

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 20 SEPTEMBER 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), Barnett, Druitt, Janio, Lewry, Moonan and Yates

PART ONE

19 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

19a) Declarations of Substitutes

19.1 Councillor Yates substituted for Councillor Atkinson. Councillor Janio substituted for Councillor Bell.

19b) Declarations of Interests

19.2 There were none.

19c) Exclusion of the Press and Public

19.3 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.

19.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items contained in part two of the agenda.

20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

20.1 Councillor Mears stated that it had been previously agreed to have a yearly inspection of properties. She would like this confirmed. The Chair confirmed that there would be inspections every 12 months.

- 20.2 Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 6.4 on page 5 of the minutes of 14th June 2017. This resolved that officers prepare a report outlining how the risk of evictions caused by the housing benefit changes and benefit cap would be minimised. Councillor Gibson asked when the report would be submitted to the Committee. The Chair confirmed that the report was expected to be submitted to the November meeting.
- 20.3 Councillor Gibson referred to resolution 14.9 (3) on page 20 of the minutes of 14th June 2017. This resolved 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. He sought assurance that the report would be available by 17th January 2018 committee meeting. The Chair replied that she had been assured by officers that the report would be submitted to the January committee meeting.
- 20.4 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committees held on 14th June 2017 and 28th June 2017 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

21 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair stated the following:

- 21.1 I am very mindful still of the impact of the Grenfell Fire and the tragic loss of so many lives. I am sure that all of our thoughts are still with the victims and those who lost family members and their homes. As you will be aware the Public Inquiry has now started and this and the Criminal Investigation are being discussed in the media. We are very conscious of how this could raise concerns for our residents, particularly those living in high rise flats and we would want to reassure them that their safety is of the utmost priority to the council.
- 21.2 I am pleased to inform you that officers have been continuing their joint work with the Fire Service to provide information and advice on home safety across the City. Officers attended the Resident Involvement 'Home' group this week, which is chaired by a tenant, and is a meeting with tenant representatives across the city which seeks to co-produce council policies relating to council housing and also scrutinises our services and our performance. Officers had been asked to attend to update the group on fire safety works including sprinklers and also because they wanted to scrutinise the way in which we had communicated with residents about their safety in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire.
- 21.3 Officers asked if residents wanted to feedback in terms of anything we could have done differently or better. Without exception, residents said they thought this was done really well; they felt very reassured; they knew without us telling them that they were safe. This is because they knew before Grenfell that we take fire safety and their safety very seriously and were aware that we had been progressing fire safety measures and working practices for some years, and keeping the message alive with them. They really appreciated the speed of our response after the Grenfell Incident and the level of information provided, such as offers of meetings etc. They also particularly wanted to commend the way in which councillors had been very involved in providing reassurances and how officers and councillors had all come together with the Fire

Service to inform and support residents. It is great to get this feedback and I want to pass this on to you all.

- 21.4 We are continuing to keep fire safety under constant review. None of the council's 43 high rise blocks of flats have cladding made from the same material as used in Grenfell Tower and safety checks have been carried out on all of them, with follow up independent surveys as required. We are continuing to take additional precautionary measures where needed, such as easing and adjusting fire doors to ensure they shut firmly; filling any gaps or holes in walls which could let smoke through; and clearing items from stairwells and landings.
- 21.5 The safety of residents has always been our top priority and we will continue to work closely with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and monitor developments as the investigation into the Grenfell fire continues.
- 21.6 Fire safety information is available on our website, including frequently asked questions following the Grenfell fire www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fire-safety-in-flats or by calling Housing Customer services on 01273 293030. Residents can arrange a free home safety visit and help with smoke alarms, including special alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Contact East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service on 0800 177 7069. We would like to encourage all residents to take this up.
- 21.7 I am also pleased to update you on new social housing homes being delivered through our successful hidden homes programme. We have been consulting with tenants about the project since January 2016 and keeping them updated on progress. Work is currently underway to create two, two bedroom accessible flats through the conversion of redundant storage space at the rear of the Normanhurst. The new flats will have level access from the main entrance making homes suitable for elderly and disabled households as well as small family units. Normanhurst is centrally located, within five minute's walk of the city centre and fifteen minutes to the sea front with good access to public transport and local amenities.
- 21.8 In addition, we are proposing to convert the redundant NHS clinic in Elwyn Jones Court into two one bedroom flats for Seniors Housing residents. Draft layout design work has been completed and residents have been consulted. A planning application will be made very soon.
- 21.9 I am further pleased to advise you that there has been a successful prosecution for the council in relation to someone who repeatedly trespasses and who is a prolific flytipper in the city. Earlier this year we successfully obtained an injunction barring him from trespass in Wild Park, Home Farm Road and Stanmer Park and from flytipping. He continued to move around other locations in the area and continued to flytip regardless of the injunction. He was frequently flytipping on council housing estates. We worked closely with City Clean and our legal team and he has been convicted and issued with a 24 week prison sentence suspended for 2 years and sentenced to community service. The police are also very pleased with the outcome as they consider that it will help them manage his behaviour.

