

## BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: EAST AREA

7.00pm 15 OCTOBER 2018

#### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors: Mears (Chair) and Platts

**Representatives:** Lyn Bennett (M.F.R.T.A Rep), Alan Cooke (Craven Vale), Janet Gearing (Woodingdean), Chris El-Shabba (Robert Lodge)

**Officers:** Ododo Dafe (Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement), Keely McDonald (Resident Involvement Officer), Glyn Huelin (Business & Performance Manager), Hilary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager), Annie Sparks (Regulatory Services Manager - Environmental Protection), Grant Ritchie (Lead Consultant – Health & Safety) and Kat Hoare (Democratic Services Officer)

**Press:** Sarah Booker-Lewis (Local Democracy Reporter)

#### 27 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

#### 28 APOLOGIES

28.1 Apologies were received from: Councillors: Mitchell and Morgan, Eddie Wilson (Mears General Manager), Roy Crowhurst (Woods House), Justine Harris, Anne Willson (MFRTA Sub Rep) and Brenda Murphy.

#### 29 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

29.1 The Chair communicated the following:

- *"You may know that Rachel Chasseaud left the post of Head of Tenancy Services at the end of August to take up the position of Assistant Director of the city's Environmental services. Justine Harris has been appointed as Rachel's replacement. Justine is currently the Housing Options Manager and will be taking up her new post shortly. Justine has sent her apologies as she is unable to attend tonight.*
- *Sharon Terry, the Resident Involvement Officer for the East Area is currently seconded to the post of Tenancy Sustainment Officer and this will extend until the end of March 2019. While she is away, Keely McDonald will be responsible for co-ordinating the East Panel meetings and the point of contact for associations in Whitehawk and Craven Vale. Rebecca Mann is the contact for Bristol Estate Community Association.*
- *A report will be going to November's Housing & New Homes Committee to share information about the work that the residents' Estates Development Panel has been*

*carrying out over the summer to make the EDB bidding process simpler and quicker for residents and to announce increased funding being made available for environmental improvements. This additional money will be spent on work that has been identified through the many different ways we engage with residents and their feedback on areas for improvement. These include the STAR satisfaction survey, the feedback residents have given us recently during consultation on the delivery of repairs and maintenance, the annual customer satisfaction survey, estate inspections, feedback from complaints and councillors enquiries in addition to information from residents associations. This report will give an outline of what is proposed, with a more detailed report going to committee in January 2019. A briefing on that report will come to the next round of Area Panels and invite your comments and contributions on the proposals it will make on the future of the Estates Development Budget and how the additional funding is spent.”*

### **30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 30.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes were an exact record of the meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018.

### **31 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME**

#### Item 1 – p. 11 – Estate Development Budget (EDB)

- 31.1 Residents asked about the deadline date for bids, as there was some confusion on this and hoped that tenants would apply. Hilary Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager stated that officers had asked for initial bids to be sent in by July with the deadline for full bids 16 November 2019.
- 31.2 Residents stated that it was difficult for tenants who lived in properties without communal areas, such as most of the Woodingdean estate, to put in a bid for this funding, since the EDB did not cover other areas and therefore fencing was the only aspect of improvement that residents could bid for. The Officer stated that currently the criteria for bids were being reviewed but that there was no hard decision on this matter at present.
- 31.3 There was a discussion between residents and Ododo Dafe - Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement about applying for funding for buying plants or requesting tarmac for outdoor areas. Residents were unsure how to get funding for the upkeep of these areas, after they had initially been awarded these items and there was special concern for elderly and disabled residents who were unable to do gardening upkeep.
- 31.4 Officers agreed that that upkeep, as well as issues such as parking were long term objectives for areas and this would be discussed within Item 37, later in the meeting.
- 31.5 Officers and residents had a discussion about different types of ground maintenance and coverings that could possibly provide the most environmentally friendly solutions such as grasscrete. The Officer suggested that this could possibly be funded by a different environmental budget – rather than the EDB.

