

## **Area Panel May 2021 Resident's Questions**

### **3 Star East**

#### **1. Communications between officers and residents**

##### **Issue**

Residents often don't get a response when they contact officers to ask questions or raise issues. As a result they don't know if the issue is being dealt with. In contrast, when officers contact residents they often ask them to provide information or respond at very short notice.

##### **Background**

An example was given from Woodingdean. They have submitted their EDB main bids but have not been told if they have been accepted. An email was sent to the Community Engagement Officer on 1<sup>st</sup> March to check this and a reply had not been received by the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Residents said this is a common problem when contacting officers. It is not specific to the Community Engagement Team.

East Residents would like a target to be set, requiring officers to provide a substantial response to residents' email and other queries within a set time frame. A target of 5 working days is proposed.

##### **Response - Keely McDonald , Community Engagement Officer**

I sincerely apologise that the expectation of a timely response was not met in this instance. Although the CEO officer was unable to respond to the Association Committee directly, the EDB Officer made efforts to update the committee with information on their bids, unfortunately was unable to speak directly to member of the Woodingdean Association Committee in this instance. The CEO officer has since held a meeting with the committee to discuss the bids and ensure that support has been offered for their submission to the voting stage of the process.

The council's commitment is to respond to incoming requests within 10 working days, the Community Engagement Team officers will continue to make every effort to exceed this timeframe whenever possible. Unfortunately, we cannot commit to reducing this target with the teams current capacity.

## 2 Star East

### 2. Funding for parks in Woodingdean

#### **Issue**

Dangerous equipment has been removed from parks in Woodingdean, but the new equipment is not due to be installed until 2022/23 due to a delay in funds being released from the Housing Revenue Account.

#### **Background**

Plans are in place for new equipment to be installed in Bexhill and Woodingdean Central parks. The majority of the funding has been allocated by City Parks, but this is being topped up by funding from the HRA. The main funding is available in 2021/22 but the HRA portion is not available until 2022/23. This will delay the work and mean children in Woodingdean do not have adequate equipment in their parks in 2021. With families having to stay at home due to the pandemic, local parks are one of the few outdoor facilities available to local children. It will have a huge impact on them if there is inadequate play equipment in the parks.

Residents request that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) contribution for park equipment in Woodingdean be brought forward from 2022/23 to 2021/22

#### **Response – Justine Harris**

Thank you for your question, we appreciate the need for children to have adequate play equipment, however, following an inspection of play equipment across the city some has had to be removed for safety reasons. There is a programme of planned works. This involves the replacement or refurbishment of 45 parks over the next three years. Bexhill and Woodingdean Central are included in this. Housing have met with colleagues in City Parks to discuss bringing the refurbishment of Bexhill and Woodingdean Central Parks

forward. Unfortunately the earliest this work can be undertaken spring 2022. This is not due to the HRA budget but due to other issues such as funding conditions for some of the non HRA parks, time of year works can be carried out and the procurement of contractors which hasn't started for these areas yet.

### 3. Chair of the East Area Panel

#### **Issue**

The chair of the East Area Panel, Nikki Brennan, has not attended the last four meetings, and Chris has been asked to stand in as chair with very little notice.

#### **Background**

Councillor Nikki Brennan no longer sits on the Housing Committee. It is the understanding of residents that the Chair of the Area Panel must be a councillor for the area and on the Housing Committee.

#### **Residents are requesting clarification on the standing orders for East Area Panel:**

- Does the Chair have to be a sitting member of the Housing Committee?
- Is the Chair deemed to have resigned if they fail to attend a set number of meetings?

East Residents would like a new Chair of the Area Panel to be appointed. Preference would be for a councillor who attends regularly and engages with residents, for example, Mary Mears or Gill Williams.

#### **Response – Thomas Bald, Democratic Services**

A resident engagement review is currently being undertaken which will address issues such as Chairing the Panel, which will clarify the matters raised.

## **All Areas**

### 1. Refuse and Recycling Service

#### **Issue:**

The collection of rubbish and recycling has been very poor recently. Collections are being missed and it is difficult for residents to contact City Clean to report this or follow up ongoing problems.

Residents are still paying for this in their Council Tax but are not receiving the service they deserve.