- 21.10 I would also like to update you on our continuing work to help tenants reduce their fuel bills, keep their homes warm and help the environment.
- 21.11 Work has been carried out to insulate homes, install solar panels onto roofs for new and existing homes, and upgrade lifts and lighting systems. Officers have also visited vulnerable tenants as part of the Warmth for Wellbeing programme to help them manage their heating and bills better.
- 21.12 We helped 1118 clients to stay warm in winter, reduce their fuel bills, increase their energy efficiency, reduce their debts and/or maximise their benefit entitlement. On average, each customer who was in receipt of home energy advice and measure is now better off by £154 per year. On average, each client advice casework client is now better off by **£2,531 per year**.
- 21.13 However, legal, environmental and economic changes mean we need to do more to improve fuel efficiency, prevent poverty and reduce carbon emissions. Therefore we are working on a strategy to bring together the existing work and help us plan for the improvements we need to make in the future.
- 21.14 The strategy aims to help our tenants save money; ensure our tenants are able to heat their homes in winter; reduce the impact of council housing on the environment by reducing carbon emissions and ensure we are compliant with legislation. We aim to direct resources to those most in need and oversee investment in our stock to ensure the best possible value for money.
- 21.15 The strategy will improve our housing stock to make it more energy efficient; ensuring our new builds are using the latest technology and techniques to make them efficient and cheaper for tenants and use innovative techniques like Energiesprong to improve older homes by refurbishing them quickly and at low cost.
- 21.16 And finally, may I bring to your attention that a warning has been issued by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau following reports in some parts of the country of fraudsters cold calling people posing as fire prevention or council officials.
- 21.17 If you are in any doubt about the identity of a caller, ask them to leave and contact the Housing Customer Services on the number above or the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 04 05 06.

22 CALL OVER

- 22.1 It was agreed that all items be reserved for discussion.

23 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Petitions

- 23.1 There were no petitions.

Questions

- 23.2 John Hadman asked the following question:

“The Council promised on 24/01/17, to open its empty buildings for night shelters. Will the Council open night shelters after voting 100% in favour of the 38 Degree petition I ran, which received 4110 signatures from the community; and what other plans do the Council have to house homeless and rough sleepers every day of the winter of 2017?”

23.3 The Chair replied as follows:

“I am pleased to say that we have identified a building and are doing checks on it with a view to opening it in November and we are confident we can get people into that building rather than rough sleeping on the streets.”

23.4 Mr Hadman asked where the building was situated. The Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing explained that until the council had carried out checks which were happening at the moment, it was not possible to give the building address. However, once checks had been carried out and it has been agreed with councillors that it was a suitable building, then officers could contact Mr Hadman and provide him with the address.

23.5 Mr Hadman had provided the following supplementary question:

“Will the Council use the available £100,000 for running shelters and the £35,000 for capital cost and will the Council use the residue of money left from S.W.P. funding, held by BHT and St Mungos for at least three years?”

23.6 The Chair replied as follows:

“The Council has identified £100,000 capital resources and £35,000 revenue resources for the purpose of running a night shelter. A building has been identified but until we have further information, following checks on the building, it is not possible to give further details at the present time. We will look at the suggestion that the council should use the residue of money left from Severe Weather Emergency Protocol funding, held by BHT and St Mungos for at least three years.”

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

23.8 Carrie Hynds asked the following question:

“How much money has the council got in its capital account ring-fenced for new homes, and can the committee specify which fund the £1.2 million paid by Crest Nicholson to avoid providing any affordable homes in Davigdor Road has been put into?”

23.9 The Chair replied as follows:

“The Council’s Budget for new homes within the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is currently £14.952million for 2017/18. The budget for 2018/19 and indicative sums for 2019/20 and 2020/21 will be approved by Budget Council on 22 February 2018.

An affordable housing commuted sum of £1.2m was secured through a legal agreement as part of the permission for residential development at 121-123 Davigdor Road (Crest Nicholson). The payment is due on first occupation of the development. As set out in the agreement the funds are required to be spent on the 'delivery of affordable housing in the administrative boundary of Brighton & Hove'. It has not yet been determined where and how those funds will be spent to secure new affordable homes and this will be a carefully considered decision of the city council."

23.10 Ms Hynds asked the following supplementary question:

"Has it been decided what the definition of affordable will be, in the homes it will eventually be spent on?"

23.11 The Chair replied as follows:

"That will be decided at the time councillors determine that application."

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

Deputations

23.13 The Committee considered the following deputation which was presented by Barry Hughes:

Deputation: Central Area Housing Panel Representatives to Housing and New Homes Committee 20th September 2017. A call for a review of procedures for mutual exchanges in Brighton & Hove.

"At the Central Area Resident Only Meeting held on 10th August a number of concerns were raised about the present procedures for mutual exchanges as conducted by B&HCC, and it was agreed that it was desirable that there should be a review of these processes in consultation with residents.

