

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

6.00pm 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Hugh-Jones (Chair), Councillors Fowler (Chair), Sue Shanks, Mary Mears, John Allcock, Claire Rainey, Kate Knight, Martin Osbourne, Tracey Hill.

Voting Representatives: Jane Thorp, Rosemary Johnson, Ian Beck, Barry Hughes, David Spafford, Heather Hayes, Theresa Mackay, Ann Pacjham, Alan Cooke, Carl Boardman, Christie Knipe, Claire Johnson, Graham Dawes, Liam Baker, Chris El-Shabba, Janet Gearing.

Officers: Sam Warren, Keely McDonald, Hannah Barker, Ododo Dafe, Glyn Huelin, Martin Reid, Simon Bannister, Diane Coe, Fabrizio Oliveri, Indi Hicks, Sophie Wadleigh, Justine Harris, Thomas Goodridge.

Guests: Sarah Booker Lewis, Eddie Wilson

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Nancy Platts, Roy Crowhurst, David Chapman.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Councillor Mears referred to 42.9 and 42.10 and requested a more comprehensive transcript of the events.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“Chairs Comms for Area Panel

Some of you may be aware that since the last area panel there have been some changes in the make-up of the council, as a result of which there is now a minority Green administration. That said, Labour and the Greens had adopted a joint programme for housing last year anyway, and we will be continuing to implement that. David Gibson and I are sharing the role of chair of Housing Committee. We have divided up our responsibilities and repairs and housing management fall within my remit, so please let me know of any issues you have and how we can make the service run better for you.

Community Engagement

Some of you who are members of residents' or tenants' associations may already have seen the draft discussion paper on Community Engagement. You have told us:

- there are too many meetings, often with duplication;
- representation from wider tenants and leaseholders is poor so we need to find ways of engaging more people, including by using more virtual tools as well as physical events and activities.
- You need support and resources to do things in your communities and on estates and naturally you want your input to make a difference.

The document is currently being revised ahead of being available to all residents, but it will certainly look to address how we attract more active participation in tenants' associations and how we give you the resources to create change, such as through participatory budgeting using the Environmental Improvement Budget.

Repairs

As you will be aware, the repairs service was reduced to emergency repairs only during lockdown. I am aware there were issues with the telephone helpline while staff were working from home. These should be resolved shortly as new staff have recruited and are currently undergoing training.

More positively, during the last quarter 99.4% of emergency repairs were completed within 24 hours and 97.5% of appointments kept. While we are on repairs, I should mention that the GMB members of the housing repair team who came in-house in April are on strike this week. There was an unresolved pay claim existing when the service came in-house in April and issues around finding the right pay grades for people as they transfer into the structure of the council. The vast majority of those transferring will be considerably better off financially if they take a council contract, as well as being eligible for sick pay and holiday pay. The other thing to remember is that no-one will be forced to take a pay cut as, under the terms of the TUPE transfer, workers can opt to remain on their existing terms and conditions if these are better than what they would get in the council.

Warmer Homes

One of the things that jumped out at me when I was reading the Housing Management Report was the fact that Brighton & Hove is in the bottom quarter of local authorities in terms of energy efficiency. That is something we intend to address. Energy efficient homes mean more money in your pocket as you will spend less on heating, and it's good for the planet as it means fewer carbon emissions. Officers are working on a report on this to come to January's Housing Committee."

4 AREA PANEL AGENDA

4.1 (Housing Clarification of the Social Value)

4.2 Mr Huelin gave a brief overview of the social value. It was noted that the head of contracts were starting following consultation processes.

4.3 Residents had the following questions, enquiries and statements:

- A resident enquired how they would be involved in the delivery of bids.
- It was stated that the social impact and wellbeing of tenants was important.
- A leaseholder enquired of the cost of social value and sought more information on this.

- A resident suggested the use of more than one company for large contracts such as windows.
- A resident enquired of the possibility of having a scrutiny process in place to stop contractors not providing value for money from attaining large contracts.

