

### BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 12 OCTOBER 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Caulfield (Chairman); Carden, Davey, Oxley, Randall, Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson), Simson and Wells

**Tenant Representatives:** Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Chris Kift (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Pat Miles (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Beryl Snelling (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Beverley Weaver (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Muriel Briault (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group)

**In attendance:** Faith Matyszak and Linda King.

### PART ONE

#### 16. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

##### 16A Declarations of Substitute Members

- 16.1 Councillor Simson substituted for Councillor Mary Mears. Councillor Brian Oxley substituted for Councillor Pidgeon. Councillor Randall substituted for Councillor Fryer.
- 16.2 Jean Davis informed the Committee that she was in attendance to support Beryl Snelling.

##### 16B Declarations of Interests

- 16.3 Councillors Randall, Simpson and Wells, Ted Harman and Heather Hayes declared a personal interest in agenda item 25 as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

**16C Exclusion of the Press and Public**

- 16.4 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.
- 16.5 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

**17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 17.1 John Melson referred to paragraph 10.4. His main point had been that the scaffolders on site were using racist and homophobic language and that the council had taken strong affirmative action which had led to the dismissal of a worker.
- 17.2 The Interim Head of Repairs reported that he had met with the Managing Director of the scaffolding firm who had dismissed a member of staff as a result of the incident. He had been assured that there would be no re-occurrence of this behaviour.
- 17.3 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

**18. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

- 18.1 The Chairman reported that it had been confirmed at full Council that there was £14 million in the budget for repairs. Next year there would be a full budget for kitchens and bathrooms. It was not true that the council had run out of money for repairs.

**19. CALLOVER**

- 19.1 The Chairman asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.
- 19.2 **RESOLVED** - That item numbers 25, 28, 31, 32 and 34 be reserved for debate and determination.

**20. PETITIONS**

- 20.1 The Chairman noted that no petitions had been submitted for the meeting.

**21. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

- 21.1 John Melson had submitted the following question.

**Surrender of Secure Tenancies as a condition of Addiction Rehabilitation**

“A concern is raised by the above policy.

Once the Rehabilitation and Aftercare course is completed successfully why aren't the clients passported seamlessly to a new Secure Tenancy at the end of the process without the need to go through Homemove?

The security engendered by a Secure Tenancy may be a major factor in a client's ability to undertake the rehabilitation process successfully and to undermine that by putting them back into Temporary accommodation may be a contributory cause of relapse into the former, or alternative, addiction.

It appears to be a negative approach to pursue such a policy, with a potential for wastage of the time and funding already invested in the client and a potential for future loss of the client, the funding and the time involved.

Can this matter be brought as an Agenda item for discussion to HMCC please?"

21.2 The Cabinet Member gave the following response:

**Policy where a secure council tenant relinquishes their tenancy to enter residential rehabilitation.**

"Clarification has been requested in respect of the council's policy where a secure tenant surrenders their tenancy in order to enter residential rehabilitation treatment.

An enquiry has been received suggesting that, once the Rehabilitation and Aftercare course is completed successfully, former secure tenants be allocated a secure tenancy without the need to go through the Allocations Policy.

It has been suggested that, in requiring the recovered addict to use the choice based lettings scheme, and possibly move to temporary accommodation whilst waiting for a bid to be successful, may deter tenants from seeking residential rehabilitation treatment. It is further suggested that treatment may be undermined by an unsettled period in temporary accommodation that may be a contributory cause of relapse into the former, or alternative, addiction.

The enquirer suggested that they feel the council's current policy is negative, with a potential risk to the time and funding already invested in the former tenant.

**Legal Position**

Under Section 167 (8) of the Housing Act 1996, the Council is prohibited from allocating accommodation unless it is in accordance with its allocation policy. All accommodation therefore has to be allocated as per policy and we are not legally able to take properties out of Choice Based Lettings and allocate them outside of policy.

