estates Development Budget has been reduced and topped up with the general reserves that are projected to be £510,000 on 31 March 2017. The projected reserves for 31 March 2018 are £161,000. The Area Panel areas changed in April 2015 and I am working with the accountant to ensure that any underspend incurred since then is ring fenced to the particular Area Panel.

With 55 Residents Associations it will not be possible to produce maps and where the estate consists of houses the area of the association can include non-housing land. Generally this is the roads and pavements that make up the highway. There is a highways map on the council's website <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/highway-search-information-map> that may be of interest.

There is also the grounds maintenance map that shows the green areas of housing land that are maintained by City Parks <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/grounds-maintenance-map>. If any association is unsure about their area please do contact the Resident Involvement Team, we are happy to deal with enquiries about this on a case by case basis.



Three star items from the West Area Tenant Only meeting held on 03/02/17

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**1. Increase in fly-tipping**

*There has been an increase in the amount of fly-tipping on Council land – this is an on-going issue causing a general degradation of council estates and land. Ingram Crescent in particular noted a problem with fly-tipping on their estate. The following questions were raised:*

*-How much is the clearing of this costing Housing Services?*

*-What action is being taken to resolve the problem?*

*-Why is it so difficult to prosecute when there are clear culprits dumping rubbish on a regular basis?*

**Action:** *Ill for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

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**Response from Chloe Goymer, Estate Manager, Estate Services, Tel: 01273 291072**

In 2016 the total cost of removal of fly-tipping across the city was £76k.

The Estates Team have a furniture recycling scheme where, if residents have items of furniture that are in good condition, then the Estates Team will collect for free and place in our store ready to be donated to people that are in need. This has reduced fly-tipping in some areas of the city.

With regard to prosecution, City Clean do have an Enforcement Team who will issue fines to offenders if there is enough evidence provided by residents. Photographs, videos, vehicle registration numbers are all good evidence that can be passed on to that Team.

The article below was published in the winter edition of Homing In.

**Fly-tipping - why should it matter to you?**

It may surprise you to know that last year the council's housing team spent £55,000 clearing items that had been fly-tipped on our estates. That's money that could have been spent on improving your homes and estates. Dumped rubbish ranged from pieces of metal to double beds. Below are a few examples of some of the items removed in 2015:

- 407 mattresses
- 180 televisions
- 144 armchairs
- 137 pieces of carpet
- 89 fridges

Anyone caught dropping litter, fly-tipping or allowing their dogs to foul in public spaces can be given fixed penalty notices with on-the-spot fines between £75 and £300. The fine depends on the type of offence.

### **Recycling**

The Estates Service Team run a recycling project where furniture in good condition can be collected for free and given to people in need. Call 01273 294769. Many charities across the city welcome donations of furniture and will often collect. There are also recycling centres and recycling points across the city.

### **Waste collection**

Cityclean offer a bulk waste collection service, with discounts if you are over 60 or on certain benefits.

### **Community clean up days**

Some tenant groups have arranged community clean up days to clear fly-tipping, and planted flowers and shrubs to prevent it from happening again. If you are interested in doing this in your area, the Resident Involvement Team can help.

### **Further information**

Visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/estates-service](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/estates-service) or contact the Housing Customer Services Team by emailing [housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or calling 01273 293030.

## **2. Storage of mobility scooters**

*The council is enforcing regulations that require all corridors and public ways to be kept clear. This means that some people are being given 3 weeks' notice to get rid of their mobility scooter.*

*The following points were raised:*

*People receive PIP/high rate DLA mobility allowance for mobility scooters, and the Council is then forcing them to give up the scooters. The scooters are not a life-style choice – without them people are house-bound and unable to live independently.*

*There is no assessment of the individual needs of the person involved. People's need for and use of scooters vary, and for some people it is an absolute essential.*

*In most places, no alternative scooter storage is being offered – people are being told they have to give up their mobility, or their home.*

- Where scooter storage has been provided it is often too far away to be of any use. If someone needs a mobility scooter to get around, they are often not able to walk to a central storage facility some distance away.*
- Scooter storage (where available) has not been advertised properly, and use not encouraged by people who are able to access them.*
- Scooter storage was promised in some areas, but never built. Residents have been told there is now no money available.*
- Individuals have been treated insensitively, and by staff who have no knowledge of their particular circumstances. On one occasion a tenant was told their mobility needs were 'not that significant' even though they are receiving PIP mobility benefits. Unrealistic suggestions for alternative transport arrangements are given as a solution.*
- There was no consultation with the Tenant Disability Network about the deadline and enforcement of the regulation before it was implemented.*
- Although the issue of scooter storage has been discussed for some time, the enforcement is happening very quickly with people only being given a few weeks' notice. -As changes to mobility benefit payments can take up to two months to process, people are left for some time without any means of paying for alternative transport.*
- Cancellation of scooter contracts incurs a fine, leaving people already living on low incomes with extra costs.*

*It was agreed that the enforcement of this regulation has not been managed in a sensitive or understanding manner, causing distress and anxiety to tenants. It was agreed to ask the Council to continue to look for solutions to the problem of mobility scooter storage, so that tenants with disabilities are not forced to choose between their home and their mobility. A report was requested on this, and on what options the Council are presently looking at to resolve this problem.*

**Action:** *Ill for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel*

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## **Response from Satti Sidhu, Performance & Improvement Officer, Tel: 01273 293219**

Mobility scooters are growing in popularity with a greater number of residents choosing to increase their independence with them. For those living in blocks of flats, finding a solution to storing the scooters prior to purchase is a must, to avoid it becoming a hazard and conflicting with tenant obligations.