**Background:**

Several examples were given:

- Bin lorries are being sent out with 2 instead of 3 operatives, so they don't have time to do the job properly
- The recycling has not been collected in Dunster Close for 4 weeks
- Rubbish has not been collected from Tavistock Down
- Collections have been missed in Southmount
- Collections have been missed in some areas of Coldean this week
- Street Cleaning teams are only responding to emergencies, so areas are being left untidy
- The Assistant Director City Environment has been off work for a long time, resulting in a lack of coordination and reduction in service
- When residents ring Cityclean the phone isn't answered

**Residents are requesting information on when Cityclean will:**

- resume a full refuse and recycling collection service
- provide a phone line that residents can use to report problems

**Response – Lynsay Cook, Head of Business Support & Projects City Clean**

The refuse and recycling service has been prioritised throughout the pandemic and we apologise for any service disruption experienced.

Covid secure arrangements are in place to ensure our colleagues are working in a safe environment. This means only the driver and one operative can be in the cab at the same time. Where a crew has more than one operative, they are being taxied to their starting location by a minibus – there has not been a reduction in the number of crew.

Street Cleansing has returned to business as usual following an initial need to attend to emergencies only due to the number of staff unable to attend work.

The easiest and quickest way to report a missed collection or an issue is through the website. This gets the information to the relevant crew. For those unable to access the internet, an accessibility line is available to assist. This available by calling 01273 292929 and selecting option 4.

The link to report issues is <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-streets>

## 2. East - East Brighton Food Coop Refuge Collection

### **Issue**

Cityclean have provided refuse and recycling bins at Robert Lodge for East Brighton Food Coop. The bins are not being collected, causing a bad smell and a health hazard for residents whose flats are nears the bins.

### **Background**

East Brighton Food Coop have been using the kitchen at Robert Lodge to cook daily hot meals for more than 200 local residents affected by the pandemic. This was originally a temporary arrangement, but has been extended due to the continuation of lockdown and delays in the equipping of alternative premises.

### **Action:**

Residents would like to invite Cityclean to talk about recent scheduling changes at the upcoming East Area Panel meeting.

### **They would like to know:**

What are the changes

Where and how have they been publicised to residents?

There have been specific issues with collections at Robert Lodge for the East Brighton Food Co-Op emergency food service, what has been the reasons for this and what is CityClean doing to mitigate these issues? Residents recognise that the increase in refuse and recycling due to emergency food hubs in the city have had an impact on the service provided by Cityclean, the need for these hubs has not abated and may not do for some time, how have CityClean been addressing this during the pandemic?

It is requested that Cityclean arrange a regular refuse and recycling collection schedule for East Brighton Food Coop bins, providing details of collection times, dates and the location that the bins will be collected from.

**Response – Lynsay Cook, Head of Business Support & Projects City Clean**

Refuse and recycling from the Coop is collected on a Tuesday.

The Coop did experience service disruption as previously the bins were placed behind a wall, which meant the crew were unable to access them. The bins are now in a new location that is suitable for the crew to collect.

**3 Star**

## Central

### 4. Major Works Defects Review

**Issue:** There have been major failures with the brand new roofs and windows installed in blocks across the city in recent years. Concerns have been raised about this work for some time, and these must be addressed and taken seriously. This affects residents as well as leaseholders, who have paid from their rents for extremely low quality and inadequate work and are living with the consequences.

**Background:** see appendix 5, attached.

The meeting thanked Jane Thorp for all her work. Central residents are asking for:

- A full discussion at Area Panels and for this item to be on the agenda at the next Housing Committee meeting.
- Full written acknowledgement of the problems following major works.
- A programme of remedies with dates for the work to be done.
- A written process for dealing with disputes and compensation which treats all applicants equally, rather than the current system of negotiating outcomes individually to the detriment of people who may not have access to the skills or advice that are needed when dealing with experienced council managers advised by an in-house legal team.

#### **Response - Glyn Huelin, Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement**

Thank you for your question.

We do completely understand the concerns raised by residents on these projects. The council are taking this seriously and working through any defects identified with our contractors. There are sometimes concerns raised following completion of works and there have been a range of different issues raised here which have required investigation. For those where defects are identified these are being logged and followed up to satisfactory completion with contractors.

We are currently in the process of mobilising new contracts for planned programmes and major works following extensive consultation with residents. We have focused on quality assurance as part of this and have committed to

working with residents before, during and after works to ensure delivery to a high quality and to quickly resolve any issues identified. We are looking forwards to working with residents on these projects.

We do acknowledge that there are some defects following works that we need to address, sometimes we do need to recall contractors to return and fix issues, these are always monitored closely and checked after completion. This has been on a limited number of projects some of which are set out in the document provided.