The council's allocation policy does address the issue of tenants surrendering their tenancy to undergo rehabilitation with the expectation of rehousing on completion of the programme:

Such former tenants attract priority band B;

- *Ex-tenants returning from institutions e.g.: rehabilitation - where a prior commitment has been made in order to secure the relinquishment of a council or HA tenancy on entering the institution.*

## **Background**

The current position in relation to issue of tenants requiring rehabilitation and after care for Substance Misuse issues is a complex one for the individual, the Council and often local residents. As the Council is unable to fetter its discretion (i.e. have a blanket policy) this issue is normally dealt with on a case by case basis to suit the individual needs of those involved. Rehabilitation is not exclusively addiction related – a tenant may need residential rehabilitation after, for example, a stroke or back injury.

Rehabilitation and after care services are provided in the City by a number of agencies in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. Rehabilitation or 'Detox' as it is often informally referred to can be provided in either a community, residential or hospital setting and this is determined by professionals based upon their assessment of individual need.

Each of the routes to these settings is different and are governed by the assessment process of the provider and none of these referral routes insist on the surrender of a tenancy for treatment to be provided.

A consideration on the surrender of a tenancy may occur in a number of circumstances and normally fall into the following categories.

- Housing Benefit payment
- Anti Social Behaviour either by the tenant influenced by their addiction, and the need for the tenant to have a 'fresh start'
- The need to move away from former associates
- After care issues if the property does not meet the tenant's housing needs.
- Making best use of the council's stock; in an area of high unmet housing need, it is not desirable for flats to remain empty for long periods whilst the tenant is away for rehabilitation.

Housing Benefit entitlement is often an issue for people entering into rehabilitation services. In general there are rules that allow a person to claim housing benefit if they are away from their home in specific reasons. Someone entering rehabilitation in a hospital setting, and where there is no charge to pay for the rehabilitation, would normally be entitled to payment for a period of 52 weeks.

For those individuals that are entering into a residential setting that is not as a hospital inpatient, provided by a voluntary sector organisation such as Brighton Housing Trust (BHT) or the Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI) or someone placed in an after care setting there is a requirement of the person to pay rent for their stay in this accommodation and as such different rules apply. If a person holds a tenancy they can only claim under the "Two homes rule" and this rule unfortunately does not cover periods that a person needs to be in rehabilitation setting for the purpose of detoxification. Even if a person were to be covered under this rule there are time limits that would not cover the sometimes

extended periods that a person needs to be in the residential or aftercare setting. In these circumstances, it is often beneficial for the tenant to surrender the tenancy to ensure that rent arrears do not build up on the tenancy and thus leading to action by the Council to end the tenancy and making it difficult for the person to become a tenant in the future.

It is however often the case, but not always, that the lifestyle of the individual is chaotic and can involve other tenancy related issues such as rent arrears or anti social behaviour towards other residents in the locality. A person with substance misuse is often known to the Council because of anti social behaviour from their tenancy and in these cases the professionals involved will seek resolution to the issues and will seek a solution that will benefit the tenant and other residents. This solution can often be in the agreed surrender of the person's tenancy so that they are able to move into rehabilitation and aftercare services and this can often lead to a person accessing supported accommodation.

It is not always suitable, or desirable for a person to return to their former home. This may be because of previous anti social behaviour or that they need additional support. The environment may have contributed to developing substance misuse in the first instance, locality, isolation or harassment being a few possible factors. In these circumstances, it is either necessary or advisable for the tenant to surrender their tenancy.

It should be stressed that a tenant is always advised to seek an independent legal advice before this step is taken."

21.3 Mr Melson commented that he was happy with the above reply.

21.4 Tom Whiting had had submitted the following question.

This is a question to the Housing Management Consultative Committee concerning a further provision to Agenda item 13 of 22nd June 2009, *Local Lettings Plan for Sheltered Housing*, at clause 3.5 "*Prevention of Anti-Social Behaviour, Risk management and Meeting Support Needs in Sheltered Housing*".

The kind of difficulties that have been identified regarding existing Sheltered tenants or tenants newly arrived are not addressed by the regulation referred to above. This will continue to cause grave problems unless addressed at a policy level. In the absence of such prescribed procedures, expediency can lead to inappropriate decisions that cause problems to the sheltered scheme community as a whole while also failing to address the core of the issue for individuals who have developing or recurrent difficulties.

