

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 19 JUNE 2019

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

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Allcock (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Brennan (Deputy Chair), Gibson (Opposition Spokesperson), Mears (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Heley, Hugh-Jones and Osborne

Other Members present: Councillor Knight

PART ONE

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) Declaration of Substitutes: Where Councillors are unable to attend a meeting, a substitute Member from the same Political Group may attend, speak and vote in their place for that meeting.

(b) Declarations of Interest:

(a) Disclosable pecuniary interests;

(b) Any other interests required to be registered under the local code;

(c) Any other general interest as a result of which a decision on the matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting you or a partner more than a majority of other people or businesses in the ward/s affected by the decision.

In each case, you need to declare

(i) the item on the agenda the interest relates to;

(ii) the nature of the interest; and

(iii) whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest or some other interest.

If unsure, Members should seek advice from the committee lawyer or administrator preferably before the meeting.

(c) Exclusion of Press and Public - To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the

proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part Two of the Agenda states in its heading the category under which the information disclosed in the report is exempt from disclosure and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 Minutes: The minutes were accepted a record of the meeting on 13 March 2019 following the alterations to paragraph 76.3 ‘... recent visit to Spain by tenants and officers.’

Matters arising: Councillor Mears requested an update on PRS bid under paragraph 66.1, An update on Homeless Move On under paragraph 70, A request for a written confirmation that HRA was not being used under paragraph 71.2, Awaiting the EIA report promised under paragraph 72.4, clarification that two housing policies exist, which is not clear under paragraph 73.10, and an update on the visit to Spain mentioned under paragraph 76.3. Councillor Mears requested that the responses be sent to all committee members.

- 2.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes of Housing & New Homes Committee meeting held on 13 March 2019 are agreed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Chair welcomed new and returning members. The public were welcomed in chamber and on web. The Chair stated that Housing is key challenge to Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) residents who are renting at high rents. The Chair highlighted the Global change carbon reductions by 2030. The Committee are charged with key housing decisions and Members should move forward together addressing climate issues.

The Chair noted the 2-year anniversary of Grenfell tower fire when fire doors failed. The Chair stated that the Association of doors manufactures remediation was unsatisfactory. The Chair felt that BHCC and Housing Associations do not have enough money to replace all doors. The Industry is collapsing, and the national government need to support. We are keen to support. An early estimate is that £2.5m is needed to new compliant fire doors. More may be needed. The safety of residents is a priority; however, the risk is low as other measures are in place. Additional fire assessments agree that the risk is low. The Chair also stated that it was felt that 2 years after Grenfell progress by the national government was slow progress.

The Chair asked the Committee to remember the late Steve Parry. The vulnerable residents have lost an advocate. The Chair requested a minute silence.

4 CALL OVER

4.1 It was agreed that all items would be reserved for discussion.

5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

a) Petitions

5.1 There were no petitions

b) Questions

5.2 Daniel Harris asked the following question:

“In 2016 this committee was asked to consider implementing full call recordings within the housing department, due to reports from vulnerable people reporting incidents of bullying; misinformation, lies and other allegations. Obviously when challenged could never be referred back to because calls are not recorded. This was causing significant stress to service users then and it still is today, three years later. Can the chair confirm what, if any calls are currently recorded within the housing department? How long these are stored for? And what security and audit trail procedures are in place to ensure no foul play or tampering?”

5.3 The Chair replied as follows:

“Thank you for your question.

In Housing calls are currently only recorded for the Repairs Helpdesk, this is currently out sourced to Mears. However, we are making a concentrated effort to have call recording in place across seven frontline teams in housing once the repairs service comes in House in April 2020. We will be happy to share more detail about this nearer time on issues being worked through now, such as call retention time and security and audit procedures.

Your question includes comments about Housing’s service provision to vulnerable people which I would also like to address. I think this is particularly in relation to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This part of the service continues to have a considerable amount of scrutiny. As a result, we have had a lot of input and feedback from across the entire sector dealing with homelessness – some good, much not so good. This has provided a huge opportunity for us, we are working to improve the service to one that looks outward to our partners, stakeholders and the communities we serve and representatives in campaigning and advocacy groups. For example, we have been working with Fulfilling Lives on service provision and issues relating to the quality of Emergency Accommodation. We very recently asked Fulfilling Lives to undertake mystery shopping in the service. Once we have their report we will be happy to share the action plan of improvements we will be making. We are also going to use this feedback to inform training all frontline staff will go on which focuses on providing a service to people who may be in crisis and/or have experienced past trauma. Head of Tenancy Services, Justine Harris would very much like to meet with you and explain how we intend to implement this and the improvements we anticipate it will make.