- 31.6 Residents stated that there were very few residents associations now and the Chair asked Officers whether more money was being sought from the HRA in future. Officers replied that the HRA money could be used differently for items required by tenants and that this could possibly work better for residents than the EDB long term sustainability on some bids. The Chair confirmed it was important for tenants to be engaged in applying for funding.

Item 2 – p. 13 – Communal facilities in Whitehawk

- 31.7 The Chair and residents discussed the costs of different venues and Councillor Platts stated that there is a Council bid for Freedom Partnership where the objective is to share space as well as find new facilities. Councillor Platts confirmed that there needed to be further discussions on this issue and that she hoped to provide more information in the near future. One resident disagreed with the statement on page 15 and said that not enough information was being given on this.

- 31.8 **RESOLVED** – that the Panel agreed to note the report.

**32 SEASIDE HOMES - FUTURE ELECTION OF COUNCIL TENANT REPRESENTATIVE**

- 32.1 Hilary Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager introduced this discussion since Roy Crowhurst (Woods House) was unable to attend. The Officer confirmed that there are currently 2 vacancies for Council Tenant trustees on the board of Seaside Homes and she encouraged all residents to spread the word to ensure that these posts were applied for.

- 32.2 The Chair was asked by residents whether potential applicants for these vacancies could also be members of other Boards and the Chair confirmed that they could. The Chair also suggested that perhaps a larger percentage of Seaside Homes tenants may be more vulnerable than other groups and thus it was even more important that they represented tenants on the Board.

- 32.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

**33 FIELD OFFICER UPDATE**

- 33.1 Annie Sparks, Regulatory Services Manager - Environmental Protection gave a presentation and then introduced the discussion on the new Field Officer team which went live on 17<sup>th</sup> September which consists of four recruited Officers with four more due to join shortly, with a full launch on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. She confirmed that they are working across nine services within the Council and have liaised with Police and the Fire Brigade and that the team will be working 7 days per week from 12 – 8 pm.

- 33.2 The Chair asked how often the team will do estate inspections and what systems were in place for residents to report issues after 8pm. The Officer confirmed that this model was still being defined and that Officers in Housing will confirm how often inspections will take place.

- 33.3 Ododo Dafe - Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement confirmed that there would be a new flexible policy on the frequency of inspections as some areas required more and some less.
- 33.4 Residents were concerned that the Field Officer (FO) team had not made contact with residents associations yet and that they were missing out on resident contacts, which would be vital for sorting out problems in the future. Officers confirmed that the Team have created an online video to identify the FOs and that she was currently setting up meetings with resident associations and the Chair confirmed that there would be an article on in Homing In before Christmas.
- 33.5 Residents queried how they could contact FOs when there was a problem outside the designated 12 – 8pm times, such as a noise disturbance at 4 am. Officers stated that FOs did work on flexible contracts and could therefore be flexible about times if required. Officers also confirmed that although they did not offer a 7-day service, often problems such as noise could be dealt with more efficiently at different times such as the morning after when people were calmer and available.
- 33.6 In response to a resident's question about whether specific FOs would be assigned to specific areas of the city, Officers confirmed that Field Officers will be based citywide and not be allocated by area.
- 33.6 Councillor Platts asked if FOs were able to gather evidence for Police investigations on issues such as drug dealing where residents felt too vulnerable to speak directly to police. The Officer confirmed that some FOs had enforcement experience and could take statements from residents.
- 33.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

#### **34 A NEW DEAL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING - GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER AND CONSULTATION**

- 34.1 Hilary Edgar - Housing Service Operations Manager introduced the report, which was a summary of the proposals in the green paper for Housing.
- 34.2 Officers highlighted the importance of residents' feeding back on the 26 consultation questions and also confirmed that Lyn Bennett, M.F.R.T.A Representative, had been selected to attend the face to face consultation with Government Ministers in Hastings on Thursday 18 October.
- 34.3 The Chair asked for the M.F.R.T.A Rep, to bring back feedback from this meeting and Ododo Dafe, Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement confirmed that paper copies and a link of the Feedback questions page would be made available to tenant representatives prior to the 6 November deadline.
- 34.4 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

#### **35 FIRE SAFETY UPDATE**

- 35.1 Grant Ritchie, Lead Consultant – Health & Safety introduced the report which was an update on recent works which had been carried out on two blocks.

