

Residents Question Time

Items from North Area Tenants Only Meeting held on Thursday 22nd October 2019

1. Door entry systems and antisocial behaviour in low rise blocks

The written response to Area Panel did not fully address the residents' concerns, particularly in relation to the low rise flats in Horton Close, Hollingdean. The Residents' Association have been attempting to raise concerns about the condition of the blocks for a long time. They have spoken to their local Councillors and have written to Nancy Platts, leader of the Council. They have provided detailed information about the condition of the blocks, where used needles are left lying around, young people are using it as a place to hang out and people are frequently urinating.

The blocks are cleaned once a week, but the debris and urine quickly build up again. The police are aware of the problems with drug dealing in these blocks and some tenants known to be dealing have had their flats raided. This doesn't seem to result in any action being taken against tenants who are clearly in contravention of their tenancy agreement.

It was felt that the installation of door entry systems and/or security cameras would help to alleviate these problems for the other residents.

It was agreed that Housing and the Police need to work more closely with local residents to try and find long-term solutions to these ongoing problems.

Action: 3 stars (III)

It was agreed to put this forward to the Area Panel and request that a meeting be held between Housing, PCSOs and the Residents' Associations' to have a detailed discussion about the anti-social behaviour in these blocks and what positive action can be taken to resolve it in the long term.

Response from Sam Warren, Community Engagement Manager with input from Peter Maddox, Housing Officer T: – (01273) 293030

We are sorry you felt the last response did not address the concerns raised.

After you raised this issue at the last Area Panel, on 9 October 2019 the Housing North team wrote to all residents of Horton Road asking them to send us reports of anti-social behaviour.

So far we haven't had any complaints from residents from this letter, but we would like to explore these issues further with your help. We will ensure a cross service community meeting happens.

Terrence Hill, chair of Resident Only Meeting has said he will help Hollingdean Association organise for a PCSO to attend a meeting. A member of the Community Engagement team will attend and we will arrange for a member of Housing North Team and the local Councillor to attend as well.

If the association can bring some residents to this problem solving meeting we can discuss in person, help form a clearer picture of the ASB whether related to drugs, noise, or physical behaviours, in Horton Road. We can together help residents to report experiences clearly from the recent past and also, importantly how to and why they should report in the future to Housing.

For information:

Our Estates Services team have confirmed that they have seen no signs of drug use, urine or ASB of any kind during the past 2 months since this were raised as an issue. This team will always record the discovery of sharp or drug paraphernalia.

We have not heard from the police/ PSCO regarding the allegations of drug dealing within the blocks. Our working protocol with the police is that they may supply us with information about a specific address which we may take some form of tenancy action on. We are not privy to police information otherwise. Without an address, we are unable to request this information to target suspected dealers.

We have checked with your local Councillors group to find out if they have any information or reports about drug dealing or ASB. They are not aware of any complaints from either residents or the association, other than the discussions at the North Area Panel. We would like to help both the association members and local residents report issues effectively.

2. Fire at Hollingdean refuse and recycling depot

The written response to Area Panel stated that Public Health England 'have not raised any significant public health issues for us to address locally'. It also stated that 'Officers have written to five local GP practices requesting any relevant activity subsequent to the event'.

Hollingdean Residents Association is concerned about this response because they have spoken to 26 local residents who have had to go to their doctor or the hospital due to the effect of smoke inhalation following the fire at the Cityclean depot.

They are also concerned that the Council won't publish the list of five GPs surgeries they have been in contact with. Thousands of local residents use GP surgeries outside the area, so the statistics the Council are collecting will not necessarily give a full picture of the situation.

There is also concern that:

- *The Council have now closed their enquiry into the impact of the fire*
- *There isn't a siren at the depot to act as an early warning system for local residents*
- *There isn't a sprinkler system at the depot*
- *The Council didn't call a meeting to discuss the impact of the fire with local residents, leaving it to Nettleton and Dudeney Residents Association to organise*
- *The Council hasn't contacted local residents to assess the impact of the fire on them*
- *The Council isn't acknowledging that fumes from the burning of household rubbish could contain toxic particles*

Action 3 stars

It was agreed to put this forward to the Area Panel and request a response to the concerns listed above, plus details of which GP surgeries the Council has contacted and what responses have been received from them.