"We are now asking if additional wording can be included in the regulation to read:

*Where the inability to meet support needs of any kind poses a risk to the health, safety, security and welfare of other residents, positive action should be taken to re-house individuals concerned more appropriately?"*

21.5 The Cabinet Member gave the following response:

**Sheltered tenants with high support needs**

"The new pre assessment process will help ensure people moving to sheltered housing for the first time do not have support needs that cannot be met within a sheltered housing setting.

However, people's support needs do change over time. There are some existing tenants with high support needs whose behaviour sometimes disturbs other residents.

Where this behaviour may be viewed as eccentric but does not pose a risk to residents, the Scheme Manager will work with the tenant in order to help give them insight into how they are perceived by others, and with their neighbours to offer reassurance.

Within a sheltered housing environment, it is inevitable that some residents will develop dementia. Some people experience mental health problems which may cause behaviour that worries neighbours and can create safety risks within a scheme.

Sheltered housing is funded as supported housing, and as such we expect to provide a certain degree of support for residents. Some people require very little support, whilst other people have very complex needs. An individual's support needs change over time, and in most instances we are able to arrange care packages to accommodate this within the scheme.

The Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, Karin Divall, is very positive about improving links with sheltered housing and states:

*"In Adult Social Care, our experience is that relatively few people living in sheltered housing have care provided through our services, and we would like to see more people supported effectively by social care so that they can remain living in their own home rather than have to move on to residential care. This fits well with Personalisation and the changes we are making within Adult Social Care.*

*In particular it would be good to see staff in housing services referring people via our Access Point into our reablement services which work intensively with people for up to six weeks in order to improve their independence. This can include people whose needs have increased, who have had a crisis, a spell in hospital or suffered bereavement.*

*Extra Care Housing also provides an increased level of care and support which provides a level of independence to people who would otherwise need to go into residential care. We are currently working with colleagues in housing to include Extra Care Housing within the Choice Based Lettings framework."*

An important part of scheme manager role is to assess a resident's support needs and to ensure that they have a personalised support plan that sets out how these needs will be addressed. This is reviewed at least annually and sooner if an older person's needs change, for example, if they suffer a major life change such as a family bereavement or serious illness.

Where appropriate, the scheme manager's assessment and support planning process is undertaken in co-operation with other key agencies such as adult social care and health. This ensures a more joined-up and holistic approach to a resident's support, especially important where they have (or develop) higher or more complex support needs. As well as a personalised support plan, each sheltered resident should have a 'personal record'

in which these important records from different care and support agencies can be saved. The support planning process enables older people in sheltered housing to live independently.

Of course, for some residents, their needs will be such that sheltered housing can no longer meet all their needs and our scheme managers work closely with other agencies to ensure that they do move-on to appropriate accommodation. In 2008/9 102 residents left the council's sheltered housing schemes – 8 of those moved to a different supported housing service, 16 moved to a nursing/care home and 2 left for long term hospital/hospice care.”

21.6 Ted Harman asked the following question.

“At Robert Lodge, residents who are already in situ are already over 50 + and mostly are considerate of not creating noise nuisance, and would like to know what the council is prepared to do to ensure that they are not disturbed by noise from younger tenants. Is there likely to be insulation against noise done to prevent this? Is the tenancy agreement going to be strongly upheld by Housing Officers?”

21.7 The Cabinet Member informed Mr Harman that this matter could be discussed under item 32, in the meantime she asked the Interim Head of Repairs to comment.

21.8 The Interim Head of Repairs reported that there were several things that could be done. The property could be surveyed to see where noise was coming from. A decision could then be taken about what action to take. There was a five year rolling programme, and noise insulation could be included in the programme.

21.9 The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that in terms of tenancy agreements, part of the Turning the Tide pilot was about enforcement and support. He suggested that Robert Lodge be used as a case study in relation to noise nuisance.