The following points were made:

1. Recent problems at Sylvan Hall indicate that properties are not inspected thoroughly before exchanges are allowed to proceed. There should be proper inspections done as part of the process for mutual exchanges.
2. Residents have been told by Housing Officers that properties 'do not have to be of a lettable standard'. This is not acceptable and should not be happening.
3. If out-going residents are in breach of their tenancy agreement then the exchange should not be allowed to go ahead.
4. Money owed by out-going tenants should be pursued, even if the individuals are no longer council tenants.

We would ask that the Housing and New Homes Committee instigate a review whereby the mutual exchange process, as it affects Brighton & Hove City Council properties, should incorporate an inspection process that truly ensures that the property inspected meets the Council's lettable home standard. If this standard is not met, or if there are breaches of the tenancy agreement, then the exchange should not be allowed to proceed.

We would also ask that the Housing Income Management Team should not only seek to recover arrears of rent but should also pursue recharges of other items, such as restoring properties to a liveable standard – whether “someone is still a tenant or not.”

Thank you for listening.”

23.14 Mr Hughes stated that since tabling the deputation, tenants’ representatives had been in correspondence with officers about the details. Whilst tenant’s representative still wished there to be a review of the mutual exchange process, possibly by means of a task and finish group, they knew there were grounds for studying how other local authorities and housing associations handle mutual exchanges and thought that officers might wish to support this review. Tenants were seeking a coherent policy that understood the need to protect council properties and bring to book rogue members of the community.

23.15 The Chair responded as follows:

“The ability to effect a mutual exchange is governed by statute and the grounds for refusing do not include the state of the property. This is contained within schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985. Inspections do take place and we ensure that all relevant safety checks are carried out. It is not always possible to do a comprehensive check because in most cases the property will be lived in and so we have to balance intrusion against the inspection. It is the case that some issues will be camouflaged and only come to attention after someone moves out. We share with the incoming tenants issues we have identified and in the case referred to at Sylvan Hall, we were very explicit about what we had found.

In reference to the lettable standard we refer to the above. It may be helpful to note that this is tenants making a choice, and one that we have only minimal control over. If a tenant chooses to take a property (even when we raise concerns) then it is their right to do so if other conditions have been met. We cannot guarantee a lettable standard because we have no legal power to stop a mutual exchange based on this as a criteria due to the fact that this is a private transaction between the two tenants. What we ensure, however, is that the property is in a safe condition.

There is a reference to breach of tenancy and it is the case that there is an expectation in the tenancy agreement that the property is kept in good condition. Allowing a property to decline is not necessarily a breach of tenancy, which simply says it is to be kept in a good condition. We can stop an exchange where we feel there has been a breach of certain provisions of the tenancy, but this would have to be dependent on the individual circumstances of the case. If a property is in a poor condition due to age this is different from wilful damage or neglect.

Money owed is pursued where it is practical to do so. The nature of many tenants is that they are vulnerable and sometimes chaotic. They may not have money and so we have to decide whether we spend money to recover money. This will not always make financial sense and we could find we spend more than we get back. These matters are discussed with our legal colleagues and a judgement made on a case by case basis.”

23.16 Finally, the Chair stated that she thought the idea of a review was a very good idea and she would be asking that the council look at how other local authorities and

housing associations offer to tenants when exchanging properties. This could be communicated in an email to the Committee and to Mr Hughes.

23.17 RESOLVED

- (1) That the deputation be noted.

24 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

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

25 HOUSING DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY

- 25.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which outlined proposals for a policy under the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) 2002 Housing Renewal to fund a wider range of housing interventions to more pro-actively help people living in the private sector with renewals, repairs and adaptations in their homes funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The report was presented by the Operational Manager Housing Adaptations.
- 25.2 Councillor Mears welcomed the report and supported a policy that would help to allow people to remain in their homes for longer.
- 25.3 In answer to questions from Councillor Mears the following responses were provided. In relation to paragraph 3.9 on page 43, the DFG allocated 1.7m of which the Better Care Fund confirmed that £1.53m was transferred to the Housing Adaptation Service. The Better Care Board decided to spend the remaining money in other ways. The report mentioned the potential for Estate Services to deliver some of the Handyperson Services in the private sector, strictly on the basis that the work would be recharged to the Disabled Facilities Grant, so it would not be paid for out of the Housing Revenue Account.
- 25.4 Councillor Moonan stressed the importance of helping people leave hospital and move back to their own homes. In answer to queries put by Councillor Moonan it was explained that a number of grants were not means tested as there was a need to speed up the process of hospital discharge. There was a cost benefit of speeding up the process and the grants were unlikely to go to people who had substantial means. Officers could keep this matter under review and if a number of applications came from the same person it would highlight problems.
- 25.5 Councillor Gibson welcomed the report and supported the objective. In response to questions it was explained that the Disabled Facilities Grant was only for private tenants. Council tenants could access a whole range of support services which are not available to private residents.
- 25.6 Councillor Yates stressed the importance of the speeding up and delivery of the new disabled facilities whether delivered through housing funding or the Disabled Facilities Grant. Bringing services together into one place so that skills, knowledge and experience could be shared was to be welcomed.