We would like to assure all residents that we do have processes and procedures in place to check on the quality of works completed. This is often supported by specific manufacturers who offer assurance on quality and workmanship. For example, on flat roof replacements the supplier (Langley) attends site and undertakes checks during installation to add extra assurance that the installation is fit for purpose.

In addition, we have made further changes to our quality assurance processes for planned and major works and are working closely with our new contractors to ensure works are carried out to the right quality standards. We are keen to engage residents throughout projects, including as projects complete, to ensure any issues are identified and dealt with in a timely way.

We would encourage any resident who has concerns following work to their home to contact the council's Property & Investment team by emailing [PAandIEnquiries@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:PAandIEnquiries@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Residents can also contact our repairs helpdesk on 08000526140 or raise a repair online at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/ask-repair-your-council-home>

The council has a complaints procedure and a leaseholder disputes procedure that can be used if residents are not satisfied with our response. Leaseholder service charge disputes would generally be most appropriately dealt with through the leaseholders' disputes procedure. Both procedures are set out on the council website. The council also has procedures for considering statutory and discretionary compensation.

Please also see our responses noted on the specific cases raised in the question as follows.



## **Pages 3-8 – Clarendon House, Livingstone House, Conway House, Goldstone House**

These photos relate to works undertaken in 2017/18 that leaseholders have raised concerns about following the completion of the project and the service charge to leaseholders.

Some of these photos relate to issues that were previously identified and have been subsequently addressed. At the same time there are some areas where we feel work has been appropriately carried out and the service charge is due for these works.

In relation to the lift motor room and the leak in a communal area, this was identified previously, and repairs have been undertaken to fix this.

The service charge is now being considered by a leaseholder tribunal which will give an opportunity to consider the works and service charges openly and transparently.

## **Pages 9-10 - Sylvan Hall Estate – Elm Lodge**

This is a case that the council is actively managing and working with contractors to resolve any remaining defects following the roofing works. We are reviewing each item raised and will manage through to conclusion where further return visits are required by contractors. Contractors have already returned to address a number of issues including ensuring insulation has been appropriately installed as per the specification.

We can confirm that the council has not charged leaseholders for the removal of leaf guards that did not perform as planned.

## **Page 11 – Saxonbury**

Thank you for raising this enquiry with us. The Property & Investment team will arrange to visit the resident and see if there are any issues that we require the contractor to return and address.

## **Page 12 – Sylvan Hall Estate – The Willows**

This is a case that the council and contractors have been actively managing to ensure any remaining defects are addressed. We have previously investigated

and apologised for some specific areas where our service fell below our standards. The remaining outstanding issues are being addressed and reviewed by contractors and should be completed shortly.

### **Pages 13-15 – Essex Place**

The installation of these windows was undertaken in 2015. We will arrange to undertake further investigation to look at the specific windows detailed in this document and identify whether any repairs need to be undertaken or warranty repairs raised to the installers.

## 5. Getting back together (North & Central)

**Issue:** As lock-down eases, Central residents are keen to start meeting together, using their community rooms, re-building their Associations and having in person meetings with the Council. They would like some information on when this will be possible.

There has been a reduction in resident involvement with the move to online meetings. Some people are unable to access the technology and others find it very unsatisfactory so don't attend.

### **Information was requested on:**

- What guidance is the Council issuing to groups?
- What are the Council's plans for Resident Involvement meetings? When will it be possible to hold Area Panels, Special Interest Groups and other meetings in person?
- A report on plans to increase involvement by more residents and reinvigorate Associations that have struggled during covid.

### **Response - Sam Warren Community Engagement Manager**

Thank you for the question. We are very aware of the difficulties of many residents to participate with online meetings however the council and Community Engagement Team are having to follow the government guidance on meeting together to protect us all from Covid 19.

We do acknowledge that for some residents joining online meetings has been complex and we have now purchased 10 tablets that we can loan to people to help them with equipment or data. We can also support residents to use this equipment to referral to Brighton and Hove Digital or through a session with one of our team.

In terms of a timeline back to physical meetings these are the dates we are currently working too. However, I would also like to acknowledge that a number of residents are finding online meeting considerably easier and we will need to have a balance when looking at how we move forward in the future to ensure everyone who wishes to, is able to participate. This may be a mix of physical and online meetings and events.

These are the government roadmaps dates

### **8 March - Social contact**

People will be allowed to leave home for recreation and exercise outdoors with their household or support bubble, if they are eligible for one, or with one person from outside their household.