21.10 Councillor Simpson mentioned that she had raised the problem of noise in flats due to a lack of sound insulation at the last Housing Cabinet Member Meeting. She suggested that the Committee received a report on this issue at a future meeting.

21.11 The Chairman confirmed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting.

21.12 Stewart Gover asked if the Chairman had received his letter regarding Ainsworth House. The Chairman replied that she had not received it but would ensure Mr Gover received a written response. The Assistant Director Housing Management explained that four residents were left in Ainsworth House. Some were waiting to go to new properties and others were waiting to bid.

21.13 The Chairman asked new members to write to her or the Democratic Services Officer if they had questions to ask at future meetings.

## **22. DEPUTATIONS**

22.1 The Chairman noted that no deputations had been submitted for the meeting.

**23. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

23.1 The Chairman noted that no letters from councillors had been submitted for the meeting.

**24. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

24.1 The Chairman noted that no written questions from councillors had been submitted for the meeting.

**25. USE OF GENERAL CONSENTS TO LEASE PROPERTIES TO BRIGHTON & HOVE SEASIDE COMMUNITIES HOMES**

- 25.1 The Committee considered an extract of the proceedings of the Cabinet held on 17 September 2009 and a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing (for copy see minute book). Cabinet had agreed to consultation with the Housing Management Consultative Committee and the Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes on exploring the potential use of an alternative means of achieving consent to lease up to 499 empty Housing Revenue Account properties from Brighton & Hove City Council to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes.
- 25.2 The Committee received a presentation with slides from the Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing.
- 25.3 John Melson queried why leaseback was being considered. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing explained that it was a way of maximising income, by using different housing benefit mechanisms. It did not affect nominees.
- 25.4 Councillor Davey asked if all 499 properties would be allocated to people with special needs. He was informed that the properties would be allocated to temporary accommodation tenants. The term special needs was broad and covered people the council needed to house. Many had special medical needs or drug or alcohol problems.
- 25.5 Stewart Gover informed the Committee that he was totally in favour of the project. The housing being renovated by the LDV was in a dilapidated state and would be worth more when the work was finished. He asked if leaseback took account of the additional value. The Chairman replied that some empty voids were marked for the housing company and this issue would be carefully considered. The LDV was a way of maximising property.
- 25.6 Councillor Oxley referred to the letter sent to the Department for Communities & Local Government dated 25 June 2009. He asked if the measures set out in the paragraph on Tackling Worklessness would still be in place. The Director of Adult Social Care & Housing confirmed that these measures were still in place.
- 25.7 John Melson asked if 25% was too high a figure for getting people back to work. This would have a knock on effect. The Assistant Director Housing Management replied that reforms to Local Letting Plans were agreed at the last Housing Management

Consultative Committee. A small number of households had come forward. 25% was not too high. The Chairman reported that an advert was placed in HomeLink magazine last week. The results would be brought back to HMCC.

- 25.8 Beryl Snelling asked if it was known who would loan money for projects. The Chairman replied that a major high street bank was interested and the council was waiting for consent.
- 25.9 The Chairman explained that the reason that the report was before the Committee was to obtain a general feeling from tenants that they were happy to proceed as suggested. If plan A was unable to proceed, would tenants be happy too proceed with Plan B?
- 25.10 The Committee took an indicative vote on the recommendations and there was unanimous support for the proposals outlined in the report.
- 25.11 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the Committee unanimously support the use of general consent A54.1 of the General Housing Consents 2005 to lease to Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes the 106 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings approved for leasing by Full Council on 9 October 2008 and such other Housing Revenue Account dwellings (up to a maximum of 499 in total, including the 106 properties) within a five year period that satisfy the criteria previously agreed by Cabinet and Council.
- (2) That the delegation of power by Cabinet and Council (24 September 2008 & 9 October 2008 respectively) to make decisions on the inclusion of individual properties to the Director of Adult Social Care and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, be noted.
- (3) That it is noted that Cabinet agreed that the powers already delegated are confirmed and, for the avoidance of doubt, the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, have been authorised to take all steps necessary, incidental or conducive, to the achievement and implementation of the proposals in resolution (1) above.
- (4) That it is noted that Cabinet agreed that the issue regarding funding options and any decision associated with that remain delegated to the Cabinet Committee consisting of the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