25.7 RESOLVED:-

- (1) That committee adopt the draft policy attached at Appendix 1 to introduce a programme of innovative housing interventions while also maintaining our statutory requirement to provide a Disabled Facilities Grant.
- (2) That it is noted that the housing interventions will be delivered primarily in partnership with the local Home Improvement Agency (HIA).
- (3) That it is noted that the contribution to the wider strategic aims and promotion of independent living and wellbeing for older and disabled adults and disabled children and their families.

26 REVISED TENANCY AGREEMENT

- 26.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which presented the results of the statutory consultation carried out with all current council tenants on the adoption of a revised tenancy agreement for tenants living in council housing. It also presented an amended draft of the revised tenancy agreement as a result of comments received during the consultation. The report was presented by the Tenancy Services Operational Manager and the Head of Tenancy Services.
- 26.2 In answer to a question put by Councillor Druitt, in relation to Appendix 3, Section 7, Clause 7.A, it was confirmed that the wording of Clause 7A was primary legislation. This was not something the council could override. Each case would be considered on a case by case basis on its merits and the law was followed in every case. More detail was contained in the Draft Tenants' Handbook. People would not be forced to move in most cases; however some cases involved victims of domestic abuse.
- 26.3 Councillor Yates asked how the agreement would be enforced and monitored. It was explained that there was a need to be proportionate in the action taken by the council. Decisions would be based on proportionality.
- 26.4 Councillor Mears expressed concern regarding mutual exchanges in relation to the tenancy agreement. She was aware of homes that had been trashed and tenants allowed to move on. It was explained that mutual exchange was an agreement between two tenants and the council could not legally stop exchanges; however, officers did carry out inspections of properties to ensure that they were safe. If repairs were required the council would carry out the work and re-charge. Councillors and tenants should let officers know of any breaches.
- 26.5 Councillor Barnett referred to Appendix 3, page 112, 3j (2.5 - Your Rights) in relation to permission being required to carry out improvements or alterations. She was aware of people gutting a home before they moved in. How could the council intervene to say this is not acceptable? It was explained that a surveyor would be sent to the property and the person would be instructed to stop the work. Officers would be interested to have details of the particular case mentioned. The cost of works would be recharged. If tenants continued to carry out unauthorised work it would be charged to their rent account. This was more difficult if they were former tenants.

26.6 Councillor Janio referred to page 118, 7.0 (5.9 – Discretionary succession). He asked about rules on succession. It was explained that there was one right to a legal succession to a council tenancy. Before the Localism Act 2012 it was spouses or civil partners and any family member. After 2012 it reduced to spouses, civil partners/partners living in the property but no family members.

26.7 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the results of the consultation exercise as detailed in Appendix 1 be noted.
- (2) That the summary of the proposed changes as detailed in Appendix 3 be noted.
- (3) That Housing & New Homes Committee agrees to the implementation in January 2018 of the revised Tenancy Agreement, attached at Appendix 2.

27 HRA ASSET STRATEGY REVIEW – PROVIDING SAFE HOMES

- 27.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which provided an update and review to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy, specifically in relation to health and safety. The report built upon the strategy by seeking to embed further improved policies as set out in Appendix 1 of the report. This would provide a framework to ensure continued improvement in compliance and safety in homes, and better access to information for residents. The report also gave an update on the project to retro fit sprinklers at Essex Place, specifically relating to achieving match funding for the project from East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. The report was presented by the Housing Asset Strategy Manager and Head of Housing Strategy, Property & Investment.
- 27.2 In answer to questions put by Councillor Druitt it was explained that the review would ensure that council blocks complied with fire regulations. The council were in the process of installing sprinklers. These were an enhancement and were not fitted to meet a health and safety requirement. The three year option to deliver sprinklers would be difficult to achieve particularly in relation to the amount of consultation required. There was a need to carry out a great deal of work to persuade tenants and leaseholders that sprinklers are a good idea.
- 27.3 Councillor Mears stressed that there was a need to give assurances to tenants and leaseholders that there was a yearly review process. In response to questions put by Councillor Mears it was explained that the frequency of fire risk assessments was laid down in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Unfortunately, it did not lay down a definition of regular, except that it should be a regular review. It went on to say that it should be a risk based approach. The council had decided that high rise and sheltered schemes should have an annual review. In terms of risk, most problems were identified on a weekly or monthly basis.
- 27.4 Councillor Moonan referred to concerns raised at the West Area Panel regarding common areas. It was explained that fire safety posters were displayed by all lifts. These gave advice regarding the delayed evacuation policy. Information was also provided to all tenants in a fire safety leaflet. Fire safety information was also supplied online.

- 27.5 Councillor Janio asked where the council had determined liability for the sprinkler systems, particularly in regard to leaseholders. He imagined that they would be charged the full amount for the installation but if it was deemed that the liability had been there when they purchased their property then a case could be made that it was for the common good that sprinklers were installed, and the council should pay a portion of leaseholder sprinkler systems. It was agreed to email the response confidentially to all members of the Committee.
- 27.6 In answer to questions put by Councillor Yates it was explained that there were approximately 25% leaseholders in Essex Place and St James's House. There was specific leaseholder advice in relation to those two blocks. Both blocks were match funded by East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and the committee had given approval for work to proceed with St James's House and to proceed with consultation with Essex Place, subject to confirming the budgets. The approach would be captured in budget papers for January 2018.
- 27.7 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the Asset Management Strategy Review be approved in principle, subject to consideration of the detailed Capital Programme in January 2018. The document is shown in full in Appendix 1.
- (2) That it be agreed to proceed with resident consultation, procurement and subsequent installation of a sprinkler system to Essex Place subject to match funding from East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.