5.4 Mr Harris requested to see the costs before 2020 as a supplementary question.

5.5 The Chair stated that the Council is happy to work together with Mr Harris and stated that the recording of calls will take time and will include training. The Chair agreed to keep Mr Harris informed of progress in this matter.

5.6 Michael Jenkins asked the following question:

“I am deeply grateful for the home that I am given to live in, and I love where I live. The outdoors condition of Stanmer Heights, breaks my heart and deeply saddens me. Each year, all the people who live in Stanmer Heights, pay £670,000, for living there. Please can the Chair and the Executive Director, of Brighton and Hove City Council Housing, create a care plan for Stanmer Heights, please, so that during this Year, everything is made nice in Stanmer Heights, please, and, please can I assist you, with the attention to detail needed for this care plan.”

5.7 The Chair replied as follows:

Mr Jenkins was informed that the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods Communities & Housing and Head of Income Involvement and Improvement have meet with residents regarding the bin store and play areas and will be following up with meeting in July with residents, officers and ward councillors to discuss all matters regarding Stanmer Heights.

Mr Jenkins commented that he had created a Stanmer Heights website: stanmerheights@wordpress.com and has listed architectural condition of Stanmer Heights and noted with 400 photos 22 holes in roofs, which has been there for more than 1 and ¼ years, cables dangling and aerials missing. The properties are in disrepair.

In answer to the comments, Mr Jenkins was thanked for his interest and support and informed that the website would be looked at and Mr Jenkins was invited to attend the meetings for tenants in July. The Chair confirmed details would be sent.

6 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS

.1 None

7 CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

7.1 The Committee considered the report from Monitoring Officer that has been provided to provide information on the committee’s terms of reference and related matters including the appointment of its Urgency Sub-Committee.

7.2 Councillor Mears commented that caution should be used and not to use the subcommittee as a bypass of the regular Housing & New Homes Committee.

- 7.3 Councillor Gibson noted the sad passing of Steve Parry who worked hard for residents. The recommendation to accept was welcomed. Councillor Mears worries were shared however the Sub Committee could be used to buy properties when opportunities arose.
- 7.4 RESOLVED: That the Housing & New Homes Committee noted the Terms of Reference attached to the agenda as appendix A to agenda item 7; Approved that the establishment of an urgency subcommittee consisting of the Chair of the Committee and two other Members (nominated in accordance with the scheme for the allocation of seats for committees), to exercise its powers in relation to matters of urgency, on which it is necessary to make a decision before the next ordinary meeting of the Committee.

8 YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE AND USE OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FUNDING

- 8.1 The Committee considered the report from Executive Director of Families, Children and Learning to provide Members with an update on youth services including the use of the Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) annual £250,000 to the budget. The report included information from April 2018 to March 2019 with outcomes for council tenants and their families. Information on the Youth Led Grants and the work of the Council's Youth Participation Team is included.
- 8.2 The meeting was attended by 4 members of the 'StepOut' project and two accompanying adults including Hangleton & Knoll Project Chief Executive - Jo Martindale and Nina.
- 8.3 The Members were informed by the young attendees that the project has promoted volunteering by young people. Each person is given a passport to record the volunteering undertaken. The project has helped young people develop in all areas including applying for jobs. A secondary group has been created called Kids Crew for 8 – 12 year olds who meet monthly with activities suggested by the group members such as cooking, games, programmed events, outdoor visits, all to build and increase confidence. Support is ongoing into employment, giving support to families with little budget. The project has assisted group members to push forward to jobs and careers that would not have been available before. The group wanted the committee to understand that younger children were helped older children, and this helped the members to make friends more easily. The younger members of the group stated that school and family life could be challenging, and the project had given them a place to talk to others in similar circumstances, and to Youth workers who care.
- 8.4 The Chair thanked the group for the presentation.
- 8.5 Councillors joined together to congratulate the group on their presentation.
- 8.6 Councillor Mears praised the brilliant Youth work being carried out across the city and in Rottingdean / Saltdean areas and wished the work to continue.