Collated response by Emma Mcdermott, Head of Communities, Equality and Third Sector

The Fire Service is the lead agency during a fire. Senior council staff were on-site during the fire at the Waste Transfer Station, liaising closely with the East Sussex Fire & Rescue service (ESFR) and followed their advice scrupulously.

Senior council and Veolia staff met with residents on Friday 20 September at which the council committed to reconvening another residents meeting, including ward councillors, once the investigation by the Fire Service has been completed. The results of the investigation will be used to inform plans of both Veolia (who operate the site) and the council for any changes required at the site.

At the time of writing this response, we are still awaiting the report from ESFR. The investigations will be completed over the next few weeks and a public meeting will be held in the New Year once we have completed our lessons learned review.

The Hollingdean Integrated Waste Facility consists of three separate buildings, the Materials Recovery Facility(MRF), the Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and the Visitor Centre. The fire was in the Waste Transfer Station. The Materials Recovery Facility has a full automatic sprinkler system. The Waste Transfer Station and Visitor Centre have smoke and fire detection only.

Veolia are working with East Sussex Fire and Rescue service to identify the best fire detection and management system for the Waste Transfer Station. This may be a sprinkler system.

In the meantime, Veolia has created a Quarantine Bay. Should any waste be received that is assessed as having an increased fire risk, it will be placed in the Quarantine Bay. Furthermore, material storage within the Waste Transfer Station has been reviewed and additional fire-break walls installed.

The materials in the Waste Transfer Station were non-hazardous standard waste from streets and seafront rubbish bins.

Health advice with regard to the health impact on local residents during and after the Hollingdean Waste Transfer fire on the 26 August 2019, was provided by East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFR) and subsequently by Brighton and Hove City Council. This advice was provided by Public Health England (PHE).

Public Health England's Surrey and Sussex Health Protection Team were contacted by the council's Emergency Planning Team on the morning of Bank Holiday Monday 26th August 2019 who confirmed that the correct advice was being issued. Health

messages were sent out through the council's corporate communication channels. This included information on the potential short term impact of the smoke and advice on seeking medical help. Housing staff texted all immediate residents a link to the Public Health England agreed health advice.

The council's Public Health staff communicated with five local GP practices, nearest the Hollingdean depot by email on the 28 August and subsequently followed up with those who did not reply either by email or phone. The email explained about the fire and noted that a few local people had felt unwell and expressed concerns to the council. The email also enquired if the five practices had noted anything of clinical significance relating to the fire. The practices were Park Crescent, Preston Park, St Peters, Beaconsfield and Stamford.

Additionally, Public Health staff from Brighton and Hove City Council discussed this issue with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) clinical leads. The CCG had not been notified or made aware of any concerns. The council's Director for Health & Adult Social Care also contacted A&E at Royal Sussex County Hospital on Monday 26 August to see if they were aware of any cases related to the fire and it was reported that this was not the case.

The council's Public Health team liaised with Public Health England South East to review whether further action was required. This included data collection to identify anyone who may have had symptoms related to the fire. The local Public Health England team consulted the national PHE Centre for Radiation, Chemical, Environmental Hazards (CRCE) for advice. PHE recommended that with no ongoing exposure, no further public health action (including data collection) was recommended in response to this incident.

This advice was based on the following factors:

- The size and type of fire and
- The plume

CRCE reviewed modelling of the plume obtained from Met Office Chemical Meteorology Office (CHEMET). This indicated it is likely that the plume from the fire passed over Preston Park. They reviewed historical Air Quality Monitoring data from the monitoring station at Preston Park. The station doesn't monitor particulates but does record Nitrogen Oxides (NOx). This is a marker for potential pollution from the fire. There were no recorded exceedances of hourly NOx targets after the fire.

It is likely that there will have been respiratory health effects of short term exposure to air pollution/ products of combustion (PoC), which would usually resolve within a few days. Short term exposure to air pollution/PoC is known to cause asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease exacerbations. The advice was that these should be clinically managed and did not require public health action.

3. Estate Development Budget

Coldean Independents want to submit a bid for a vandal proof bench. They had been told by their CEO to look online for the cheapest suitable bench. The meeting felt that it is not the responsibility of the local Association to source items for EDB bids, but that this is the role of the CEO or Mears EDB Project Team.

Action: 3 stars (III)

It was agreed to put this forward to the Area Panel and ask for clarification on the role of CEOs and Mears EDB Project Team in sourcing items.