## **26. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2008/09 FINAL OUTTURN AND FORECAST OUTTURN FOR 2008/09 AS AT MONTH 4**

- 26.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which informed the meeting of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2008/09 final outturn and the forecast outturn for 2009/10 as at month 4 (copy attached).
- 26.2 **RESOLVED** – (1) That it be noted that the final outturn for the HRA for 2008/09 was an underspending of £0.445 million compared to the budgeted deficit of £0.250 million. This represents a variance of 0.95% of the gross revenue budget of £47 million. General HRA revenue reserves have reduced by £1.747 million to £3.902 million as at 31 March 2009.

- (2) That it is noted that the forecast position for 2009/10 as at Month 4, is an overspend of £0.089 million.

## **27. HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-2014: HEALTHY HOMES, HEALTHY LIVES, HEALTHY CITY**

- 27.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which summarised the development of the city's LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) communities and sought the endorsement of the strategies (for copy see minute book).

- 27.2 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommend to Cabinet that:

- (1) That the Housing Strategy 2009-2014; healthy homes, healthy lives, healthy city and related sub-strategies, the Older People's Housing Strategy 2009-2014 and the LGBT People's Housing Strategy 2009-2014 be endorsed.
- (2) That the extensive good practice and stakeholder engagement demonstrated during the development of these strategies be recognised.
- (3) That it be recognised that minor changes may be made to these strategies during their approval process to ensure they reflect the latest national and local strategic context. Significant changes would require Director approval.

## **28. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REVIEW**

- 28.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which proposed a review of the current grounds maintenance arrangements with the aim of creating quality spaces in which people want to live and could be proud, and which others would respect (for copy see minute book). It was proposed to work with the Estate Service Monitoring Group to bring recommendations on future delivery of the grounds maintenance service on housing management land.
- 28.2 The Housing Manager informed the Committee that the council was looking for increased value for money and was keen to establish a working group within the next few months. The Chairman explained that as the review was progressing, suggestions would be welcome.
- 28.3 John Melson suggested that the working group could tour sites and carry out an audit of what was required by each block. This audit would be carried out in conjunction with the Estate Service Monitoring Group. The Housing Manager agreed that this suggestion would be essential. This would make the review very local and enable residents to have their say on the maintenance of gardens.
- 28.4 Councillor Davey liked the idea of growing fruit and having allotments. He stressed the need for dedicated tenant engagement.

- 28.5 Chris Kift informed the Committee that many tenants wanted to tend their patches of ground. It was important that these areas of land remained. The Chairman suggested that a map was needed which showed who tended which particular areas of land. If a tenant group wanted to take over an area of land they could be rewarded in some way.
- 28.6 Councillor Simpson welcomed the review, especially looking at areas not covered by the current contract. She referred to the scheme termed as "conservation". She was concerned that "conservation" areas in parks were often left to become areas of long grass and undergrowth. They became depositors of rubbish, with fly tipping dumped. This aspect needed investigation.
- 28.7 Councillor Simson made the point that some houses had been sold under the right to buy. There was a need to include the areas around those houses. The Chairman reported that if tenants took over some areas of land then the areas around the houses bought under right to buy could be included as well.
- 28.8 The Housing Manager reported that it was proposed to widen the review to include tenants associations.
- 28.9 Ted Harman asked if tree maintenance would be included in the review. The Housing Manager referred to paragraph 5.1 of the report. There was a separate budget for tree maintenance. This work could be investigated and prioritised.
- 28.10 John Melson made the point that there was a need to investigate which parks were on housing owned land and which parks were the responsibility of City Parks. The Chairman concurred.
- 28.11 Chris Kift stressed the importance of every tree in Central Area. They needed to be protected and maintained.
- 28.12 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the proposal to carry out a review of the current grounds maintenance arrangements be endorsed.
- (2) That the proposal for the Estate Service Monitoring Group to undertake this work with officers be endorsed.