### **29 March- Social contact**

Outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either 6 people or 2 households will be allowed

### **12 April - Social contact, no change**

However, non-essential retail will open alongside personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres. Most outdoor attractions and settings including outdoor hospitality venues, zoos, theme parks, and drive-in cinemas and indoor leisure facilities such as gyms will also reopen (but only for use by people on their own or in household groups)

### **Not before 17 May- Social contact**

Most legal restrictions on meeting others **outdoors** will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal.

We may be able to hold more local Tenant and resident meetings outside if the weather permits and there are appropriate places to do this.

Indoors, the Rule of 6 or 2 households will apply this means indoor meetings will still not be possible. Although it may be possible to meet individuals indoors if we have the right spaces to do so. Many council buildings are still not open to all staff and there are very strict COVID safety measures in place that would need to be followed. Having said this, we will be exploring how we can use the community rooms and community spaces to have small meetings.

### **Review of social distancing**

Government will review social distancing and other measures to cut transmission. This will also inform guidance on 1 metre plus, the wearing of face coverings and working from home.

### **Not before 21 June - Social contact**

The government hope to remove all legal limits on social contact. However, it is likely that we will need to continue to carry on with 'hands, face, space', possibly wear face masks indoors and comply with any COVID-Secure measures that remain in place. We will also try to continue to meet outdoors when we can.

We are in the process of buying a few pop-up gazebos which we hope will enable us to do more outdoor meetings.

The CEO's are working with tenant groups to determine their needs. Each CEO has or will be in contact with the all the TRA's to see what their priorities are and how we can help. If you have any specific needs, please contact your CEO and they will be able to support your TRA or local group.

## 6. City-Wide Conference Organising group - new members needed

**Issue:** The city-wide conference organising group would love to have some new members. They asked for a request for volunteers to be raised at each Area Panel.

**Background:** This group helps plan and organise the yearly city-wide conference. It meets roughly every month for about an hour.

Any resident who is interested in joining this group can contact Rebeca Mann (Community Engagement Officer) at [rebecca.mann@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.mann@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

## 3 Star West

### 7. Maintenance Schedule HLT

**Issue:** At the last West Area Panel (3/3/21) West residents requested a maintenance schedule and raised concerns about the impact on the Estate Development Budget of unscheduled maintenance work. (*Item 11 West Residents meeting 12/1/21*)

This was discussed at the Area Panel, but no one was certain about the exact outcome (minutes are not yet available). The meeting agreed that this is an on-going issue and that more information about maintenance schedules is needed, with further discussions at the next Area Panel.

Clarification of the agreement at Area Panel on the maintenance schedule item is requested for the Agenda Setting Meeting, as well as confirmation that it will be on the Area Panel agendas in May.

#### **Response: Glyn Huelin, Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement**

We wanted to clarify that the council does not work to a fixed pattern of carrying out certain work to its properties every 'X' amount of years, instead the council prioritises work as and when it is required. Given this it is not possible to provide a citywide "maintenance schedule".

Following the last Area Panel we are working with Community Engagement to review the condition of meeting rooms and produce a priority list for any work required to the community rooms. This was also raised at the previous Area Panel.

We have provided some further information below regarding planned works programmes for the 2021/22 financial year that may be helpful to the Area Panel. Please note these are always subject to change dependant on ad-hoc priorities identified. The council are currently developing our future works

programmes and will be looking to publish the outline programmes for 2022/23 and 2023/24 later in the year on the council’s website

Please note that this is separate to major works – planned works delivers individual elements of work like roofing, windows, doors etc. Major works will deliver a potential combination of works required to one block or area.

**External repairs & decoration**

This programme concentrates on carrying out work to maintain the external elements to properties except for roofs and windows, as these are picked up under their respective contracts.

The work is delivered to both blocks and houses, and in 2021/22 will benefit 95 houses, 19 blocks (benefitting 231 flats) and 18 duplex properties.

Queensway	Wellington Road
Craven Road	Surrey Street
Uplands Road	Church Road
Patchdean	Livingstone Road
Lyminster Avenue	Shortgate Road
Rotherfield Crescent	Denton Drive
Hodshrove Road	Hangleton Way
Egginton Close	Kingsfold
Kimberley Road	Sanderstead
Chailey Road	Bylands
Ringmer Drive	Lancing Court
Highfields	Grinstead Mount
Rushlake Road	Framfield Court (C)
Reeves Hill	Lichfield Court (C)
Burlow Close	South Lodge (C)
Ravenswood Drive	Mayflower Square
Shipleigh Road	Middleton Rise
Bexhill Road	
Coleridge Street	
Cowper Street	
Deacons Drive	
Middleton Rise	

**Window replacement**

The provisional window replacement programme for 2021/22 focuses on replacement for both blocks and houses, and will benefit 140 houses, 8 blocks (benefitting 108 flats).

