

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.00pm 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

HOVE TOWN HALL, - COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Williams (Chair) Allcock, Gibson (Opposition Spokesperson), Mears (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Fowler, Heley, Hugh-Jones and Osborne

Other Members present: Councillors

PART ONE

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) Declaration of Substitutes:

Councillor John Allcock substituted for Councillor Nichole Brennan.

The Democratic Services officer stated that there is currently a vacancy for the Chair of the meeting and the committee is required to appoint one. Nominations were received for Councillor Gill Williams from Councillor Peter Atkinson, seconded by Councillor Theresa Fowler. The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Gill Williams to the Chair.

(b) Declarations of Interest:

Councillor Theresa Fowler declared an interest in item 14. The Councillor will step out of the meeting and not take part in the any discussions or decisions.

- (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 PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were accepted as a record of the meeting on 19 June 2019.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Thank you for all attending this meeting of Housing Committee, my first as chair. I would like to thank Cllr Allcock for his work as chair and wish him well as the new chair of Children and Young People's committee and Deputy Leader of the Council.

As I am new to this role, there is a lot for me to learn but I have been impressed with what I have seen so far. I think the work plan, we will be discussing at tonight's meeting is exciting and is a real opportunity to make a difference to people in the city.

There are a couple of things I would like to mention.

Earlier this year, we carried out structural surveys on our eight 'large panel structure' tower blocks. These surveys were conducted by specialist structural engineers and found that there are no structural issues with any of the buildings. The report also stated that the buildings are generally in good structural condition. The report did highlight some non-urgent repairs, and these will be scheduled into our programme of planned maintenance. We're now writing to residents of the blocks about the survey results and will be bringing a report updating the committee on this to November's Housing Committee.

I was really pleased that our new 12 council homes in Kensington Street are now completed and residents have moved in – This brings the numbers of new homes built under our homes for neighbourhood programme to 185 and will make a real difference to people needing homes in our city.

As many of you will know our annual City-Wide tenant event, City Assembly, is taking place on 28 September 2019. I look forward to a lively event, hearing the views of tenants. We have changed the format to make it more interactive which I think will be positive.

4 CALL OVER

It was agreed that the following items would be called for discussion:

7	Housing & New Homes Strategy Delivery Targets 2019/23
8	Housing Supply Update Report 2019/23
9	Home Purchase Policy Progress Update
10	Evictions from Temporary Accommodation Annual Update
11	Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy Development and Consultation
12	Night Shelter & Supported Accommodation for Rough Sleepers
14	Disposal by Lease of Two Sites at Dunster Close, Hollingdean

The following items were not called for discussion and the recommendations contained therein are therefore approved and adopted.

13	Frederick Street – Scheme Approval
15	Housing Management Performance Report Quarter 1 – 2019/20

5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

a) Petitions

Homeless Bill of Rights – Item referred from Council.

b) Questions

I. Question from Valerie Paynter

How many of the 57 flats at Clarendon House on the Clarendon & Ellen Estate have been either transferred to Seaside Homes or have been leased back from leaseholders & used for temporary/short-term housing, please?

Response from the Chair

Thank you for your question.

- In Clarendon House we have 10 Seaside units and 4 Private Sector Leased properties.
- In Ellen Street we have 1 Seaside unit and no private sector leased properties.

In answer to a supplementary question Valerie Paynter was informed that Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) were aware of the anti-social behaviour at Clarendon House. It was noted that Martin Reid and Larissa Reed would be visiting the estate to understand issues. Valerie Paynter was invited to accompany the visit.

II. Question from Barry Hughes

On Sylvan Hall Estate four blocks have recently been refurbished including new roofs. These blocks were well built post war and all could have had an extra floor built on top, I understand that Government thinking would allow this without recourse to planning, resulting in additional units for the HRA. An extra floor on each of these blocks would have produced 9 one-bedroom flats and 6 two-bedroom flats.