28 HOME PURCHASE POLICY

- 28.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which explained that the Housing service required a policy on the purchase of homes funded by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The council had statutory powers to purchase properties. There was currently no policy framework that enabled officers to decide whether to make offers to buy properties. The report and the accompanying draft policy at Appendix 1 sought to fulfil this requirement and requested budget approval. The criteria for a Home Purchase Policy was detailed in paragraph 4.1. If agreed the policy would be trialled for a year. The report was presented by the Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager.
- 28.2 The Chair reported that two amendments had been received. One from the Green Group and one from the Conservative Group. She invited Councillor Gibson to set out the Green amendment.
- 28.3 Councillor Gibson proposed the Green amendment as follows:

"To amend the recommendations as shown below in bold italics:

That Housing & New Homes Committee:

- 2.4 Recommends to Policy Resources & Growth Committee to approve a budget of ***£1.000m £2.000m*** within the HRA capital programme 2017/18 for the purpose of purchasing former council homes, to be funded from Right to Buy receipts (***£0.300m £0.600m***) and HRA borrowing and/or reserves (***£0.700m £1.4m***).

That Policy, Resources & Growth Committee:

2.5 Approves a budget of ~~£1.000m~~ **£2.000m** within the HRA capital programme 2017/18 for the purpose of purchasing former council homes, to be funded from Right to Buy receipts (~~£0.300m~~) (**£0.600m**) and HRA borrowing and/or reserves (~~£0.700m~~)-(**£1.4m**)

2.6 For the duration of the pilot, purchases should seek to provide 50% temporary accommodation and 50% general needs. The general needs accommodation will charge living wage rents, providing the business case model, (as calculated in appendix 2) indicates that no subsidy is needed."

28.4 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Druitt.

28.5 Councillor Gibson made the following points: The policy was a positive initiative that was bringing homes from the private sector and making them available for public use. Paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of the amendment was saying that the recommendations needed to be bolder than the proposals in the committee report. The Green proposal would double the budget for the purchase of former council houses. Funds were clearly available for the pilot scheme and the pilot would be more representative. There was a need to achieve as much as possible in a time of housing crisis and the Green proposal would give the council more options to spend Right to Buy receipts. 2.6 of the amendment would double the programme and the accommodation achieved through that programme. It was clear that initially, general needs housing could be let in most cases modelled on living wage rents without resort to any subsidy.

28.6 Councillor Mears proposed the Conservative Group amendment as follows:

"To add the new recommendation as shown in bold italics.

That Housing and New Homes Committee add a new 2.6 to state.

2.6 That for the duration of the pilot scheme, the allocation should be for 100% general needs accommodation and will charge living wage rents, subject to the business case model (appendix 2 shows that no subsidy is needed)."

28.7 The amendment was seconded by Councillor Barnett.

28.8 Councillor Mears explained the reasons for the Conservative Group amendment at 2.6 as follows: The council had changed the allocations policy and the majority of all council properties available on Homemove were going to temporary accommodation and Homelessness. This led to concerns that there was little chance of people being allocated property under general needs. The reasons for changing 2.6 to general needs was to provide balance to people on the waiting list to ensure that the council is mindful of all the housing needs in the city. The proposal would release property for temporary accommodation and provide continuity on the estates.

28.9 Councillor Yates pointed out that the policy would be trialed for a year but the money would only be available up to 31st March. He asked for clarity about at what point the money could be considered spent and whether the money could be carried over into the next financial year. Councillor Yates stressed that the living wage rent was higher than social rent. If tenants were to move they would pay a higher rent. It was clarified that the budget agreed would be for 2017/18 up to the end of March. However, if it was felt that

the money was not going to be spent in time, officers would with permission, be able to carry the money over through the TBM process. It was confirmed that Living wage rents were higher than social rents. If tenants moved to a flat that was being purchased by the council, that rent would be higher than rents paid by other tenants in the block.