## **29. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 1)**

- 29.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which presented the quarter one report for Housing Management Performance for the year 2009-2010 (for copy see minute book). The report continued the new style of presentation and comparative benchmarking outlined in the end of year report presented previously to Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- 29.2 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

## **30. HOUSING MANAGEMENT CUSTOMER ACCESS REVIEW**

- 30.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing concerning the review of customer access arrangements for the Housing Management

Service (for copy see minute book). The Housing Management division provided a range of services to the residents of council managed properties in Brighton & Hove. Customers currently accessed services through a number of different channels and through a range of teams. Reviewing customer access and developing a strategy for the future was a key project in the Housing Management Improvement Programme 2009-2012.

30.2 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the customer access review work to date be noted and the next steps be agreed.

(2) That the resident involvement in the Customer Access Review be approved as detailed in paragraph 4.1 and 4.2 of the report.

**31. PROCUREMENT OF CONTRACT FOR THE MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OF LAUNDRY FACILITIES FOR COUNCIL MANAGED HOMES**

31.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which explained that a procurement process had been entered into whereby tenders were sought from service providers in relation to a contract for the management & maintenance of laundries facilities in both sheltered and non-sheltered housing (for copy see minute book). Following an evaluation of the tenders received, it was proposed that a contract be entered into with the preferred supplier, PHS Laundryserv, for a period of five years, starting 31 December 2009, with a possible extension of two years.

31.2 The Chairman thanked Faith Matyszak and Linda King for their hard work in their involvement with the Laundry Group. They were invited to give a presentation to the Committee.

31.3 John Melson asked if there would be an automatic locking system at night. Linda King explained that there could be automatic locking and unlocking with a SmartCard.

31.4 Chris Kift agreed that SmartCards worked well and were secure. There were some laundries where the entrance was outside the block and SmartCards worked well there. However, there would be an issue where the entrance was inside the block. Meanwhile, the new machines would cost £3.50 to use. Mr Kift stressed that people often only washed small loads.

31.5 Faith Matyszak explained that the cost of using the new machines would be £2.50 for a wash and £1 for use of the dryer. Costs had been kept down as much as possible.

31.6 The Assistant Director, Housing Management agreed that SmartCards were an option that would be investigated in consultation with tenants in local areas. There would be flexibility in areas such as St James's House. Sheltered housing tenants would pay through a service charge. This cost would be covered by housing benefit in the majority of cases.

31.7 Beryl Snelling said she was disappointed that sheltered housing tenants would not be paying for the service on a pay as you go basis. She stressed that there was a lot of misuse of launderettes in sheltered housing. Some people allowed their relatives to use the machines.

- 31.8 The Assistant Director, Housing Management replied that the misuse of launderettes would be investigated.
- 31.9 Tom Whiting stressed that the misuse of launderettes was only 2% maximum, and the scheme manager was usually made aware of the problem. He suggested that a range of sizes of machines should be considered.
- 31.10 Steward Gover raised the issue of security. People who lived in the blocks had access. There was need to consider outside access. He suggested that payment for the laundry could be by pay point. Linda King replied that pay point could be used for payment .
- 31.11 Councillor Davey asked how water and electricity were paid for in non sheltered housing. He asked if the council paid for these charges. The Head of Financial Services replied that all water and electricity charges were paid by the Housing Revenue Account budget.
- 31.12 The Chairman reported that with regard to water meters in blocks, Councillor Mary Mears had held a meeting with Southern Water last week and raised tenant's concerns. As a result, 2 people from Southern Water would attend the next Energy Efficiency Working Group.
- 31.13 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommend to the Cabinet Member for Housing that:
- (1) That the tender submitted by PHS Laundryserv for the management & maintenance of laundry facilities for sheltered and non-sheltered housing be accepted.
  - (2) That the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing be authorised to amend the service charges for sheltered housing to reflect the new laundry service from 31 December 2009.

