

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: EAST AREA

7.00pm 4 MARCH 2021

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present: Chris El-Shabba (Chair), Councillors Dee Simson, Mary Mears and Gill Williams

Representatives: Alan Cooke, Janet Gearing, Rosemary Johnson

Officers: Janet Dowdell, Glyn Huelin, Grant Ritchie, Eddie Wilson.

Guests: Sarah Booker-Lewis

26 WELCOME APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS, PREVIOUS MINUTES

26.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Nikki Brennan.

Minutes

26.2 **RESOLVED** -that the minutes were a correct record of the previous meeting.

27 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

28 RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

28.1 Item 1 – Anti-Social Behaviour

28.2 Janet Dowdell (Tenancy Services Operations Manager) stated that BHCC would like residents involved in the review once the scope of the review had been ascertained.

28.3 Residents had the following enquiries, statements and concerns:

- A resident noted another issue of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and stated that a process on dealing with this had to be a priority.
- A resident sought clarity regarding the number of ASB incidents that were resolved. It was stated that the paper did not specifically state that incidents were resolved successfully and noted that cases could be closed depending on the season as cold weather in winter correlated with low ASB incidents due to less footfall.
- A resident noted Councillor Platts was looking at a process which sought to establish a single point of contact.

28.4 Officers had the following responses to resident's questions, enquiries and statements:

- The Tenancy Services Operations Manager noted the reason for the review and emphasised the importance of communications between BHCC and residents and other bodies such as police.
- The Tenancy Services Operations Manager stated that cases could not always be kept open as there was a large case load, however it was further noted that although cases were closed they could be re-opened.

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

28.6 Item 2 - Delays in Letting Empty Properties

28.7 Eddie Wilson (General Manager R&M) presented the response and noted issues which occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic such as obtaining materials and a drop in productivity. It was stated that as the lockdown was drawing down there was an opportunity to consider what needed to be done to put houses back into circulation as soon as possible.

28.8 Councillor Mears referred a case of a structurally unsound property being re-let to new tenants and noted that there were currently over 250 houses in need of works.

28.9 Councillor Simson further referenced expressed the concern of the case of a structurally unsound property.

28.10 Councillor Williams requested a report to the next East Area Panel which included more details.

28.11 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory and that a report by the General Manager R&M be brought to the next East Area Panel.

28.12 Item 3 – Roof Repairs in Woodingdean

28.13 The General Manager R&M presented the response found in the paper and noted that there was a loss in productivity and that, in response, more contractors had been procured to address this issue.

28.14 Councillor Simson expressed support for this and noted the importance for the work to be of the highest quality.

28.15 Councillor Williams stated that there was a system which was tasked with inspecting the quality of work.

28.16 The General Manager R&M noted efforts to improve BHCC's inspection regime were ongoing.

28.17 Grant Ritchie (Lead Consultant – Health and Safety) stated that post inspection on all internal works where access was available had been undertaken and that any works with scaffolding was inspected and water tested.

28.18 Councillor Mears stated that the quality of work and the time taken to complete this was not acceptable and that this must be improved.

28.19 Councillor Simson noted issues regarding delays between various works.

- 28.20 The Lead Consultant – Health and Safety stated that this was as a result of capacity issues and that priority order for works led to a greater period of time between the inspections and works. It was confirmed that 2 further roofers had been contracted and that the effort to resolve roofing issues was being undertaken.
- 28.21 Councillor Mears noted that the inhouse service was started nearly a year ago and that these issues needed to be resolved.
- 28.22 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 28.23 Item 4 – Allocation of Housing Association Sheltered Flats
- 28.24 Councillor Simson noted an issue with properties being advertised in the local estate agent and sought clarification with regard to the guidelines on the policy of allocations of these and other sheltered housing.
- 28.25 The Chair noted that the Tenancy Services Operations Manager’s response in the paper clarified that BHCC were not required to let all properties through Home Move and that this was the case for several registered providers and that this depended on they had developed their accommodation and how this had been financed in the past.
- 28.25 Councillor Simson noted that there were tenants that may want to downsize and that the last place they would consider was an estate agent.
- 28.26 Councillor Williams agreed with Councillor Simson and suggested that it was worth contacting Housing.
- 28.27 **AGREED** -that the response was satisfactory.
- 28.28 3 Star West – Item 1 Review of Anti-Social Behaviour.
- 28.29 **AGREED** -that the response be noted.
- 28.30 3 Star West – Item 2 – Maintenance Schedule.
- 28.31 **AGREED** -that the response be noted.
- 28.32 3 Star Central – Item 1 – Renewal of Knightguard Contract.
- 28.33 **AGREED** -that the response be noted.
- 28.34 3 Star North – Item 1 – Fencing to Individual Homes and Blocks.
- 28.35 **AGREED** -that the response be noted.