- 8.7 Councillor Heley thanked the StepOut members for coming. It was noted that mental health issues affecting young people were supported by the project and schools in the city as a priority. Jo Martindale stated that extra help is available including specific groups such as young women, helping to improve wellbeing, and young men who have been helped with activities such as boxing. Fishing has given young men time away from the estates where they live and time for reflection. Grant funding has included contributions from Sussex Community Trust.
- 8.8 Councillor Osborne commented that the presentation was inspirational. Councillor Osborne was informed that Youth Grant Outcomes were only measured at initial stage, however the ethos is to raise aspirations. Jo Martindale confirmed to the Councillors that data bases were shared with East and West Sussex. Impact is also measured by case studies with older youth reporting back on impact of support throughout life. Councillor Osborne was informed that young men responded well to single gender settings where they can receive support.
- 8.9 Councillor Knight congratulated the group and felt the funding had been well used.
- 8.10 Councillor Gibson commented that the youth group brought the project to life and it is clear the impact that funding had had. Councillor Knight was informed by the youth attendees that the younger group of 8 – 12 year olds formed itself and designed its own agenda. They meet in the community centre and enjoy trips outside, arts & crafts, carrying for bees, food preparation and cooking. It was noted that all of the events help to build relationships across ages and with contemporaries. Nina confirmed that the group come up with the ideas and plan all the events with little adult involvement. Councillor Gibson supported the group and felt others could learn from them. Councillor Gibson supported the report.
- 8.11 Councillor Atkinson thanked the group for attending the meeting, congratulated the Youth Grants Projects winner and noted that in North Portslade youth groups were using Mile Oak recreation ground.
- 8.12 The Chair thanked the group for attending and commented that youth clubs are a good thing.
- 8.13 RESOLVED: That the Housing & New Homes committee: 1. notes the report; 2. Ensures that the report is shown to the next round of area panels; 3. That the Housing & New Homes Committee agrees in principle, subject to the views of Area Panel to include a minimum of £0.125m for Youth Services in the HRA budget for 2020/21 in order to extend existing contracts for 6 months to October 2020. Subject to Policy, Resources & Growth Committee approving this as part of the HRA budget in February 2020; 4. That a progress report is considered by the Committee in June 2020.

9 USE OF RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS FOR APPROPRIATION OF PROPERTIES TO THE HRA AND GRANT TO HOMES FOR BRIGHTON & HOVE LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP (LLP)

- 9.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing forecasting an under spend of the use of Right to Buy (RTB) receipts for the final quarter of 2018/19. The report would also be presented to the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee.
- 9.2 In answer to questions Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that the joint venture may use receipts via the Limited Liability Partnership Board, which is a partnership between Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) and Hyde Housing, and not by Hyde Housing alone. It was also noted that the receipts cannot be given to a company wholly owned by BHCC.
- 9.3 Councillor Knight was informed that the National Government were consulting local authorities on the use of only 30% of the fund to be used to supply affordable housing across the city. It was noted that the authority is lobbying the government to change the percentage and there is not mechanism in place at the moment to help. Councillors were informed that changes may be possible in the future.
- 9.4 Councillor Mears was informed that new builds constructed with funds can be placed into general housing stock and not just for social rented housing. It was noted that temporary accommodation can be placed eventually into the general housing stock. Temporary accommodation income would be returned to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and it was clarified that the item would also be going before The Policy, Resources & Growth Committee.
- 9.5 Councillor Gibson was informed that the delay in buying properties related to asbestos issues arising during the buying process which in turn delayed works to the building. The buying of two further properties fell through as a result of onsite asbestos issues. It was noted that 5.5 full time employees (FTE) had been achieved from funding and this had increased the productivity.
- 9.6 The Committee voted on the recommendations and these were agreed by all Members. The recommendations in the report were carried.
- 9.7 **RESOLVED:** That the Housing & New Homes Committee:
- 9.8 That the Housing & New Homes Committee notes that the following decisions have been taken by the Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing:
- 9.8.1 to appropriate Flat 1 Greenleas, Hangleton Valley Drive and The Bungalow, Drove Road Portslade from the General Fund to the HRA;
 - 9.8.2 to make a transfer from the HRA of £0.548m to the General Fund in consideration for the appropriation referred to at 9.8 above;
 - 9.8.3 to make a grant of £0.223m to the LLP.
- 9.9 That the Housing & New Homes Committee recommends to Policy, Resources & Growth that it agrees that the general fund will receive £0.112m less RTB receipts in 2019/20, therefore increasing the receipts available for use by the HRA.