Response from Sam Warren, Community Engagement Manager

Our Community Engagement Officers offers support to residents groups to achieve their aims.

With EDB it is responsibility of the group to say what they want and do some research to find a suitable item that fits their needs. The CEO can help and advise them to do that, particularly so that people learn to do that for themselves next time.

We wouldn't be able to do it for groups however partly because it would limit our capacity to help more groups but more significantly, there wouldn't be any leaning or empowerment for next time.

The Mears EDB project team can sometimes also advise with best suppliers based on previous bid and experience. For example, bids have been made in the past for outdoor street benches or indoor communal lounge chairs so we have suppliers we know and are good quality.

Residents Question Time

Items from East Resident Only Minutes 28/10/19

1. Antisocial Behaviour

The East Resident Only meeting raised concerns about antisocial behaviour at Robert Lodge to the Area Panel. The written response stated “In order to take action against someone’s tenancy we need written evidence from witnesses with details of times, dates and details of the incidents they have witnessed. We will then work with witnesses and other agencies to tackle the problem.” and “...we rely on residents to report details of incidents that they have witnessed so that we have the evidence in order to take the appropriate action.” However, many residents, especially those who are elderly, are too scared to report incidents of antisocial behaviour or to be seen to be doing so. They are even too scared to have visits from Housing Officers or the Police for fear of repercussions. The meeting felt that Housing could be doing more to listen to the information provided to them by residents and then to collect evidence in a way that will not impact on or implicate elderly or vulnerable residents who are being affected by antisocial behaviour. Suggestions were made about the use of professional witnesses or clandestine CCTV.

Action: 3 stars (III)

It was agreed to put this forward to the Area Panel and request that Housing review procedures for collecting evidence in cases of antisocial behaviour with a view to supporting witnesses and understanding their vulnerabilities.

Response from Richard Jordan-Penswick, Housing Manager

T: 01273 294650

When considering taking action against a person’s tenancy the Housing service considers all the evidence that is available, including direct evidence from a witness or victim of the behaviour, evidence from professional witnesses including Field Officers, the Police and other officers. Housing will use photographic evidence, video and CCTV where we are legally able to do so.

The Housing service is keenly aware that victims of nuisance can often be too scared to give evidence in legal proceedings and cases frequently go forwards with evidence presented in an anonymised form with no identifying information. The service operates enhanced service standards to victims of nuisance in order to both provide support and to keep individuals informed of progress. The victim support service has been highly effective in ensuring the progression of a number of complex cases where reporters have been concerned for their safety.

3. Refuse Collections

In Woodingdean the bin lorries often miss a street, or several streets, when they are doing their rounds. This means that rubbish isn't collected for two weeks and residents can never be certain when it will be done.

In Robert Lodge the recycling is being collected at irregular times. Recently there have been collections very early in the morning and late at night, so people can't rely on when it will happen.

Action: 3 stars (III)

It was agreed to put this forward to the Area Panel and request confirmation of when regular refuse and recycling collections will recommence.

Response from Jonathan Pyle, Assistant Business Support Manager, CityClean

T: 01273 292929

Following an investigation into the report of refuse and recycling not being collected on a regular basis and at irregular times, I have received confirmation from our Operations Team, that the service should now have returned to the planned schedule for collections in Woodingdean and the Operations Team are not aware of any current concerns over collections there.

There have been various reasons for delays to collections that have affected the regularity of collections since the Summer, which have now been resolved. Staff sickness over the summer and vehicle breakdowns both contributed to delays in both refuse and recycling being collected, as well as the fire at the Veolia depot in Hollingdean Lane. Whilst I cannot guarantee that there will not be any further issues with collections, we will continue to do our very best to ensure a regular and reliable service is provided to the residents, putting appropriate contingency plans in place where possible, although I am sure you can appreciate, sometimes there are circumstances outside of our control.

Residents should continue to contact CityClean directly should they have any concerns regarding collections of refuse or recycling.

Items for West Area Panel

17/12/19

from the West Area Residents' Associations' meeting 29/10/19

1. What will help us build strong Residents Associations?

West Area put forward to the Area Panel a number of suggestions and ideas for ways of building strong Residents Associations. The idea was for this to be part of a broad based, constructive discussion amongst all Resident Associations.

The written response to this item in the Area Panel agenda was the same as the response to an item from North Area. There was no response to the different points raised by West.