Although scooters are on the increase and the issue of storage becoming a topic of discussion, the clear common way policy has existed for a number of years. All shared areas in blocks are expected to be kept clear, to meet the fire regulations and this includes mobility scooters.

Due to a number of fires in blocks of flats, we continue to work closely with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, to minimise risks to residents during emergencies. As a result we have produced guidance to enable officers to work with residents to reach solutions that will mean they are storing their scooters in a safe location.

There are a number of solutions that are available for storage of mobility scooters, these include:

- Store rooms specifically built for rental at 4 sites across the city
- External bolts and chain to an appropriate location
- Resident funded external storage units
- Inside flat
- Fire assessed shared area storage
- Alternative available space (this will depend on availability each building)
- Promotion of alternatives – Shop Mobility

Those who have a medical need for mobility vehicles will receive support from the Occupational Therapy and Adaptations Teams.

The process officers will follow will usually be at least 3 attempts to engage with the resident. This will include door knocking and letters inviting contact to discuss storage options and explanation of reasons to relocate. There will be further attempts made by revisiting and warning letters with advice on what will happen should the scooter continue to cause a hazard.

Due to the nature of the situation and urgency to remove the hazard, officers will move quickly through the process to encourage relocation. Where residents continue to park inappropriately and refuse to cooperate to reach a solution, we will as a last resort, take action to remove the scooter, I am leading on this area of work and will be attending the next Tenant Disability Network meeting on 10 April 2017.

### **3. Proposed change to EDB regulations**

*New regulations mean that a Resident Association is limited to a maximum of five EDB Quick Bids a year. It was proposed that if there is money left over in the pot 3 months before the end of the financial year, then this restriction should be dropped. If some Areas want to do this and others don't, then each Area should be able to decide for itself how it wishes to allocate any remaining funds.*

*Action: III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

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#### **Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293022**

The EDB review was worked on by the EDB panel for a number of weeks, driven by the residents' desire to make the EDB fairer. Area Panels with 'quick bid' underspend will be asked to bear this in mind when they allocate the funding in April. If towards the end of the year there is underspend, the Resident Involvement Team will contact associations who have not applied to encourage them to take up the funding.

#### **4. Payback Team**

*It was requested that information on how to apply for work done by the Pay Back Team is sent to the Chair of every Resident Association.*

*Action: Resident Involvement Officers*

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**Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293022**

A letter and the application form for the community payback work will be sent to the Chair of every Residents' Association.

## 5. Estate inspections

*Two issues were raised about Estate Inspections:*

- *Follow-up after estate inspections can be really slow. For example, it took four months before any feedback was received on an Estate Inspection at Ingram Crescent held on 17th October 2016. Are there proper procedures in place for processing jobs raised during estate inspections? What are they?*
- *In many areas there have been no Estate Inspections for some time.*
- *What is the programme for Estate Inspections? What do Associations need to do to arrange one?*

*Action: Ill for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

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### **Response from Janet Dowdell, Tenancy Services Operational Manager / Rachelle Metcalfe, Housing Manager East Housing Team, Tel: 01273 293196**

During the period April – December 2016 there were 169 advertised Estate Inspections. 158 of these inspections were completed and our performance was 94%. There were approximately 2414 actions raised as a result of Estate Inspections which is an average of 15 actions per inspection.

The Ingram Crescent inspection happened within the first three weeks of our new service which was an extraordinary period with a high level of new case work. The inspection happened as planned and some priority jobs such as removing abandoned bikes causing an obstruction were dealt with at the time. Although there was a delay in the results being published and we apologise for this.

Helen Burrow, Housing Officer carried out the inspection and has recently returned to tackle items left in common ways. The results of our inspections are displayed on noticeboards where we have access to them and we can send them to tenant representatives to display themselves too. All outstanding inspection results have now been uploaded onto the website for public viewing.

Currently we carry out full Estate Inspections every 6 months. The Estate Inspection programme for the City is displayed on the Council's website <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/estate-inspections>. You can also contact the Housing Customer Service Team on 01273 293030 to request this information and register your interest in attending any future inspections on your estate.

We will be meeting with the Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Service Improvement Group within the next two months to discuss a full review of this part of our service. The group will be asked to provide feedback on the current service as well as suggestions to bring about improvements. We will come back to Area Panel later in the year with an update on our progress

## **6. Balconies at Ingram Court**

*Residents are concerned about the inadequate quality of the work on replacing balconies at Ingram Court, and also the poor management of the project. Work was done over an extended and unspecified timespan. This meant that untreated wood was left exposed to the elements for long periods of time, creating potential problems with the new balconies and undermining the quality of the work. Residents were also not given any idea of the time-scale of the project and how long disruptive work would continue for. It was agreed to ask for an investigation and report on the management and value for money provided by this contract.*

*Action: III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

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This response is not ready. West is the last Area Panel on 4 April and it will be included in their blue pages.