- 28.10 Councillor Druitt stated that the report did not commit to social rents in the short term. The Green amendment was suggesting that for the pilot rents would be no more than the Living Rent, which was less than the report appeared to propose for the long term.
- 28.11 Councillor Moonan considered the policy to be an excellent initiative and made the following points: Councillor Moonan's understanding of Paragraph 4.4 of the report was that the local housing allowance would be for any temporary or emergency accommodation and the social rent would be for any general needs accommodation, in which case the council would be starting a programme for those tenants on social rent. With regard to the debate around how much was general needs and how much was temporary accommodation, Councillor Moonan was more favourable to the Green Group amendment. Some of the properties that come forward might be appropriate for general needs but other properties might be more appropriate for emergency accommodation and she would want to retain that flexibility. Councillor Moonan stressed that there was a dire need for people in emergency accommodation and she would like to see some of these properties available for these people to move into for more long term sustainable temporary accommodation, and eventually for them to move into the permanent housing stock.
- 28.12 Councillor Mears made the following points: It was important to remember that the council's new homes rents were higher than social rents. The council was building homes at rates that people on low incomes could not afford. The Conservative amendment gave a small shift to general needs and still released people from temporary accommodation. Paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of the Green amendment would be supported by the Conservative Group.
- 28.13 The Chair proposed a short break to discuss the amendments. The Committee adjourned at 6.00pm and restarted the meeting at 6.13pm.
- 28.14 Following the adjournment Councillor Mears proposed the following amendment to her amendment.

“That Housing and New Homes Committee add a new 2.6 to state.

2.6 That for the duration of the pilot scheme, the allocation should be for 100% general needs accommodation and will charge social rents up to the living wage rents, subject to the business case model (appendix 2 shows that no subsidy is needed).”

- 28.15 Councillor Druitt commented that he was minded to support the Conservative amendment as amended above. Councillor Gibson stated that he was happy with either amendment. When someone transferred in general need that released property for temporary accommodation.
- 28.16 Councillor Moonan stressed that there needed to be flexibility for officers. Property was not always freed up for temporary accommodation. A 50/50 mix would give officers flexibility and let them test the system. This could be changed in a year's time.

28.17 The Chair remarked that it was dear to her heart to increase social housing in the city. However, she was mindful of how little council run, council owned, temporary accommodation there was in the city and how this impacted on the council's budget.

28.18 Councillor Druitt proposed that amendment 2.6 could state that there should be 75% general needs and 25% temporary accommodation, with social rents up to living wage rents. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Gibson.

28.19 The Committee adjourned to further discuss the amendments.

28.20 Following the adjournment Councillor Mears proposed the following:

"That Housing and New Homes Committee add a new 2.6 to state.

That for the duration of the pilot scheme, the allocation should seek to provide 75% general needs accommodation unless the business case is not viable, then 25% to temporary accommodation, and will charge social rents up to living wage rents, subject to the business case model (appendix 2 shows that no subsidy is needed).

28.21 Councillor Janio seconded the amendment.

28.22 The Committee voted on the Conservative Group amendment as set out in paragraph 28.24 above. The amendment was agreed unanimously.

28.23 The Committee voted on the Green amendment relating to recommendations 2.4 and 2.5 proposed by Councillor Gibson and seconded by Councillor Druitt as follows: (Councillor Gibson withdrew the Green Group recommendation 2.6).

That Housing & New Homes Committee:

2.4 Recommends to Policy Resources & Growth Committee to approve a budget of ~~£1.000m~~ **£2.000m** within the HRA capital programme 2017/18 for the purpose of purchasing former council homes, to be funded from Right to Buy receipts (~~£0.300m~~ **£0.600m**) and HRA borrowing and/or reserves (~~£0.700m~~ **£1.4m**).

That Policy, Resources & Growth Committee:

2.5 Approves a budget of ~~£1.000m~~ **£2.000m** within the HRA capital programme 2017/18 for the purpose of purchasing former council homes, to be funded from Right to Buy receipts (~~£0.300m~~) (**£0.600m**) and HRA borrowing and/or reserves (~~£0.700m~~)- (**£1.4m**)

28.24 The Green amendment above relating to recommendation 2.4 and 2.5 was agreed unanimously.

28.25 The Committee then voted on the substantive recommendations. Recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 were agreed as set out in the report. These were approved unanimously.

28.26 Recommendations 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 were approved unanimously as amended.

28.27 **RESOLVED:-**

(1) That the Committee agrees the Home Purchase Policy at Appendix 1 which enables the HRA to purchase homes, both through the right of first refusal and on the open market (subject to business case).

- (2) That it is noted that the policy allows the purchase of accommodation up to £250,000 subject to the purchase meeting the policy criteria.
- (3) That it is noted that that the scheme and future budget allocation will be reviewed as part of the HRA budget setting process for 2018/19.
- (4) That the Committee recommends to Policy Resources & Growth Committee to approve a budget of £2.000m within the HRA capital programme 2017/18 for the purpose of purchasing former council homes, to be funded from Right to Buy receipts (£0.600m) and HRA borrowing and/or reserves (£1.4m).
- (5) That the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee approve a budget of £2.000m within the HRA Capital Programme 2017/18 for the purpose of purchasing former council homes, to be funded from Right to Buy receipts (£0.600m) and HRA borrowing and/or reserves (£1.4m).
- (6) That for the duration of the pilot scheme, the allocation should seek to provide 75% general needs accommodation unless the business case is not viable, then 25% to temporary accommodation, and will charge social rents up to living wage rents, subject to the business case model (appendix 2 shows that no subsidy is needed).