## **32. LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS - LETTINGS RESTRICTED TO PERSONS OVER 50 YEARS OF AGE & BUNGALOWS**

- 32.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which explained that the council had to regularly review, and formally adopt Local Lettings Plans in order to be legally compliant and ensure that the plans met the council's stated objectives. All Local Lettings arrangements currently practiced by Brighton & Hove city Council in respect of its permanent council housing stock were reviewed to assure legal compliance and alignment with current policy objectives. Current arrangements were reviewed, and new proposals considered. There had been extensive stakeholder consultation, the outcome of which was included in the report. The council currently operated a practice of letting flats in some blocks only to people aged fifty or older. The council's current practice was not conversant with the legislative requirements in terms of justifying the need or review. Some practices were not compliant with current equalities requirements (for copy see minutes book).

- 32.2 Councillor Dee Simson welcomed the report but asked if consideration could be given to an amendment in relation to 6 bungalows in Woodingdean, near Irelands Lodge. These bungalows had always catered for retired people. They would not be protected by this policy. She suggested the amendment as follows: 'That six bungalows near Irelands Lodge in Woodingdean be let to people over 60 years of age which will release family accommodation'. Councillor Simson considered the bungalows to be a valuable resource and this amendment would preserve a community of vulnerable people. Councillor Wells concurred with this proposal.
- 32.3 Councillor Simpson asked if the change in designation for bungalows included bungalows termed as sheltered accommodation in Ditchling Gardens.
- 32.4 The Head of Housing Management (North & East) explained that Ditchling Gardens was a designated sheltered scheme and was exempt from any of the proposals in the report. The bungalows in Woodingdean were not attached to Irelands Lodge, but there was historically a close connection. A clause could be added that covered the 6 bungalows. However, it could be open to challenge if someone had needs and was excluded purely because they were under 60.
- 32.5 The Director of Adult Social Care & Housing suggested that officers worked on an equalities impact assessment on the proposed amendment.
- 32.6 John Melson disagreed with the amendment and stressed that people needed a home whatever age they were. He suggested that introductory tenancies were given for longer periods. He was against local letting plans. The Chairman replied that the report had been produced as tenants had requested over 50's blocks. Other tenants did not want to move to sheltered blocks. The proposals would make family housing available and would be reviewed in December.
- 32.7 Chris Kift made the point that 'Right to Buy' would have a negative effect on Local Lettings Plans for the over 50's. In one block 30 flats had been bought. He could not see the point of over 50's blocks. Beryl Snelling concurred these comments.
- 32.8 Councillor Oxley supported the recommendations and made the point that when Right to Buy was introduced, not many flats were sold. He stressed that the request for some blocks to be included in the proposals had come from the tenants. He asked when consultation would commence and who would be consulted. The Head of Housing Management (North & East) explained that the consultation would be with tenants, homeseekers, councillors, community interest groups and user groups. Consultation would be commenced quickly and the results would be reported to the December HMCC.
- 32.9 Beverley Weaver informed the Committee that she had moved into a bungalow 9 years ago. Neighbours had submitted a petition of objection as she was under 50. She stressed that people had to live somewhere. Meanwhile, when allocating properties there should be consideration as to whether people were well enough to cope.
- 32.10 The Chairman summed up by stating that in addition to the recommendations officers would investigate whether the six bungalows near Irelands Lodge in Woodingdean could be let to people over 60 years of age which will release family accommodation.

32.11 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommend to the Cabinet Member for Housing that:

- (1) That the restrictions limiting letting flats in Livingstone House, Philip Court, Ardingly Court, Nettleton Court, Dudeney Lodge and Hampshire Court to people aged over 50 years is confirmed as council policy and adopted as a Local Lettings Plan. That this excludes adapted and mobility standard property which, in the interest of disability equality, is available to people of any age with that specific need. That this is reviewed in 2012.
- (2) That flats in Robert Lodge are offered with priority to people over 50, but in the event of there being no eligible bidders of that age, may be let to younger tenants.
- (3) That bungalows meeting the council's housing mobility standards will be available to people of any age with that specific mobility need.
- (4) That bungalows that do not meet the needs of people in mobility groups 1, 2 or 3 are let with priority to households releasing 3 and 2 bedroom houses and 3 bedroom flats.
- (5) That a feasibility study, focused around community consultation, takes place in order to assess the viability of expanding the 50 plus local lettings plan to include Kingsway, Clarke Court, Malthouse Court and other suitable blocks. This would report to Housing Management Consultative Committee in December 2009. HMCC are invited to propose blocks for inclusion in this study.