Stapley Road	Bellingham Crescent	<b>Communal windows only</b>
Henfield Way	Godwin Road	Highbrook Close
Egmont Road	Poyning Drive	Chates Farm Court
Fitch Drive	Wilfrid Road	
Dartmouth Crescent	Drove Crescent	
Beal Crescent	Foxdown Road	
Wickhurst Rise	The Highway	
Garnet House	Upper Bedford Street	
Tavistock Down	Hereford Street	
Selsfield Drive	Wickhurst Road	
Greatham Court	Queensway	

### Roofs replacement

The roof replacement programme will concentrate on both blocks and houses, and flat and pitched roofs.

The provisional window replacement programme for 2021/22 focuses on replacement for both blocks and houses, and will benefit 18 houses, 9 blocks (benefitting 109 flats).

Ryeland Drive
Ditchling Gardens
Balchin Court
Maple House
Devon Lodge
Derby Place
Medway Court
Coldean Lane
Hawkhurst Road
Standean Close
Surrey Street
Highbrook Close
Crown Hill
The Laurels

## Door replacement

The door replacement programme is being prioritised to ensure compliance with fire safety guidance and this will continue to be the focus on this programme for the first couple of years.

We have now agreed a compliant door with our new contractor that has been tested and certified as passing the government's new safety tests. The provisional programme below may change, depending on the manufacturers ability to produce and install the volume of doors we require.

The programme will also include some ad-hoc properties where residents urgently require a new door.

The provisional programme will deliver 920 doors through 2021/22.

Conway Court	Flint Close
Clarendon House	East Hill Drive
Ellen House	Hornby Road
Goldstone House	Sherbourne Close
Livingstone House	Netherfield Green
Dudenev Lodge	Manor Green
Nettleton Court	Haybourne Road
Theobald House	Plumpton Road
Hereford Court	Ditchling Gardens
St Johns Mount	Hillside
Tyson Place	Hodshrove Road
Warwick Mount	Bamford Close
Falcon Court	Poynings Drive

## 8. Lack of action from CityClean

**Issue:** CityClean is very slow to respond to problems and complaints. This is an on-going problem which comes up consistently across the city.



**It is the responsibility of the Council to make sure that CityClean meet the commitments of their contract with the Council. What action is the Council taking to ensure this?**

**Response - Glyn Huelin, Head of Housing Repairs & Improvement**

Thank you for your question. To be helpful it is worth clarifying that CityClean is a directly operated council service and not a contractor. CityClean provide a variety of services to residents and any questions or concerns around these services should be raised directly with colleagues in CityClean so that they can address any concerns that residents have. There is information on the council website at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-streets>

## 9. MEARs payments for Estate Development Budget Work

Issue: it is possible that Mears have been paid for EDB work that has never been done.

Background:

There are outstanding EDB projects from three years ago.

Mears are refusing to give the Council access to any information longer than two years ago. Without access to this information it is impossible to know if Mears has been paid for work they never carried out.

The Council should not accept Mears refusal to provide information and must continue to pursue this. A report on progress was requested for the Area Panel.

**Response Eddie Wilson – Head of Repairs & Maintenance**

Thank you for your question.

It is not possible that Mears were paid for EDB work that was not done or completed. All work carried out by Mears was only paid for, following an on-site inspection to confirm completion and quality, or in the circumstances where equipment was provided under EDB, the recipients were contacted to confirm safe receipt. I hope this answers your concerns.

## 10. Estate Development Budget (EDB): New Systems

**Issue:** West residents are concerned about the organisation and running of the EDB budget. Issues keep coming up and action is needed to progress the situation.

**Background:**

The central concern is that a new EDB system has been implemented which has never been agreed by the EDB panel, so does not have full agreement from residents.

**Two specific issues were also raised at the meeting:**

In the past, a regular report was circulated making clear what EDB jobs were completed, scheduled, refused or stalled. This information is necessary in order for residents to make decisions and be fully involved. It is part of ensuring a resident-led process. Will this information be available in the future?

At a recent EDB panel, resident representatives were stopped from asking questions about bids from their area and were told it was not the place to discuss local issues.

If this is not allowed, where can bids be discussed?