29 1. SINGLE HOMELESS & ROUGH SLEEPER ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES. 2. YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING ADVICE & SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

- 29.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Health & Adult Social Care which updated members on the progress of two previous reports – Single Homeless & Rough Sleeper Accommodation & Support Remodelling & Tender report presented on 21st September 2016 and Young People's Housing Advice and Supported Accommodation Report presented on the 16th November 2016. Following consultation with stakeholders and service users new models of accommodation and support for single homeless adults and homeless young people were developed in 2015/16 to respond to increasing demand and the changing demographics of service users. Since the presentation of the remodelling proposals work had commenced to remodel and retender services. The report was presented by the Commissioning & Performance Manager – Rough Sleeping & Homeless Support Services.
- 29.2 Councillor Druitt was mindful that the Rough Sleepers Strategy aimed to eliminate street homelessness by 2020. He was aware this was a major challenge but considered that it was possible. He asked if this was expected to be an achievable aim. He thought it would be a good idea to bring a regular report to the committee to review the target. Councillor Moonan explained that a report would be presented to the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities & Equalities Committee which would then be submitted to the Housing & New Homes Committee. There would be six monthly reports. Eliminating rough sleeping by 2020 would be challenging. Rough sleepers on the street were not the same group of people and they were constantly moving on. It was important to stem the tide. The council was working as hard as possible to successfully move people off the street.
- 29.3 Councillor Mears referred to the minutes of 14 June 2017 - Paragraph 14.3 on page 19. The Housing First report suggested that targets would not be met, while it was known that rough sleeping was increasing. The current report showed that the number of beds

had reduced by 85. Councillor Mears referred to the financial implications on Page 158 and stated that she could not see any reference to the St Mungo's contact and how much they were paid. Councillor Mears was not convinced that there was sufficient joined up working. In response, it was explained that the timescale for hostels had been delayed. Two tenders had been re-issued and revised. The number of beds had reduced due to a budget reduction; however, more beds than expected had been procured. A breakdown of the St Mungo contract and details of additional finance through the rough sleeper grant would be sent to members. Meanwhile, it was the intention to have joined up working in the city. This would include work with substance misuse and drug misuse services.

- 29.4 Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 3.2.9 in relation to accommodation for the Substance Misuse & Physical Health Accommodation Service. He asked if funding was still secure for this service and when the committee would receive a report on the subject. In response, it was explained that funding from the HCA was secure and work was ongoing. A report would be brought to the Committee in November.
- 29.5 Councillor Gibson expressed concern that just under 100 people were waiting for accommodation and that there was a 10 month wait. He stressed the importance of reducing these waits. Councillor Moonan replied that the council would continue to work to eliminate rough sleeping but were aware of the challenges. The current paper was only part of the ongoing work to achieve this aim. Meanwhile, the loss of beds was offset by high quality services available, such as a women only service and substance misuse service. As a result, outcomes were much better. Councillor Moonan accepted that there was a waiting list but the night hostel could address some of these issues. There needed to be move on accommodation. She thanked officers for the report and their hard work.
- 29.6 Councillor Mears express the view that homelessness and rough sleeping were housing matters and reports on this subject should first be presented to the committee rather than being submitted first to other meetings.
- 29.7 Councillor Yates stressed that a great deal in the report was about making services fit for service. It was important to have the maximum amount of temporary accommodation. From a health and care perspective, the council was pleased to be engaged in this the process, and be providing more appropriate services and a better level of wrap around care to meet people's needs.
- 29.8 Councillor Gibson commented that it was important for the council to provide temporary accommodation where it could in a crisis. However, the council needed to look to providing permanent secure accommodation in the longer term.

29.9 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the report is noted

30 SURVEY OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS (STAR) 2016 - DETAILED RESPONSE TO TENANT FEEDBACK

- 30.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which provided a detailed account from Housing on actions arising from the customer feedback responses to the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) satisfaction survey carried out in June 2016. The survey results and the council's immediate response to them were reported to the Committee on 18th January

2017. The actions detailed in the report were designed to improve the areas of service tenants were most concerned about as expressed in their free-text responses to six open-ended questions. Alongside that, there were two main areas where satisfaction levels had gone down slightly against the previous STAR survey carried out in 2014 – ‘Your neighbourhood as a place to live’ and ‘the overall quality of your home’. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement.

- 30.2 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the report and remarked that it was helpful to see tenants’ comments on a wide range of services. Councillor Mears commented that in relation to neighbourhoods there was housing land which ran into City Parks land. She stressed the need for more joined up working.
- 30.3 In response to questions put by Councillor Gibson, it was explained that with regard to access to customer services, phone calls had once been recorded in part of the service, but this became very expensive. Officers were looking at ways of reducing costs and re-introducing recorded calls. The recordings could be used for staff training and also used to respond to some complaints. This could be looked at as part of a procurement of a new IT system. The IT system would widen the scope of the services that could be accessed. The current system was 20 years old and tenants could not currently report repairs on the system. The new system could be linked to My Account.
- 30.4 Councillor Lewry asked if the questionnaire was sent to all tenants. He referred to paragraph 3.10.5 regarding various tasks currently carried out by the Estate Services Team to improve neighbourhoods and mentioned that the fire escape in one estate in his ward was covered in moss. It was explained that 3000 tenants were randomly selected for the questionnaire. The survey was always mentioned in Homing In. It was stressed that an estate budget was available to all estates even when there was no tenant association.
- 30.5 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the report be noted along with the comments of the Committee.