### 33. DISCUSSION PAPER ON PROPOSED FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

33.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing concerning the development of a Financial Inclusion Strategy for residents of Council Housing, that would contribute to the aims and objectives contained within the Housing Revenue Account Service Improvement Plan 2009-2012 (for copy see minute book). Specifically, the strategy would address the interrelated issues experienced by financially excluded residents in Brighton & Hove.

33.2 **RESOLVED** – That the involvement of the Income Management Monitoring Group in the development of the strategy be noted.

### 34. TURNING THE TIDE

34.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care & Housing which set out the draft Social Exclusion Strategy – “Turning the Tide” (for copy see minute book). The strategy outlined the aims and objectives to address anti-social behaviour, intergenerational social exclusion and quality of life experience for residents in social housing living in areas of multiple deprivation in Brighton and Hove. To do this the strategy adopted a robust parallel approach of support and enforcement in order to “turn the tide” by addressing behaviours that impacted negatively on individuals, families and the community. The strategy was a work in progress, currently at the second draft stage. Comments/feedback from key stakeholders, partners and council

tenants would be sought before presenting a final draft to Cabinet for approval/agreement later this financial year.

- 34.2 Chris Kift made reference to the Eastern Road Partnership, which had a three year plan and had to finish after only one year, due to funding being re-assigned. Some excellent work had been carried out by the Partnership. He liked the report but made the point that the strategy should not stop until it had been completed.
- 34.3 The Chairman replied that the Eastern Road Partnership was about cross tenure and was reliant on funding. The Turning the Tide Strategy was a housing initiative and would be using existing resources in a different way. She agreed that the Eastern Road Partnership had carried out some excellent work.
- 34.4 Councillor Simson asked if the strategy would be working with partners and running parallel to other projects.
- 34.5 The Social Inclusion Manager informed the Committee that she had spent a great deal of time mapping and investigating what had already been achieved and has made strong links with the key partners/services and agencies across the city. The strategy was about using existing resources more efficiently in order to ensure sustainability of services that compliment not duplicate each other.
- 34.6 Councillor Oxley considered the report to be one of the more important documents published by the administration. He considered it a travesty that some people were trapped by inter-generational dependency and that others were suffering from anti-social behaviour. He considered the multi-agency approach essential. He agreed that peoples' aspirations needed to improve and that consultation was important. Councillor Oxley asked about the financial implications and queried whether tenant centred strategies should be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.
- 34.7 The Director of Adult Social Care & Housing replied that the Head of Financial Services had advised that a certain amount of Turning the Tide funding could come from the Housing Revenue Account. There would be a mixture of funding streams. Meanwhile, she would ask the Head of Financial Services to contact Councillor Oxley about this issue.
- 34.8 John Melson commented that it was a very helpful and comprehensive report and officers should be congratulated. He stressed the need to ensure that the pilot was working and to extend the strategy to other areas. There was also a need to see what was not working.
- 34.9 Stewart Gover agreed it was a good report. He asked why the pilot focused on Mousecoomb and Whitehawk. Why not Portslade and Hangleton for example.
- 34.10 The Chairman replied that the pilot would cover the area served by the Selsfield Drive Housing Office which includes Coldean and Bates Estate as well as Moulescoomb and Bevendean. It had been necessary to pick an area for the pilot and the areas chosen were among the most deprived in the city. The Social Inclusion Manager stressed that the decision had been taken on levels of need in the area both at community and household level.

- 34.11 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the launch for the Turning the Tide Pilot in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean to be led by Housing Strategy with the relevant staffing resources be agreed.
- (2) That a series of tenant/resident focus groups run in the pilot area to look at the key themes and identify priorities for the local community
- (3) That the financial implications be noted

The meeting concluded at 5.51pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