Concerns about the running of the Estate Development Budget have been raised repeatedly by West residents. They are asking for these to be taken seriously and a way found to move forward constructively.

**Response - Sam Warren Community Engagement Manager**

**A new EDB system has been implemented which has never been agreed by the EDB panel**

In 2018 an internal audit was carried out of the EDB process and this found it was only partially compliant. Therefore, the way the EDB funds are allocated and the bids assessed needed to be reconsidered.

In 2019/20 the EDB officer has worked on a new application process and developed some guidance for the EDB panel to follow to ensure there was a clear decision-making process.

This guidance was taken to the Involvement and Empowerment Service Improvement Group

in August 2020 and January 2021 and was shared with the residents for comments. All members of I&E and the EDB review group were invited.

There was no voting process for the residents to agree this new process just a discussion and opportunity to feedback on the new guidance. This was something that we were required to do to comply with the audit recommendations and ensure that the evaluation of EDB bids is understandable and clear for all residents bidding and for those on the panel.

Each bid will now be evaluated on the information given in the application to ensure it is a transparent process. If a decision is challenged there is now a clear rationale that will show why a bid was agreed or declined. The resident panel will still discuss the bids and are the final decision makers for EDB.

**Resident representatives were stopped from asking questions about bids from their area and were told it was not the place to discuss local issues. If this is not allowed, where can bids be discussed?**

Some residents on the EDB panel did challenge if it was appropriate to have conversations about outstanding bids in the panel decision making meeting, especially if these were bids relating to a specific group where the panel members were also the recipients of the bid.

However, in the last EDB panel meeting it was acknowledged that there needs to be a place to consider all outstanding bids. Therefore, it was proposed that the first part of the EDB panel meeting will evaluate the bids and the second part of the meeting will look at any outstanding bids.

**A regular report was circulated making clear what EDB jobs were completed, scheduled, refused or stalled, will this information be available in the future?**

The EDB team in Property and Investment will share the spreadsheet for all outstanding bids at each EDB panel meeting.

The EDB Panel and the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Groups are continuing work to ensure that the EDB Process is fair, inclusive, and resident led. The ongoing work is as follows:

1. Continue to work on options that form part of wider consultation to move towards a wider 'participatory budgeting' style voting system.
2. Continuing work on options for the funding split, such as the rollover of underspend into the main pot, or to keep underspend ringfenced to specific areas.
3. Clarifying what is 'maintenance' and what is an improvement ( this links to the question about planned maintenance in community rooms and communal areas)
4. Reviewing guidelines stipulating that an EDB bid cannot incur ongoing costs due to the limitations this imposes on certain projects, such as the installation of Wi-Fi in community rooms.
5. Agreeing a process for evaluating the impact of EDB (tying in the Resident Inspectors programme) over the course of a year, such as:
  - demonstrating value of residents as decision makers
  - the impact of successful bids within the communities
  - what has been delivered over the course of a year

This work will continue over the next year.

## 11. Environmental Improvement Budget

**Issue:** £500,000 has been found for the Environmental Improvement Budget in 2020/21 and 2021/22. At the same time the Estate Development Budget (EDB) has been cut.

**West residents would rather have the EDB returned to previous levels than more funding for the Environmental Improvement Budget.**

- A report and discussion at Area Panels was requested. This should cover:
- Where the money has come from for the Environmental Improvement Budget.
- Details of what it has been spent on.
- The process for consulting and involving residents.
- Can funds go into the Estate Development Budget instead of the Environmental Improvement Budget?

### **Response**

**Report Attached at the end of the questions:** "Environmental Improvement Budget Update May 2021".

There was a resident survey carried out at the beginning on the Environmental Improvement Budget programme however we are aware that there was a small response to the survey and we aim to do this again in summer 2021. The aim of the survey will be to identify the key priorities for the residents so that the Environmental Improvement Budget can be used to address these issues quickly. Further consultation can then be carried out with residents to look at specific details when projects are being delivered in their areas. The Environmental Improvement Budget is there to deliver on the strategic issues that residents have identified.

This is different from the Estate Development Budget (EDB) process where residents can bid for projects and ideas that they would like to take forward. The funds to EDB and the Environmental Improvement Budget are decided within the budget and approved at Housing committee annually.

## 12. Buy Local

**Issue:** a recent EDB purchase of plants for North Portslade came from Kent. These were really poor quality and arrived in a bad condition. There are many excellent local businesses and projects who could have supplied better products and need our support.

Why is the Council not buying locally?