4.4 An officer gave the following responses to resident's and leaseholder's questions, enquiries and statements:

- It was stated that working with residents was important and that there were plans to do much work through the mobilisation phase of working with providers on expectations. It was further noted that BHCC would happily work with residents and the Home Group in future.
- An officer offered to provide the leaseholder with more information.
- It was confirmed that BHCC could not ensure that certain companies could be barred from attaining contracts.
- It was stated that a different way of working was being considered following feedback from residents, this would see additional staff focused around contract management and that BHCC would go to the framework with detailed specifications of works to be contracted out.

4.5 Councillor Osbourne enquired how the social value could be enforced.

4.6 An officer stated that there was a sustainability element that was assessed in the contract such as standards of materials along with key commitments.

4.7 Councillor Knight reiterated resident's concerns regarding the BHCC not receiving value for money and stated that companies who provided bad standard of work should not be re-employed. It was enquired if there was a possibility of taking past performance in to consideration when procuring works.

4.8 An officer stated that tenant's had been involved in inspecting properties and that BHCC were happy to enlarge this role to provide further transparency.

4.9 **AGREED** – that the update be noted.

4.10 Service Update in Light of Covid-19

4.11 An officer gave a brief overview of Area Panels during the Covid-19 era. A list of actions were supplied and it was noted that most services were contacted by email and that efforts were undertaken to procure technology to enable staff at home to answer calls immediately.

4.12 **AGREED** – that the update was noted.

4.13 Housing Management Report

4.14 An officer outlined that the Housing Quarterly Report Q4 was the performance for the end of year 2019 – 2020 and was a short summary pages on how BHCC had benchmarked against other housing organisations. It was further stated that the second report provided a new look performance report from Quarter 1 of this financial

year which outlined information including progress on the Housing Committee Workplan areas.

4.15 **AGREED** – that the report was noted.

4.16 Seaside Homes

4.17 A vote, which was open only to residents within East Ward, was conducted to recruit a resident to sit on the Seaside Homes board

4.18 Chris El-Shabba was unanimously voted in.

5 HOUSING QUARTERLY REPORT Q1

5.1 See Agenda Item 4 Area Panel Agenda, 4.13 (Housing Management Report)

6 PERFORMANCE SUMMARY Q1

6.1 See Agenda Item 4 Area Panel Agenda, 4.13 (Housing Management Report)

7 HOUSING QUARTERLY REPORT Q4

7.1 See Agenda Item 4 Area Panel Agenda, 4.13 (Housing Management Report)

8 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

8.1 (Item 1 - Communication between Council and Residents – How will future meetings work?)

8.2 Residents had the following questions, enquiries and statements:

- A resident enquired of the current status of monies which had been used to pay for works that had not yet been completed.
- A resident noted the effort taken by BHCC to migrate Housing Area Panels to Zoom.
- A leaseholder affirmed the positive function of calling in via telephone as there was little lag / cut out.

8.3 An officer gave the following responses to resident's and leaseholder's enquiries concerns and statements:

- It was stated that the EDB came in April however although Mears had carried out the bid however the bid didn't provide further specifics.
- It was clarified that Mears had not been involved in the bidding process this year due to Covid.
- An officer stated that an effort to schedule service improvement group meetings was underway.

8.4 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

- 8.5 (Item 2 – Water Ingress in Housing in Woodingdean)
- 8.6 It was noted that there were no leaves now and that roof leaks were prioritised during the pandemic.
- 8.7 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.8 (Item 3 – Coordination of Repair Works)
- 8.9 A resident enquired noted that it took too long for electricity to get turned back on after works had finished due to inefficient communication.
- 8.10 An officer stated that a process had since been put in place where trade teams would notify each other of when works were booked.
- 8.11 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.12 (Item 4 – Right to Buy Following Succession)
- 8.13 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.14 (Item 5 – Laminate Flooring in Flats)
- 8.15 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.16 (Item 6 – Reporting Repairs Online)
- 8.17 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:
- A resident stated that a phone number left options for voicemail.
 - A resident enquired of the possibility of details being provided in Homing In magazine.
 - It was noted that the online form was not well designed.
- 8.18 An officer gave the following responses to resident's questions, concerns and statements:
- It was noted that issues with the online site were wide-ranging however residents were reassured that there were other modes of communication and that anyone calling via the helpdesk could still reach the relevant contact.
- 8.19 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.20 (Item 7 – EDB Bids)
- 8.21 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.22 (Item 8 – Eviction Targets)
- 8.23 **AGREED** - that the response was satisfactory.