I hear this is an idea under discussion but is it not a policy that should be implemented at Sylvan Hall, Stage 2 and citywide now?

Response from the Chair.

Thank you for your question which is very relevant to one of the council's key priority areas - to increase the supply of council housing in the city.

As outlined in our Housing Committee Priorities and work plan to be discussed at this meeting, the council is considering all opportunities for achieving additional council and other affordable homes.

This may include options to build on top of existing blocks where:

- This is possible and allowable under planning policy;
- There is a sustainable business case;
- There is resident support.

We have recently bid for, and been awarded, £50,000 from the Local Government Association (under their 'Building Council Homes' fund) to help us look at potential sites for additional council homes and accelerate delivery.

As outlined in our Housing supply update (also to be discussed at this meeting) we are committing significant resources to increase officer support for the delivery of our plan to achieve our target of 800 additional council homes over the next 4 years.

This includes newly developed sites, buying back homes previously sold under the Right-to-Buy, using infill sites on council estates, and building additional housing within existing blocks.

While the council has not yet developed a specific policy on building on top of or to the side of existing council blocks of flats our housing revenue account asset management strategy expressly supports best use of our land and buildings to deliver more homes.

We would be pleased to explore further any proposals to provide extra floors on blocks where this is feasible, fits within our repairs and improvement programme and has the support of residents.

No supplementary questions were asked by Barry Hughes.

III. Question from David Spafford

71/73 Grand Parade, is freehold HRA property, leased on a full Repairing lease to Optivo Housing Association, is grade two listed.

The lease with Optivo has under a year left to run.

The property is divided up in to several homes some on short leases and others on 30day notice tenancies on Social rents.

Are there plans to have the building surveyed and a notice of dilapidations served on the freeholder or are the cost of bringing the property up to standard, Better Homes, BHCC standards, Grade Two, to fall on the council tenants though the housing revenue amount.

Response from the Chair.

Thank you for your question.

As you've identified 71 – 73 Grand Parade is leased by Brighton & Hove City Council.

The properties were leased to South London Family Housing Association Limited in December 1997 on a 25-year lease.

This lease ends in December 2022, the tenant may wish to renew the lease at this point.

Should the property be handed back then the council will work to manage this appropriately and to ensure that any Housing Revenue Account or General Fund interests are managed.

This is something that the council has done successfully on the return of other leased properties over recent years.

We will be liaising Optivo as we approach lease end with a view to ascertaining their future intentions.

In response to a supplementary question David Spafford was informed that there were no stock condition surveys proposed. When properties are bought back from residents they will be checked. Residents can ask at anytime for issues to be checked.

(c) Deputations

Deputation on the Homeless Bill of Rights

On 25th July 2019 the Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition presented a petition to the full Council calling upon the city of Brighton & Hove to adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights. The petition had more than 2,500 signatures (it now has more). John Allcock, chair of the Housing and New Homes Committee, welcomed it warmly, as did Amy Heley of the Green Party and Mary Mears of the Conservative Party. The Council noted the petition and referred it to the Housing and New Homes Committee for action.

Among the items for this committee to consider is item 7, the Strategic Delivery Targets, and we welcome the commitment in these to the Homeless Bill of Rights; in particular, in Appendix 2, to consult on how best to implement a Bill of Rights for homeless people. However, we are very concerned that there is no item on your agenda to take this forward, and yet there is an item to start a consultation on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the next five years.

This deputation argues that this is in danger of putting the cart before the horse. The Homeless Bill of Rights does not, in itself, have financial implications; it is a statement of principles, a high promise to our homeless and our rough sleepers to make their human rights real, a set of standards for the Council to hold itself to. It should inform every step of the consultation on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping; it is relevant to every word of it; it is the common thread that should run through the whole.

Standing as we are on the threshold of winter, the Coalition urges the Committee to pledge itself without delay to these principles of equality, humanity and dignity in its

treatment of the homeless, and to integrate them into every part of the consultation on its homelessness strategies.

