

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: CENTRAL AREA

14/12/2021 – 1400HRS

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors: Cllr Hugh-Jones (Chair), Cllr Shanks.

Residents: Barry Hughes (Chair of Residents Association), Gary Jones, Carl Boardman, David Spafford, Theresa Mackey

Officers: Martin Reid, Simon Bannister, Janet Dowdell, Theresa Reynolds, Sam Warren, Fabrizio Oliveri, Thomas Bald, Francis Mitchell

1 – WELCOME, APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies from Cllr Rainey

2 – ACTIONS AND MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 Cllr Hugh-Jones stated 'KMT' should instead be 'K&T', and 'PNR' should be 'P&R'.
- 2.2 Barry Hughes mentioned that David Spafford was misspelled on two occasions.

RESOLVED – The panel agreed the minutes and actions of the previous meeting.

3 – ESTATE DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

- 3.1 There was no discussion.

4 – RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS

- 4.1 Martin Reid outlined the structure of task and finish groups and informed the panel that there was no planned delay in residents chairing Housing Area Panels.
- 4.2 Carl Boardman asked for more information regarding training residents to chair the panels and was informed by Martin Reid that there were training packages in place. Sam Warren added that chairs training would be developed with the resource centre.
- 4.3 Martin Reid stated his encouragement of residents chairing the panels, adding that the relevant training should not be seen as a barrier for residents.
- 4.4 Barry Hughes clarified that the resource centre delivers chair's training.
- 4.5 Carl Boardman highlighted the importance of refresher training for chairs, agreeing that the training should not be seen as a barrier.

- 4.6 Gary Jones asked if residents would be involved with inspections and was informed by Janet Dowdell that the Council was keen to involve residents in this, but more information would be supplied at the next round of area panels.
- 4.7 David Spafford was informed by Janet Dowdell that Housing Officers are not specialists in repairs, and Janet Dowdell highlighted the roles of various housing staff.
- 4.8 Martin Reid stated that there was a discussion regarding the government's 'decent home standard' to reflect on neighbourhoods as well as individual homes, and highlighted the importance of preventative measures as well as repairs.
- 4.9 David Spafford asked if the decent home standard had been changed to provide different standards for homes in different parts of the city and was informed by Martin Reid that this was not the case and the standard should be consistent throughout the city.
- 4.10 Cllr Hugh-Jones suggested that several officers that are capable of covering different areas of expertise should attend estate inspections to ensure residents questions are answered appropriately.
- 4.11 Barry Hughes highlighted the importance of the need for cooling in hot weather.
- 4.12 David Spafford stated that the removal of weeds would be beneficial around Essex Place.
- 4.13 Barry Hughes asked when non-toxic weed killers would start being used and was informed by Janet Dowdell that the estates team is in the process of identifying areas that require its use.
- 4.14 Barry Hughes suggested the use of weed killers in Essex Place as paved surfaces are becoming hazardous.
- 4.15 Theresa Mackey stated that the presence of weeds and plants on the pavement have made it difficult for individuals living near Highcroft Villas, especially those who are disabled, elderly or frail, to leave their homes, and highlighted the importance of accessibility across the city.
- 4.16 Cllr Hugh-Jones stated that the Tourism, Equalities, Community and Culture Committee is looking into accessibility in the city.

5 – HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 Martin Reid delivered a verbal update on this item.
- 5.2 Gary Jones raised about long waiting times on the customer service phone line. Martin Reid stated that this is an area of poor performance that needs to be looked into and improved. Janet Dowdell added that between 3 and 5 staff operate the phones and often deal with around 250 phone calls a day, citing difficulties with demand.
- 5.3 David Spafford was informed that staff and apprentices are being brought into the repairs and maintenance service.
- 5.4 David Spafford stated that the stock condition report identified many dwellings that did not meet standards and asked if this standard was only regarding bathrooms and kitchens. Martin Reid stated that the report doesn't only consider bathrooms and kitchens.
- 5.5 Martin Reid informed Theresa Mackey that the decent home standard is being kept under review.

- 5.6 Carl Boardman asked whether Local Government had any input on the carbon reduction white paper and was informed by Martin Reid that while Local Government does not have a say on this paper, the Council is bidding for funds from Central Government to aid with carbon reduction.
- 5.7 Cllr Hugh-Jones stated that the council is working with other local authorities such as Lewes to look into retrofitting homes.

6 – POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS

- 6.1 There was no discussion.

7 – FUTURE FORMAT OF AREA PANELS

- 7.1 Martin Reid stated that the discussion at the East Area Panel was that Hybrid Meetings were welcomed highlighting benefits in terms of accessibility.
- 7.2 Sam Warren added that the intention for the community engagement team is to move towards hybrid meetings and that the engagement team has purchased a piece of equipment called an 'owl' that will make the hybrid process positive regardless of whether an attendee is physically or virtually present.
- 7.3 David Spafford outlined advantages of hybrid meetings, citing travel times, and requested that Hampshire Court get WiFi connection for virtual meetings. Simon Bannister stated that in the new year there would be an update on WiFi in Hampshire Court.
- 7.4 Barry Hughes highlighted phone reception issues in Hampshire Court.
- 7.5 Gary Jones stated that there is no fire-safety guide for Hove Town Hall that regards disabled residents. Martin Reid confirmed he would come back to the next meeting with a response.
- 7.6 Theresa Mackey supported hybrid meetings, citing that neurodiverse individuals may have difficulty attending virtually and that physically disabled individuals may find it difficult to attend in person.

8 – BUDGET UPDATE

- 8.1 Martin Reid delivered the report.
- 8.2 Barry Hughes stated that not enough money is being spent maintaining the grass and trees. Martin Reid responded that there is an intention to improve service provision and is happy to engage on this.
- 8.3 Gary Jones was informed by Martin Reid that the intention to tackle fuel-poverty is to improve the quality of council stock, citing the improvement of insulation. Martin Reid stated that there are systems in place to help people suffering from fuel poverty, citing vouchers.
- 8.4 Carl Boardman was informed by Martin Reid that the lift repair budget is separate from the lift replacement budget.

8.5 David Spafford was informed that planters purchased through the EDB budget are to be maintained by residents.

9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Barry Hughes stated that all residents should take an interest in projects that draw from the Housing Revenue Account, citing expensive door-entry systems. Martin Reid agreed, stating that residents should be consulted regarding works being conducted on their blocks.

9.2 Gary Jones asked why his block has had a fob-door entry system installed that cannot be used, Martin Reid confirmed he would look into this and come back with a response.

The meeting concluded at 15:40hrs.