10 ANNUAL REPORT 2019

- 10.1 The Committee considered the report from Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing that has been provided to council tenants and leaseholders.

The regulatory framework from social housing in England from the Regulator for Social Housing, sets out the requirements for the areas that must be covered in the report and include information on the repairs and maintenance budget, timely and relevant information, and support for tenants to build capacity and more effectively involvement.

- 10.2 Councillor Atkinson commented that the report was lively, easy-to-read and the recruitment of a Senior Leaseholder Liaison Officer, following feedback from the Leaseholder Action Group, along with a single phone number for residents to report anti-social behaviour were positive steps forward.
- 10.3 Councillor Mears commented that the report was detailed and considered the photovoltaic installations on three housing blocks, were good improvements to reduce residents fuel bills.
- 10.4 Councillor Hugh-Jones stated that the report was good and congratulated all involved. Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that online surveys will be available to all tenants via the 'Homing-In' magazine with phone numbers to call for residents to give feedback. It was noted that bids will be placed with European Union funded Sustainable Housing Initiatives in Excluded Neighbourhoods (SHINE) project whatever the situation is with the UK leaving the European Union. The photovoltaic improvements were welcomed.
- 10.5 Councillor Heley was informed that the door-to-door survey carried out across the city related to: repairs; what was going well; and what are the residents wants for the future. It was noted that the feedback informs the repair and maintenance service.
- 10.6 Councillor Mears noted that not all tenants were online and welcomed the support phone line. Councillor Mears was informed that mutual exchanges were preferred online as this allowed tracking of information. Customers are offered the alternative of phoning staff for assistance and to 'act as the customers hands' to infill online forms. It was noted that 49 field officers operate in the Hangleton and Knoll areas. These officers have visited homes and interacted with the community. Councillors were informed that the field officers were happy to give feedback to the Members and to meet on site to discuss issues if requested.
- 10.7 Councillor Osborne was informed that previous figures for the 'How do we spend our income?' could be provided if Members wished to compare.
- 10.8 **RESOVLED:** That the Housing & New Homes Committee approved the draft Annual Report 2019 to Council tenants and leaseholders.
- 11 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR 2018/19**
- 11.1 The Committee considered the report from Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing that covers quarter 4 of the financial year 2018/19 alongside end of year results. Ododo Dafe - Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, drew the Committee's attention to the highlights listed, including:
- Rent collection and current arrears – 97.81% of rent collected.
 - Customer services and complaints – 91% of calls answered and 90% of stage one complaints responded to within 10 working days.

- Empty home turnaround time – 142 homes re-let in an average of 33 days (or 51 days including time spent in major works).
- Repairs and maintenance – routine repairs took an average of 12 days to complete and 97% of appointments were kept.
- Estates service – 78% of bulk waste jobs completed within 7 working days.
- Anti-social behaviour – 85% of people surveyed were satisfied with the way their anti-social behaviour complaint was dealt with.
- Tenancy management – 25 people helped to keep their tenancies which were at risk.
- Seniors housing – 96% of residents have had their annual review.

- 11.2 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that the improvements resulting from photovoltaic placements were not included in this report. It was noted that pre-improvement figures are measured against post work figures to measure performance.
- 11.3 Martin Reid – Assistant Director of Housing, informed the committee that making the housing stock more energy efficient was an ongoing matter, with older stock raising more issues. Energy bills will be looked at for residents and tenants in older housing blocks. It was noted that £11m is spent annually on new programmes.
- 11.4 Councillor Heley noted the two flats in Preston Park ward undergoing major works and the effects on the neighbouring properties. It was hoped that the works would be concluded soon to reduce the impact on neighbours.
- 11.5 Councillor Atkinson stated they were concerned regarding the number of tenants affected by arrears under Universal Credit.
- 11.6 Councillor Mears noted that the structural repairs at Leach Court were stated as complete. It was noted that the appearance of the Leach Court did not seem to indicate that this was the case. Martin Reid agreed that this would be looked into. Councillor Mears was pleased to forward movement on the Oxford Street conversion of offices to flats, however it appeared to be a lengthy process. Martin Reid stated that party-wall agreements had delayed the development, along with other planning consent issues.
- 11.7 Councillor Gibson was informed that a percentage of tenants in rent arrears under Universal Credit can be helped. Alternative payment agreements are available. It was noted that Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), who have strict criteria, and Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) can be used for rent, and arrears. Tenants with Universal Credit issues are assessed on a case-by-case approach. It was noted that next year higher rent arrears are expected, as a result more help will be given to residents. Martin Reid informed the committee that major works do go out to tender and value for money is a deciding factor. It was noted that annual benchmarking against other authorities was challenging as other Councils were only similar in general terms.
- 11.8 RESOLVED: That the Housing & New Homes Committee notes the report.