We accompany this deputation with the text of the Homeless Bill of Rights, since it is not in your papers today.

David Thomas - Legal Officer, Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition.

Chairs response

Thank you for your deputation and for the petition which was referred to this committee from full Council on 25 July.

My predecessor Cllr Allcock emphasised at the Council meeting that he was keen for the Housing Committee and the council to adopt a Homeless Bill of Rights as an important statement of principle and commit to working for the human rights, equality, and dignity of our homeless residents. As the new Chair of Housing I can assure you that I am committed to this also.

We welcome both the petition and your deputation and as you will later hear and be able to see in the report for item 7 *Housing and New Homes Strategic Delivery Targets - 2019-2023*, both appendix 1 and 2 reference joint Labour/Green plans to review, consult and hopefully adopt a Homeless Bill of Rights.

We have agreed to ask the Executive Director for a report to the next committee meeting on 13 November. This will involve a concise consultation with other departments in the Council, the Police, health and relevant community and voluntary sector partners about the principals and implications of adopting the Bill. Their views will be referenced in the report.

I understand your point that the Bill itself has no financial implications but as I said, we are committed to consult on, and adopt a homeless bill of rights and the adoption of this bill may have financial and legal implications.

In addition, the timing for us to consider adopting the Bill of Rights is helpful as we are currently reviewing our rough sleeping and homeless strategy (item 11 on the agenda) and we want to reference the bill of rights as part of this piece of work.

Thank you for your continued work in advocating for our homeless residents.

6 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

- a) **Petitions:** There were no petitions
- b) **Written Questions:** There were no written questions
- c) **Letters:** One letter has been received:

We are submitting this letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Housing Committee meeting of 18th September 2019.

As chair of the Housing Committee, I'm sure Councillor Allcock shares our concerns about the conditions in temporary accommodation and the need for these to be drastically improved.

The fact that existing contracts expire in May 2020 presents an opportunity for us to guarantee an improvement to conditions. These conditions must be laid out before the re-procurement process begins.

The Council must commit itself to improving conditions in temporary accommodation before starting the re-procurement process with providers of temporary accommodation, and if the provider does not agree to pay for these additional services, we feel that the council should cover the costs.

The council has a duty to ensure that temporary accommodation is a safe, comfortable and welcoming place, and the current conditions do not meet these requirements. Extra charges for basic services result in unnecessary stress and financial burden for people at points of crisis in their lives, so the council should alleviate this as much as we can by covering the costs.

Given the above, I would ask that as the Chair, Councillor Allcock agrees with us that the Committee should to commit to the following conditions being included in the procurement documents:

That:

- Service charges should be paid by the council, not the tenants;*
- Laundry facilities must be provided for tenants;*
- Basic kitchen equipment (kettles, crockery, cutlery, toaster, microwave, dishtowels) and bedding must be provided to tenants free of charge;*
- Wi-Fi must be provided to tenants free of charge*

*Yours sincerely,
Councillor Amy Heley
Councillor Nichole Brennan*

Chairs response

Dear Councillors

Thank you for your letter to Housing Committee regarding the future specification for short term managed temporary accommodation.

We are keen to ensure that accommodation is as good as it can be within the budget we have available.

We are starting to obtain feedback on the future specifications for short term accommodation that is managed on our behalf.

We will be seeking feedback from the current providers and the Temporary Accommodation Action Group along with some users of the accommodation currently procured.

We also welcome feedback from members.

We have previously had feedback from Committee over travel costs for clients living in our short-term temporary accommodation and will look at this as part of this work.

Following this consultation, we are aiming to bring a Report to November Housing Committee that sets out options with indicative costs.

Any additional facilities and equipment that the council require providers to deliver would be an additional cost over and above the inflationary uplift on current specification.