**Request for a commitment from the Council to prioritise local businesses**

### **Response**

#### **Response – Sam Warren Community Engagement Manager**

As the council purchasing/invoicing system is quite limited, we are working on a number of ways to reduce the time residents are waiting for quick bids.

Firstly, the Community Engagement Officers are working with the Tenant and Resident Associations to ensure they have functioning bank accounts where this is appropriate. When a group is awarded a quick bid, where is it possible, we will be granting the funding directly to the community group and each group will need to sign a small grant agreement and show receipts for the items they buy. However, this will enable the group to purchase the items they have bid for

directly and have more control over value for money, and where they purchase their items.

Secondly, where it is a more informal group that have bid to EDB without a bank account we will try to work with a neighbouring TRA support them to still purchase locally.

Thirdly, we have increased the amount we are able to spend on our purchasing card to the maximum of a quick (£1,000) so we can purchase higher value items directly and locally, without having to use the council 30 day invoicing system which is only accepted by a limited amount of suppliers.

Where none of the options above are available we will need to use the council purchasing system and approved suppliers, many of whom are still local.

### 3 Star North

## 13. Clearance of overgrown areas by City Parks

See Item 2 and 6: Minutes of North Area Residents Only Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### **Issue:**

Communication between City Parks and Residents Associations has been very poor. When requests are made for an area to be cleared Residents Associations are:

- not invited to the inspection of the area or informed of the date or outcome
- unable to get any detailed information or progress reports when they phone City Parks
- Work requested by Associations and discussed at Area Panel is not followed up on or carried out.

### **Background:**

Two examples were given:

The overgrown brambles between the bottom of Davey Drive and Horton Road. This has been discussed extensively over many years, leading to a commitment by City Parks at the January 2021 Area Panel to cut back the brambles and do regular maintenance of the area. Despite this the brambles are still growing over the wall onto the footpath, causing a hazard to local residents.

Overgrown brambles at the allotments between The Charltons and Haig Avenue, Coldean. Heather has asked Alan Griffiths, City Parks Operations

Manager, to carry out a joint inspection of the area. He has not responded with a proposed date.

**Residents are requesting that City Parks review their communication with Residents Association with a view to:**

- Acknowledging requests for work on estates
- Arranging joint site visits with Residents Associations to clarify what work is required
- Providing updates on the progress of work.

**Response**

No response received.

## 14. Estate Development Budget (EDB): Fencing

See Item 10: Minutes of North Area Residents Only Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Issue:**

North residents would like to be able to submit EDB bids for fencing to individual properties.

The replacement of fencing affects a whole area, making it feel tidier and well-kept. Many fences have been blown down or damaged over time and this is leading to a general deterioration of the local environment.

Background:

Residents often ask for fencing when EDB submissions are being prepared. In the past this work was funded by EDB and it was very popular.

An item was put forward to the North Area Panel in January 2021 requesting a review of the decision to exclude fencing for individual properties from the EDB. The written response explained the reasons for the change in policy but did not put forward a framework for how it might be reviewed. Therefore this has not resolved the problem.

The meeting agreed to put this forward to the Area Panel as a 3 star item and contact other areas to ask them to support it.

**Residents are requesting that the inclusion of individual fences in EDB bids be reconsidered.** This should include an assessment of the impact of damaged and broken fences on:

- the overall appearance, untidiness and gradual deterioration of our estates

- the security of individual tenants who cannot afford to renew their own fences.

### **Response – Justine Harris**

Thank you for your question. At the January Area Panel the response to the question about fencing set out how we respond to individual requests for fencing. Each area Housing Office has an individual budget and tenants can request help for fencing by contacting the Housing Customer Service team, things such as security and affordability will be considered, along with the overall appearance of the Estates. As set out in January's response, we do have a large area of discretion when it comes to replacing fences.

The Estates Development Budget is for projects that benefit the whole community and not for individual issues. Therefore in a review in 2018 the EDB review group decided that individual fencing would no longer be funded. However as stated above if an individual has a specific fencing issue they can still resolve this by contacting the Housing Customer Service team to help them.



**Area Panel**  
**Environmental Improvement Budget Update**  
**May 2021**

**Report Provided by: Justine Harris**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give the Area Panels a progress update in relation to the Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB).

**2. Background**

2.2 In January 2019, Housing Committee agreed a proportion of the Housing Revenue Account could be set aside to support improvements to areas on Housing estates. This was following a report that went to Area Panels in November/December 2018. A sum of £500k per year was agreed for a minimum period of three years. We have just entered year three, 2020/21.