- 35.2 Officers highlighted the fact that they had now done work with the chosen contractor to install sprinklers in communal rooms and each flat would be given the option to have a sprinkler located by the door. They hoped that this new package would be more acceptable to residents.
- 35.3 Officers stated that the Scheme now needs to be accelerated in order to meet the Council's target of ensuring that all Council properties in the City are updated within five years.
- 35.4 In response to residents' questions on why the uptake for the scheme had been slow, Officers confirmed that the bright orange appearance of the 2 inch pipe required by the installations had probably deterred some residents, since correct cladding and positioning was important to ensure that they did not dominate rooms.
- 35.5 In response to queries from residents on the cost and funding of this scheme, Officers confirmed that there was £ 3,000 plus funding available to residents for blocks of 6 floors and above. Officers stated that the funding had already been allocated from the HRA and that they continued to work with the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.
- 35.6 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

## **36 FUTURE DELIVERY OF HOUSING REPAIRS, PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL WORKS**

- 36.1 Glyn Huelin - Business & Performance Manager gave a verbal update, as promised in September 2018 since there was no written report. The Officer highlighted the following points:
- From 2020 the Repairs Help Desk and the Refurbishment service will both be brought in-house
  - Work has already been carried out to adapt to the change in March and April 2020
  - Officers will have a full communication plan in place to deliver the information on the change to residents. Officers will talk further about the plan at the Citywide conference and an article will appear in Homing In magazine.
- 36.2 In response to residents questions, Officers confirmed the following:
- Existing workers currently employed by Mears and the Council would have rights to transfer to the council when the current contract ends in 2020.
  - There would still be an Apprenticeship training scheme attached to the service.
  - Inspections of empty homes will also be carried out in-house by the Council from 2020
  - Major Housing works would be communicated to residents directly from the Council via Homing In or other letters / direct communication. Reps would not be expected to deliver this communication.
  - Glyn Huelin - Business & Performance Manager asked tenants to contact him directly with any queries on this matter.
- 36.3 **RESOLVED** – that the Panel agreed to note the report.

**37 2019 / 20 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- 37.1 Ododo Dafe, Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement introduced the discussion about the proposed change in how the Estate budgets are used, which focussed on the maintenance of older stock, increasing the standard of gardens and outdoor areas, reducing fly tipping, and addressing the issues of fuel poverty and social isolation.
- 37.2 In order to increase the standard of work inhouse, the Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement confirmed that she wanted input from residents and requested that residents email her answers to the following questions:
- What are your priorities for your estate?
  - What do you notice most and what do you want more of on your estate?
  - Come up with 3 or more key things that require attention on your estates?
- 37.3 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement highlighted the gardening and decorating schemes and confirmed that tenants over the age of 70 could apply for gardening help and those under the age of 70 could also apply for decorating help. Other vulnerable residents such as disabled families, may also be eligible and be encouraged to apply.

**38 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

- 38.1 Ododo Dafe - Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement confirmed that she would return to the next Area Panel Meeting to have a full discussion of the Report when it is available.
- 38.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

**39 CITY WIDE REPORTS**

- 39.1 **RESOLVED** – that the Panel agreed to note the report and the Chair confirmed the Citywide Conference was taking place on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October.

**40 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 40.1 Chris El Shabba – Robert Lodge raised the issue of the new housing development planned to be built above the racecourse in Whitehawk. She had been in touch with Hyde Housing but wanted to get more information on this.
- 40.2 Councillor Platts explained that the Homes for Brighton & Hove scheme in Whitehawk was aimed at creating 1000 homes – 500 for social homes and 500 for people on lower wages in order to relieve the pressure on the current waiting list. The Councillor stated she had concerns about the site and area.
- 40.3 The Chair confirmed that this urban fringe scheme was part of the Homes for Brighton & Hove scheme and that residents should contact ward Councillor Platts for more information on this.

**41 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

41.1 The date of the next meeting will be 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018 – the Chair sent her apologies in advance for this date.

The meeting concluded at 21:15.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