In considering the proposals outlined, we anticipate that based on current specifications costs could increase which would potentially create a budget pressure despite the ambition to reduce our expenditure on use of such accommodation.

In light of this additional budget would need to be identified.

As you are aware the general fund is under increasing pressure and so unfortunately, we do have to be mindful of that and make some choices.

Nevertheless, we are committed to looking how conditions can be improved.

This is in addition to reviewing how we can provide other solutions for households so that their stay in short term accommodation is for a minimal time and only then where we have been unable to find another housing solution to either:

- prevent their becoming homeless;
- and/or to find a speedy solution to resolve a household's homelessness.

Once we have feedback and all additional costs, including related to the proposals in this letter, it is proposed that Housing Committee members will then review and recommend an option to Policy and Resources Committee who will make the final decision in January 2020.

Committee comments:

- 1) Councillor Mary Mears commented that there is a wide variety of accommodation across the city and some temporary accommodation was not acceptable. The costings need to be looked at in detail with a lot falling within the general fund and some from Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 2) Councillor Theresa Fowler agreed that Wi-Fi would help temporary accommodation residents with loneliness.
- 3) Councillor David Gibson noted that tenants placed out of the city centre have encountered difficulties in back into the centre.

- 4) Councillor John Allcock noted that the needs of temporary accommodation want to be addressed.

Resolved: That a report would be submitted to a future meeting.

7 HOUSING AND NEW HOMES STRATEGIC DELIVERY TARGETS - 2019-2023

- 1) The Committee considered the report presented by Larissa Reed to seek agreement for the priorities and work plan for the Housing Committee and service for the next four years in order to inform future reporting to Committee on key areas of officer focus and delivery, budget strategy, asset review, investment plans and resource allocation, resident engagement and formal consultation, engagement and consultation with partners and key stakeholders.
- 2) Councillor Mary Mears commented that the Conservative Group had been excluded and felt that this was a coalition report. The Councillor made the following points: affordable housing would be around 1,000 under the joint venture; photovoltaic panels need to be rolled out across housing stock; the fire authority need to have input into improving council housing; approve of arrears policy; financial report to be submitted to January 2020 Committee to understand how additional affordable homes will be achieved; what were the set up costs for field licensing officers.
- 3) Councillor Peter Atkinson was pleased to see references to: key workers under 'Enabling more affordable home ownership'; modern methods of construction under 'Providing additional affordable homes'; 'Alleviating poverty'.
- 4) Councillor John Allcock noted that under the joint venture the administration was working closely with the Green Party and this had been considered constructive. The reduction of carbon comments was welcomed. It was noted that having a clear sense of direction for housing supply was very important.
- 5) Councillor David Gibson noted that the Labour and Green parties were closely aligned on housing and working together would will achieve more. The Councillor made the following comments: Under the combined manifesto pledges it was good to see 1,500 new homes; striving to achieve the end of homelessness was a good thing; reducing carbon emissions by 2030 was a huge challenge; the increased spending on photovoltaic panels was going ahead; tenant involvement via area panels needs to take place to monitor pledges; pleased to see 346 homes already granted planning permission, making the challenging 1,500 more achievable.

Resolved: That the Housing Committee agreed:

- I. the contents and timings of the work plan.
- II. to receive a progress report on alternate meetings.
- III. that the work plan and joint programme be referred to Area Panels for comment.