12 PURCHASE OPTIONS FOR SHORT TERM TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communications & Housing that sought to improve housing supply in the city, in particular the supply of affordable homes for rent which is a key element of the citywide Housing Strategy and the commitment to provide more council owned temporary accommodation. The report sets out options and considerations to achieve the delivery of short-term accommodation by the council.
- 12.2 Following questions Councillor Mears was informed that short-term accommodation was not good for people. It was stated that suitable new homes that can be used ongoing as permanent accommodation in the future are needed and emergency accommodation needs to be reduced. The strategy is to reduce the use of temporary accommodation through early intervention, increased use of private rented accommodation and moving people on through the Housing Allocation policy. It was also noted that the model is to have less short term / emergency accommodation and more long-term accommodation. It was noted that appendix of the report outlined the modelled number of units in April 2019 and showed the planned reduction over the year to March 2020.
- 12.3 Councillor Allcock stated that there was a national housing crisis and there was a need to build as many new homes as possible. It was considered a positive that temporary accommodation could be flexible.
- 12.4 Councillor Heley was informed that the purchase of accommodation was only within and not outside the city and there were no plans to change the policy at this time.
- 12.5 Councillor Atkinson noted the 1.2m from 2015/16 to 2.8m in 2018/19 due to the increased demand for temporary accommodation. It was also considered that under revenue costs – staffing, regular checks by security on properties out-of-hours and ‘to be called in an emergency’ was a positive way forward.
- 12.6 Councillor Gibson welcomed the report and agreed that replacing costly providers was a positive as the Authority would own the assets at the end and agreed that the modelling was very good.
- 12.7 Councillor Gibson was informed following questions that income assumptions on average to external providers was £282.00 per property per week, with an average income of £157.00 giving a net cost to the general fund of £125.00 per property per week. It was also noted that the current average repair time is five months.
- 12.8 Councillor Brennan was informed that Wi-Fi could be supplied to Brighton and Hove City Council accommodation at additional cost.
- 12.9 The Chair noted the comments and welcomed the report and the financial implications set out in the report.

12.10 RESOLVED: That it be noted the contents of the report and the business case will be developed to assess available properties as being potentially suitable for Short-term Temporary Accommodation for consideration at a future committee.

13 FUTURE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE DELIVERY – UPDATE

- 13.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communications & Housing to update the committee on the progress of the programme for the future delivery or responsive repairs, empty property refurbishments, planned maintenance and improvements programmes and major capital projects to council housing stock post April 2020 (the 'Programme') when the current contractual arrangements expire.
- 13.2 Councillor Mears noted that the reports and lists of 'Programme' team officers are helpful. It was noted that the 'Programme' team were within budget and the Southern Housing Group formed part of the peer engagement group in order to gain insight best practice advice from all areas of housing.
- 13.3 Councillor Atkinson commented that they supported the apprenticeship scheme. The committee were informed that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 as amended (TUPE) protects the terms and conditions of employment of transferring staff from Mears. It was noted that the training budget for apprenticeships is protected and the transfer of staff regarding HR, pay, training and support for transferring staff.
- 13.4 Councillor Hugh-Jones was informed that the procurement standards would be confirmed and be reported to the Members.
- 13.5 Councillor Osborne was informed that the stock review would be an external overview of blocks of flats to be undertaken by a consultant.
- 13.6 Councillor Brennan welcomed the social value which the Council will have opportunity to develop over time.
- 13.7 RESOLVED: That the Housing & New Homes Committee notes the progress with the Programme for the future delivery of responsive repairs and empty property refurbishments, planned maintenance and improvement programmes and major capital projects to council housing stock which is outlined in the body of the report.

14 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL

- 14.1 RESOLVED: That report relating to Item 12 on the agenda, Purchase Options for Short-term Temporary Accommodation be referred to the council meeting on the 25th July for information.

The Meeting concluded at 19.23

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of