31 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2017/18

- 31.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing which covered Quarter 1 of the financial year 2017/18. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement.
- 31.2 In response to questions from Councillor Druitt, it was explained that with regard to page 187 – Customer Services & Complaints - 2.11 – the missed calls related to people who rang the number but had not spoken to an advisor. There was not an answering machine as people did not like to leave messages.
- 31.3 Councillor Mears referred to page 186 – rent collection. She was pleased to see the improvement in the rent collection in the East Area, but thought the rent collection target should be 100%. Councillor Mears asked when there would be a paper on legionnaire’s disease and asbestos. It was clarified that there were some cases where it was known that 100% could not be achieved. A target was set that showed that the council was achieving something. The report on legionnaire’s disease and asbestos was an annual report.

- 31.4 Councillor Yates stated that 4.20 and 4.21 on page 194 relating to the Estate Development Budget did not explain much about the projects. He asked for an explanation of paragraph 4.22. He was informed that officers had considered what would be a useful measure. 4.20 and 4.21 were for information only. With regard to 4.22 – Estate Development Budget – Duration of Work, tenants wanted to see something that demonstrated on average, how long it took to complete work.
- 31.5 Councillor Gibson referred to miss calls. He asked if officers had considered the option of allowing tenants to book a call back. He was informed that this was an option that could be considered. Officers were currently looking at the new IT system and new telephone system.
- 31.6 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the report which was circulated to Area Panel members in September 2017 be noted along with the comments of the Committee.

32 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS: DEVELOPMENT COSTS OF NEW BUILD COUNCIL HOMES

- 32.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment, Economy & Culture which provided context and an overview of the New Homes for Neighbourhood programme to date including projects, procurement/delivery routes, design standards and specification, development costs and associated controls. It also reported the outcome of an internal audit on the housing new builds programme in May 2017 which checked that adequate procurement and project management arrangements are in place and that budget management for each project is robust. The report was presented by the Lead Regeneration Programme Manager.
- 32.2 Councillor Druitt referred to page 207 in relation to the planning requirement for all new homes to meet energy and water efficiency standards for the former Code of Sustainable Homes Level 4, including installing photovoltaic solar panels. He asked if there had been a valuation of other measures. It was explained that there were no other specific measures included.
- 32.3 Councillor Mears raised the issue of costs. Brooke Mead had been financed through the HRA and the original cost estimate had been £8m. Costs had now risen to £12m, which should not have happened. Kite Place would cost £14m. Councillor Mears stressed that these schemes were expensive and there was a need to deliver affordable homes. It was explained that rents were set by the Committee. Lessons had been learnt from Brooke Mead and the Kite Place scheme involved a high level of construction and design which lifted that area of Whitehawk. The scheme should cost significantly lower than £14.1m.
- 32.4 In response to questions from Councillor Yates it was clarified that work started on the Lynchet Close site on 29th August 2017. Costings were now lower than expected, however there was always a risk of unforeseen costs with new build properties.
- 32.5 Councillor Gibson welcomed the report and welcomed the scrutiny of costs and the workshop organised for members. He stressed that many households in the city were on low incomes and he asked how the council could achieve lower rents for lower income residents. If rents were modelled over a longer period than 40 years this could provide

lower rents. It was explained that officers had listened to members regarding having a longer period for modeling rents. Although from a financial perspective, there needed to be a borrowing period of 40 years, there was no reason why officers could not look at what additional surpluses were brought in, once that borrowing had been paid back. This information could be included in future reports submitted to the Committee.

- 32.6 Councillor Moonan thanked officers for the report. She referred to paragraphs 3.24 and 3.25 concerning the Internal Audit Report on housing new builds. Councillor Moonan stated that she would like the council to consider low cost modular build and newer techniques of building. She hoped the committee would see more of these types of projects going forward. It was clarified that current projects included Y:Cube and Futureform. These types of projects could be delivered more quickly and worked well on some, but not all sites.
- 32.7 Councillor Hill thanked officers for the report and workshop which demonstrated how hard the council was working to minimise costs. She was impressed with the level of scrutiny involved. Councillor Hill would be against the idea of modelling rents on a 60 year period as lower rents would mean less funding available to finance more new homes. The priority was to build new council housing and the Local Housing Allowance Rate was a reasonable way to move forward.
- 32.8 The Chair thanked officers for the report and appreciated the amount of work that had been carried out.
- 32.9 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

33 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

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

Part Two

34 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS: DEVELOPMENT COSTS - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

34.1 RESOLVED:

- (1) That the appendix and discussion is noted.

35 MINUTES OF 28 JUNE 2017 - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

- 35.1 **RESOLVED** - That the Part Two minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committee held on 28th June 2017 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

36 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

36.1 RESOLVED:

That Item 34 and the Part Two minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2017 remain exempt to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 8.18pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of