2.3 The budget for the EIB comes from the capital budget- £400k and the revenue budget-£100k

2.4 The purpose of the budget is to ensure that the Council is able to respond with greater speed to reports by tenants, councillors and officers in relation to improvements we can make on Housing estates.

2.5 Using EIB funding, as of 31/03/21: 96 projects have been completed, 6 projects are in progress and 7 projects are being procured. Further to this 31 bids are currently undergoing consultation.

2.5 Consultation is undertaken with residents if a proposal for making an improvement, could be seen to have a negative impact on other residents such as the installation of communal seating, or to consider need, such as installation of play equipment.

2.6 Both the Estate Development Budget (EDB) and the EIB are important when it comes to estate improvement. The EIB enables us

to respond quickly as a landlord to make improvements. Whilst the EDB enables residents to come together to submit proposals.

### **3. Environmental Improvements to date and in progress**

3.1 Bids to the value of £964,747 have been approved since the start of the project with works to the value of £480,357 having been completed. A further £150,000 of work is currently in the later stages of procurement, including the refurbishment of 2 play areas due to be installed in early summer.

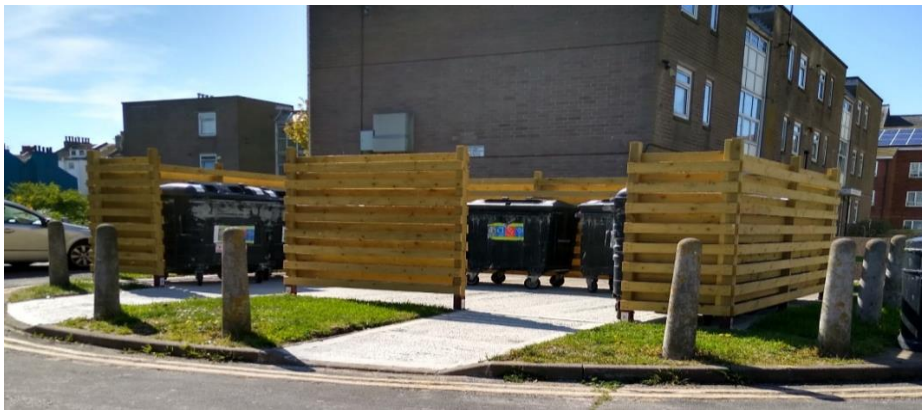
3.2 Work undertaken includes:

- Repair and replacement of play equipment
- Community improvements through landscape enhancements, signage and replacement of benches
- Creation of bin stores to improve visual appearance and reduce fly tipping
- Landscaping including shrub and tree works
- Improved accessibility by providing raised planters, dropped kerbs, paths, ramps and handrails
- Clearance of graffiti and painting of external walls
- New or replacement fencing for security
- Knee rail fencing to resolve parking issues
- Security measures including secure bike storage
- Creation and conservation of community gardens
- Resurfacing of Housing car parks

**Improvements of signage and entrance to community hall** (*St George's Community Hall*)



**Improved bin storage to improve visual appearance of estates and reduce fly tipping**  
(*Hampshire Court*)



**Before and After** ( *Faygate Court* )



**Pathway widened to improve access on link pathway to bus stop** ( *Downland Court* )



**Provision of community facilities** (*Ingram estate*)



**Project to clean and repaint garages** (*Lewes Road - Community Payback Project*)



**Refurbished play area** (*Downland Court*)



Clearance of shrubs blocking light ( *Barclay House* )



Fencing renewal ( *Ingram Crescent* )



**Provision of handrails and raised planters ( *Nettleton Lodge & Dudeney Court* )**



**Pathway repairs ( *Ingram Crescent* )**



Response from Sam Warren, Community Engagement Manager on:

- The process for consulting and involving residents.
- Can funds go into the Estate Development Budget instead of the Environmental Improvement Budget?

There was a resident survey carried out at the beginning on the EIP programme however we are aware that there was a small response to the survey and we aim to do this again in summer 2021. The aim of the survey will be to identify the key priorities for the residents so that the EIP budget can be use to address these issues quickly. Further consultation can then be carried out with residents to look at specific details when projects are being delivered in their areas. The Environmental Improvement Budget is there to deliver on the strategic issues that residents have identified.

This is different from the EDB process where residents can bid for projects and ideas that they would like to take forward. The funds to EDB and EIP are decided within the budget and approved at Housing committee annually. Therefore any decision to change this would be with the Cllrs.