It was agreed to raise this again at Area Panel and ask for:

- A response to the issues raised
- An agreement to progress this discussion amongst all Residents' Associations, and look at constructive, practical ways of building stronger Associations.

Graham Dawes (Philip Court) has written a paper with some more detailed ideas about the role of Community Engagement Officers. It was agreed to also ask for this to go to the next Area Panel.

Action: 3 stars (III) for agenda setting meeting/inclusion in Area Panel agendas

Response: This item will be addressed via a workshop with residents and BHCC officers

2. Streamline taxis

Brighton and Hove City Council gives residents' representatives taxi vouchers for use with Streamline on 202020. Streamline appear to be unable to meet the needs of wheel-chair users, and are not providing a service suitable for people with disabilities.

Residents book accessible taxis in advance, but these often do not turn up, and when followed up, they are told there are no accessible taxis available, despite the booking. This has meant waits of an hour and a half or more. There seems to be a particular difficulty with assistance dogs.

This has left vulnerable residents stranded, in places they don't know and with no idea how they will get home. It is a significant obstacle facing residents in wheel-chairs who wish to participate in residents meetings.

Residents have made individual complaints to the taxi company and on the Council's on-line form. However it is felt that the Council should be raising this issue directly with Streamline.

If Streamline is unable to meet the requirements of residents in wheel-chairs and with assistance dogs, then the Council should be sourcing an alternative provider.

Action: 3 stars (III) for agenda setting meeting/inclusion in Area Panel agendas

Response: Jim Whitelegg, Regulatory Services Manager/Licensing & Trading Standards, Safer Communities. T: 01273 292438

The council recognises the importance of having a mixed fleet as being the best way to provide transport for a range of passengers, including disabled and older passengers. The council's Taxi Licensing Policy sets out procedures and best practice with regard to transporting disabled passengers, as well as requirements regarding the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles within taxi fleets.

It is an offence for a taxi to refuse a disabled passenger and the taxi licensing team will investigate any complaints, We are unable to take formal action regarding waiting times although we can make the operator aware of the complaint and record any incidents on their file, which can be taken into consideration at renewal.

We recognise the problems disabled passengers face when accessing public transport and we're hoping to do a wider review of taxi provision in the city.

Response: Emma Mcdermott, Head of Communities and Equality/Communities, Equality & Third Sector

Housing Services had a payment system established with Streamline that means we are currently tied into using this form. The Community Engagement team will write to the Director of Streamline with the support of the council's regulatory service team to raise our concerns with their service and we will explore the possibility of a payment system that allows residents to use other firms in the city.

3. Access for elderly and disabled to large rubbish bins

The re-positioning of rubbish bins from Conway Court to Sackville Road has highlighted a number of problems for elderly and disabled residents that have a wider relevance, as similar situations are occurring across the city.

- Elderly and disabled residents are not able to use the foot-bar to lift the lid of the bins, so can't open them to dispose of rubbish.
- Elderly and disabled residents are not able to walk the considerable distance from their flat to the bins.
- Elderly and disabled residents are often not able to carry rubbish. It has been suggested that they make multiple trips with very small bags, but this doesn't resolve the problem.
- Alternative methods of collection for the elderly and disabled are complicated and unreliable.

It was agreed to ask the Council for proposals about how they can improve access to rubbish collection services so they are useable by their disabled and elderly residents.

Action: 3 stars (III) for agenda setting meeting/inclusion in Area Panel agendas

Response: Justine Harris| **Head of Tenancy Services**

The Housing Estates Service is able to arrange an assisted rubbish collection for tenants who need it. Generally this will be for people who have no one else supporting them who could provide this assistance and have a mental or physical health difficulty that does not enable them to leave their homes easily. This service is offered once a week, on Friday.

Due to increasing demand we will review ways we can improve this offer. If a resident thinks they may qualify for an assisted collection, they can contact Housing Estates Service on 01273 291072 to discuss this further

4. Meeting on rubbish and refuse collection

It was noted that problems with the rubbish and refuse collection service are long-term and on-going, and come up continually at residents' meetings.

It was agreed to ask for a meeting with Rachel Chasseaud and city-wide Resident Association representatives to discuss the problems and what is being done to improve the situation.

Action: 3 stars (III) for agenda setting meeting/inclusion in Area Panel agendas

Response: Rachel Chasseaud. Assistant Director- City Environmental Management/ City Environment

Cityclean& Cityparks) T: 01273 294701 will be attending.