29 KNIGHTGUARD CONTRACT RENEWAL

- 29.1 Glyn Huelin (Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement) provided a verbal update on the status of the Knightguard contract found in the 3 Star Item for Central Ward Area Panel Response to Resident’s Questions. It was noted that scoping work had been

undertaken to procure a new door system and CCTV in the coming months and to consider options for future delivery.

- 29.2 A resident expressed concern with the response and noted that there had been bad communication between BHCC and residents on this issue. Clarification was sought on how many approved installers were available during the procurement process.
- 29.3 The Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement stated that many contractors were bidding for this contract and that they needed to be able to install the system. It was clarified that Sentry Tech were used to supply the system. It was further stated that contractors did not have the ability to remove components from installed systems.
- 29.4 **AGREED** – that the update be noted.

30 ITEMS FOR HOUSING COMMITTEE

- 31.1 Ododo Dafe (The Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service) provided an overview of the report and noted areas for concern and areas with improved performance.
- 31.2 The Chair sought clarification on the effect of universal credit affected arrears.
- 31.3 The Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service stated that there had been significant problems. It was noted that among the issues that affected performance with rents were situations such as tenants in precarious employment such as zero hours contract. It was further noted that there were still people in on universal credit waiting for claims to be assessed.
- 31.4 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:
- A resident stated that printed copies were in black and white and noted an issue with the colour system provided in the report.
 - The resident referred to Page 17 of 24 of the performance report item 10.2, “HMOs where all special conditions have been met (for licences issued over 12 months ago” and noted that the target was only 50% and further sought clarification on the reason for the low target figure.
 - A resident noted that a HMO (of which they had been in charge) were being given 6 months to change smoke alarms from one category to a different category which was not very critical and noted that 100% targets would be difficult to meet.
 - The resident referred to pg 19 of 24 of the performance report and enquired if the figures were additional to the number of Council owned.
 - The resident referred to figures given on the number evicted tenants being 0 was not good news and sought clarification on this.
 - A resident noted that there had been a case of someone being removed from their flat for 3 months and that they had been afraid that the issue may recur.
- 31.5 Officers had the following responses to residents:
- The Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service stated that targets needed to be useful for the people doing the work and that a 100% target may provide an unrealistic expectation.

- It was confirmed that the figures were additional to the BHCC's number of owned homes.
- It was clarified that BHCC had proceeded with closure orders on properties to deal with extreme cases.
- It was stated that if any tenant had been evicted, this could be seen as a failure on the part of BHCC. It was clarified that this was not to say that residents could cause as much nuisance as they liked rather that that some nuisance caused to neighbours, though annoying, was dealt with differently where it was understandable.
- The Tenancy Services Operations Manager clarified that in cases where BHCC decided to evict people, a case would need to be brought to court where the burden of evidence to be considered by the judge had to be large.

31.6 Councillor Simson enquired if social tenants were paying more in rent.

31.7 The Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service confirmed that both had rents and that these had service charges which were worked out differently. It was noted that some were paying higher rents.

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

31 UPDATE FROM EAST HOUSING TEAM

31.1 The Tenancy Services Operations Manager provided a brief update on behalf of the East Housing Team. It was stated that housing officers were dealing with case work and that there were 16 areas of case work with ASB being just one. It was clarified that BHCC were currently running at around 800 cases. It was stated further stated that face to face meetings had been replaced with other methods of communication such as Zoom and Teams or a phone call. It was noted that 129 cases of untidy gardens were halted to focus efforts on pressing issues such as ASB with a plan to return back to gardens soon after.

31.2 A resident noted the case of CCTV installed while there had been no formal request for this.

31.3 The Tenancy Services Operations Manager clarified that this had been installed as part of an ongoing project that was running behind.

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

32 POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

32.1 A resident stated that residents at Tilgate Close had managed to attain additional lighting which helped to illuminate the dark main street.

32.2 A resident noted that EDB bids had been submitted this year for a range of healthy gym equipment which had received large positive approval.

32.3 The Chair noted that 220 meals had been provided by the kitchen at Robert Lodge.

32.4 **AGREED** - that positive community news be noted.

33 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 33.1 The Chair informed the panel of a dog attack incident and sought information on how this could be done about this.
- 33.2 The Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service stated the BHCC could not be involved with this and that this ought to be an issue for the Police.
- 33.3 Councillor Simson noted that this had been brought to Licensing Committee and that it was noted that more and more incidents like this had occurred and that this would be brought as a question to the upcoming Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee.
- 33.4 The Panel thanked Chris El-Shabba for exemplarily performing for role of Chair and at such short notice.

The meeting concluded at 9.10pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of