8 HOUSING SUPPLY UPDATE REPORT - 2019-2023

- 1) The Committee considered the report presented by Diane Hughes to update the Committee on the delivery of new affordable housing by the council, and future plans to escalate delivery by utilising the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing flexibilities and revenue underspends in the HRA.
- 2) Councillor Mary Mears commented that the HRA is ring fenced to support tenants. It was important to watch budgets and spending. The budget pressure of recruiting staff for the housing supply programme was noted in relation to the HRA revenue budget for 2020/21. It was noted that the Councillor was nervous about taking monies from the HRA.
- 3) The Member was informed that HRA covers some of the most important work going on in the city. It was confirmed that HRA was ring fenced to council housing only and the staff recruited would help provision of affordable housing across the city.
- 4) Councillor Siriol Hugh-Jones welcomed the additional housing supply and noted BHCC was working towards zero carbon homes in the city by 2030. Any individual schemes will come to committee. The Councillor requested that the Brighton General Hospital be included in the Home Purchase Policy under land and buildings acquisitions. It was noted that the proposed residents of the move-on accommodation to be sited at the former Hollingbury Library will require low to medium level support. A report on the matter will be submitted to a future meeting of the committee.

Resolved: That the Housing Committee agreed the following recommendations:

- I. That the Housing Committee note the contents of this report.
- II. That the Housing Committee notes that estimates for new revenue spend on housing supply for 2020/21 will be included in the HRA Revenue and Capital Budget Report for approval in February 2020.
- III. That Housing Committee recommend to Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee that for 2019/20, any new revenue costs (estimated at £0.100m) arising from the increased support for delivery of housing supply, should be met from HRA general reserves (current balance £6.980m).

9 HOME PURCHASE POLICY - PROGRESS UPDATE

- 1) The Committee considered a report presented by Diane Hughes updating the Committee on the operation of the Home Purchase Policy following the policy agreement in September 2017 and the feedback on the pilot and revised policy presented in September 2018.
- 2) Councillor Mary Mears was informed that the rent support reserve was £1m. The Councillor also considered that the report lacked clarification.
- 3) Councillor David Gibson noted that 40 additional homes had been built this year, above numbers reached in previous 4 years. It was noted that the rent reserve of

£1m has not been used yet and the right-to-buy receipts need to be used. The Councillor supported the report.

- 4) Councillors were informed that delegation as been given to the Constitutional Working Group with no objections at Full Council.

Resolved: That the Housing Committee:

- I. Notes the outcomes of the Home Purchase Policy to date.
- II. Recommends that Policy and Resources Committee agree an additional HRA capital budget of £3.000m for the scheme for 2019/20.
- III. Councillors were informed that the Constitutional Working Group had indicated that it had no objection to an increase in the threshold to the delegations given to the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing to permit the acquisition of land for residential purposes only, this subject to Committee approval.
- IV. Recommends use of the rent support reserve held within the HRA reserves to enable consideration of reduction of rents under the Home Purchase Policy to achieve social rents or 27.5% living wage rents.

10 EVICTIONS FROM TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ANNUAL UPDATE

- 1) The Committee considered the report presented by Sylvia Peckham to update the Committee on the numbers of evictions from Emergency accommodation over the last year.
- 2) Councillor Amy Heley was informed that training is given on the job through experience. Sylvia Peckham attends sites and checks in with residents to ascertain feedback.
- 3) Councillor Mary Mears noted that military veterans have complex needs and civilian life can be challenging. It was noted that stats breakdown does not identify military veterans and residency is not required when apply for accommodation which can be resolved quickly.
- 4) Councillor David Gibson noted the 412 units for short term / emergency accommodation and expressed concerns that agency support may not be to standard as was the case historically. It was considered that continuity of support was important.
- 5) Councillor John Allcock considered that working together was the best way forward to deal with the complex issues including drug use in accommodation, which has been raised with Police.
- 6) Councillor Martin Osborne was informed that the Council's duty of care stops when residents are evicted from accommodation. It was noted that vulnerable groups are

supported and if reasons for evictions are not clear then another placement will be offered.

- 7) The Committee were informed that the number of evictions is under 10%.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Housing Committee note the findings of the report.

11 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 1) The Committee considered the report presented by Justine Harris to ask for approval to commence work to consult on the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2020/25.
- 2) Councillor Peter Atkinson considered that prevention was better than cure and noted the importance of the work carried out by the options team. Imported homeless to be given affective support to return home town. It was noted that St Mungo's charity offer support in the city and help incomers to contact place of origin.
- 3) Councillor Mary Mears noted that BHCC form part of Trailblazers, an early intervention project with funding included to reduce rough sleeping in the area. The Councillor was informed that officers are aware of other funding streams including the cold weather fund.