8.24 (Item 9 – Communal Digital TVB Aerials)

8.25 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:

- A resident stated that since a communal aerial had been installed, they had experienced issues accessing freeview.
- A leaseholder enquired what assistance could be offered to people who were still being charged despite being denied access.

8.26 An officer gave the following responses to resident's questions, concerns and statements:

- An officer offered to look in to issues regarding the aerial installed.
- It was stated that an officer would contact the resident regarding any assistance available.

8.27 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.28 The following East Area 2 star questions were addressed at the breakout session which took place on the 1st October 2020.

8.29 (East Area 2 **Star** – Item 1 – Craven Vale Roof)

8.30 An officer stated that it was recognised as being distressing for the tenant and that Housing were in direct contact and working with the resident.

8.31 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.32 (Item 2 – Chair of East Area Panel)

8.33 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.34 (Item 3 – Estate Development Budget Robert Lodge)

8.35 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.36 (Item 4 – Electric Car Charging Points in Craven Vale)

8.37 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.38 (West Area Panel – Item 10 – Matters Arising from the Last Meeting)

8.39 A resident stated a concern regarding Covid-19 in communal blocks

8.40 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.41 (Item 11 – Clarification on Council Opening)

- 8.42 It was enquired if this was still relevant in view of the incoming regulation of the rule of 6.
- 8.43 An officer stated that this would be kept under review and that risk assessments would be adjusted as necessary.
- 8.44 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.45 (Item 12 – Grass Cutting and Ground Maintenance.)
- 8.46 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:
- It was requested that officers address the issue of grass cutting at Sylvan Hall.
 - It was enquired when someone would be able to fix pavements.
- 8.47 An officer offered to contact City Parks to address the issues regarding grass cutting and pavements.
- 8.48 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.49 (Item 13 – Housing Revenue Account)
- 8.50 A resident expressed concern with the prospect of residents effectively paying twice for services provided in other areas of the City.
- 8.51 An officer stated that if there were any major issues then this would be scrutinised and that monies spent were closely monitored and that it was made sure that it was not spent outside of the legal restrictions imposed by the HRA.
- 8.52 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.53 (West Area **2 Star Items** – Item 1 – Stonery Close Gutter)
- 8.54 The following West Area **2 star** questions were addressed at the breakout session which took place on the 1st October 2020.
- 8.55 It was stated that the repair had been completed. A resident requested that residents be told when repairs had been completed.
- 8.56 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.57 (Item 2 – Clarendon & Ellen Putting Out Food for Birds)
- 8.58 An officer reported that all tenants had been written to advising residents not to put food out.
- 8.59 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.60 (Item 3 – Phillip Court Faulty Guttering)

- 8.61 It was stated that repairs have been completed however due to the time it took to do the works, doors to the refuse had swelled due to water leakage.
- 8.62 Assurances were sought that works to correct this were booked to repairs and maintenance.
- 8.63 An officer agreed to address this.
- 8.64 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.65 (Item 4 – Roof tiles)
- 8.66 It was reported that these were now repaired.
- 8.67 A resident stated they were unaware the repair had been carried out.
- 8.68 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.69 (North Area 3 Star – Item 14 – Disposal of Masks Gloves and PPE)
- 8.70 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.71 (North Area **2 Star** Items)
- 8.72 Due to lack of attendance, there were no comments with regard to the Resident’s Question Time responses for North Area.
- 8.73 (Central Area 3 Star – Item 1 – Lifts in Tower Blocks and Flats)
- 8.74 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

The meeting concluded at 9.20pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of