Resolved: That the Housing Committee agreed to:

- 1) give approval to commence consultation on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.

12 NIGHT SHELTER & SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS

- 1) The Committee considered the report presented by Jenny Knight to update on the work that has taken place to develop the night shelter and supported accommodation for rough sleeper services and to seek approval from the Committee to the procurement of a joint 365-night shelter and supported accommodation service.
- 2) Councillor Siriol Hugh-Jones was informed that the single bidder proposed 29 units.
- 3) Councillor John Allcock stated that Councillor Nichole Brennan was keen to get the much-needed night shelter running.
- 4) Councillor David Gibson was informed that the single bidder would be finalising the lease of a property at the end of September 2019. The alterations to accommodation would then start in mid-November 2019. The accommodation will be released in phases.

- 5) The Chair was informed that the accommodation would be open 24/7 365 days a year.

Resolved: That the Housing Committee agreed:

- 1) That the Committee grants delegated authority to the Executive Director of Health & Adult Social Care (HASC) to take all necessary steps to:
 - (i) Procure and award a contract for Two (2) years for the provision of a joint Night shelter Service and supported accommodation service to the value of £450,000 per annum.
 - (ii) The contract is to contain a break provision permitting the council to terminate the contract in whole or in part after one year.

13 FREDERICK STREET - SCHEME APPROVAL

Resolved:

- 1) That the Housing Committee approves:
 - i. The proposed scheme of four new council homes at Frederick Street, Brighton under the New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme;
 - ii. The rent levels for the 2 bed flats are set at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and the 1 bed flats are set at 37.5% Living Wage rates in line with the New Homes Rent policy.
- 2) That the Housing Committee recommend to Policy & Resources Committee to:
 - i. Appropriate the Frederick Street car park site (7-9, Frederick Street, Brighton, BN1 4TA) for planning purposes and delegate authority to the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing to appropriate for housing once the development is complete.
 - ii. Approve the appropriation of land at Frederick Street from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account for £0.300m, being the best consideration reasonably obtainable.
 - iii. Approve the use of £0.300m of commuted sums held for housing purposes as a contribution to the total scheme costs.

14 DISPOSAL BY LEASE OF TWO SITES AT DUNSTER CLOSE, HOLLINGDEAN

- 1) The Committee considered a report presented by Emma Kumar informing the Committee of the progress of the disposal by lease of two sites at Dunster Close, Hollingdean.
- 2) Councillor Theresa Fowler having declared an interest in the item stepped out of the meeting for the duration of the discussions on the item.

- 3) Councillor Martin Osborne observed that going forward more sites need to be found in the city.
- 4) Councillor David Gibson welcomed the joint programme between BHCC and the Brighton and Hove Community Land Trust (BHCLT) who are the council's lead partner for community led housing.
- 5) Councillor John Allcock welcomed the 'community wealth building' resulting from the partnership of BHCC and BHCLT.

Resolved:

- I. That Housing Committee recommend to Policy & Resources Committee the disposal by lease of two areas of land identified at Dunster Close (Site A and Site B), to Bunker Housing Co-operative for a 125-year period with the freehold retained by the council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The granting of the lease for the site is on the basis that best consideration can take the form of an annual ground rent instead of an initial capital payment, and is subject to Bunker obtaining planning consent, securing funding and entering into a nomination's agreement with the council.
- II. That the decision at 2.1 be implemented by Housing who will report details and progress to the Housing Supply Members Board.

15 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2019/20

Resolved:

- 1) That the Housing & New Homes Committee notes and comments upon the report.

16 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

There were no items referred to Full Council.

The meeting concluded at 6.10pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of