

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL**  
**EAST AREA**  
**WHITEHAWK INN - 11 OCTOBER 2022 -7PM**  
**MINUTES**

Attendees:

Residents: Chris El Shabba (Chair), Val Steadman, Janet Gearing, Alan Cooke, Rosemary Johnson

Councillors: Cllr Simson, Cllr Williams

Officers: Grant Ritchie, Justine Harris, Francis Mitchell, Jan Dowdell, Natalie Beckwith, Sam Warren

Guests: Representatives of Sussex Police

Press: Sarah Booker-Lewis, Felice Southwell

**1 – WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

1.1 There were apologies from Cllr Platts, Lee Catt, Christine Harrot and Keeley McDonald.

**2 – ACTIONS AND MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

2.1 Francis Mitchell and the Chair informed Rosemary Johnson that practise is for residents to be named along with their comments in the minutes of the meeting.

2.2 Rosemary Johnson stated that item 2.1 from the previous meeting was yet to be actioned.

a. **ACTION** – Martin Reid to contact Rosemary Johnson regarding the Housing First Scheme.

2.3 Francis Mitchell invited Rosemary Johnson to share comments on the minutes of previous meetings via email.

2.4 The Chair agreed the minutes of the previous meeting as correct record.

2.5 The Chair read through the action log of the previous meeting, there were no comments from attendees.

### **3 – RESPONSES TO RESIDENTS QUESTIONS**

#### Anti-Social Behaviour:

- 3.1 Justine Harris delivered part one of the response to this question.
- 3.2 Alan Cooke was informed that, due to data protection, there is a defined protocol that must be followed in order to release CCTV footage. Janet Dowdell stated that CCTV footage is held while that process is being carried out.
- 3.3 Rosemary Johnson stated that the answer to this question focused on CCTV and requested a response to the question which fully answers the question.
- 3.4 Martin Reid invited residents concerned about the Council blocking Police access to CCTV to contact him or Justine Harris.
- 3.5 A representative from Sussex Police stated that they had not faced any issues collecting CCTV from the Council and cited the process that must be undertaken to receive footage from.
- 3.6 The Chair shared their experience with antisocial behaviour and stated that the perpetrator was dealt with appropriately by the Police.
- 3.7 Alan Cooke stated that a special Craven Vale meeting being held the next day would present an opportunity for residents to share their concerns with Police in more detail.
- 3.8 Cllr Williams stated that an antisocial behaviour policy is being put in place which includes a 'rapid response' trigger and questioned whether it would be possible to tighten the communication between the Police and the Council.
- 3.9 Justine Harris informed Cllr Williams that this was something addressed in the antisocial behaviour review and will be included in the policy.
- 3.10 Justine Harris delivered part two of the response to this question.
- 3.11 Alan Cooke was informed that there are 600 units of supported accommodation.
- 3.12 Rosemary Johnson criticised the Council for focusing on drafting new policies rather than taking immediate action to alleviate antisocial behaviour and asked what immediate action the Council was taking to reduce such behaviour.
- 3.13 Janet Dowdell stated that while antisocial behaviour is dealt with every day, it must be dealt with sensitively and highlighted the importance of developing new policy to ensure that antisocial behaviour is dealt with in the most effective way.
- 3.14 Janet Gearing stated that it can take time to deal with antisocial behaviour as it takes time to collect sufficient evidence.

3.15 The Chair was informed by police representatives that potential drug dealers might not be dealt with immediately as they may be a victim of cuckooing or because it takes time to collect sufficient evidence for action to be taken.

3.16 Janet Gearing was informed that in order for a warrant to be granted, Police must receive a minimum of three strong pieces of evidence. Janet Gearing was also informed that witnesses are not required for a drug warrant.

#### Communal Bins in Craven Vale:

3.17 Janet Gearing stated that she had visited Craven Vale and that the rubbish had not been removed. Janet Gearing also stated that action had not been taken at the east end of Craven Vale behind the communal houses and stated issues with fences in the communal gardens which have not been dealt with.

3.18 Justine Harris stated that the estates team have carried out a further inspection and will carry out remedial work. Justine Harris also stated that she had taken note of Janet Gearing's concerns regarding rubbish in Craven Vale and issues with fences in communal gardens.

- a. **ACTION** – Justine Harris to meet with Janet Gearing regarding the points raised about rubbish in Craven Vale and issues with fencing in communal areas.

3.19 Cllr Simson stated concerns regarding a planning application that, if approved, would block a communal walkway in Craven Vale and despite reporting it, stated she had not heard anything back.

3.20 Janet Gearing stated that she was informed that the boundary of a property ends at the back of the house as the garden to the rear is communal. Janet Gearing stated that properties that have been purchased have erected fences which block the communal path.

3.21 Martin Reid invited Cllr Simson and Janet Gearing to contact him with concerns regarding individuals building on housing land.

- a. **ACTION** – Martin Reid to follow up with Cllr Simson and Janet Gearing in relation to people building on Council owned land.

#### Overgrown Grass Verges:

3.22 Janet Gearing suggested cutting all the long grass and allowing it to grow through the winter and cited a resident who had to pay £500 to remove grass seeds from their dog's ear.

- 3.23 The Chair stated that there are weed killers which do not affect animals which could be used but was informed by Alan Cooke that it is ineffective against barley grass as it is not a weed.

#### Sensitive Lets – Craven Vale:

- 3.24 Alan Cooke stated that this item would be covered in more detail in Craven Vale meeting the following day and communicated he felt that care in the community was not being prioritised and individuals were being housed without support which could lead to them being exploited by drug dealers.
- 3.25 Martin Reid stated that his department is working closely with the Police to find the quickest remedies to the issues highlighted in the question and raised by Alan Cooke.
- 3.26 Janet Gearing highlighted that Craven Vale has had previous issues with drug dealers throughout the years and questioned why vulnerable people are housed near drug dealers or their associates.
- 3.27 Martin Reid stated that it possible that whoever moves into a property would be targeted, but that ways of solving this are being looked into.

#### **4 – ESTATE WALKABOUTS**

- 4.1 The Chair read the report for this item.
- 4.2 Alan stated that 39 residents attended 12 walkabouts with 14 residents from Craven Vale and asked whether an update would be provided on the status of estate walkabouts.
- 4.3 Cllr Simson communicated her disappointment in the report and stated that walkabouts are too officer heavy.
- 4.4 Justine Harris stated that the number of officers were cut back due to concerns about walkabouts being officer heavy and iterated that various officer attendees were present at walkabouts so that they could directly deal with issues within their remit.
- 4.5 Cllr Williams stated that, while she understood Cllr Simsons concerns, she preferred the officer heavy approach.

- 4.6 Rosemary Johnson stated that the scope of estate walkabouts was too wide and stated that there are different avenues for residents to express their concerns. Rosemary Johnson highlighted walkabouts should be used to target problems rather than suggesting improvements to an estate.
- 4.7 Justine Harris stated that the intention for estate walkabouts to cover all routes in the city in a 2-year period with those routes being planned presently.
- 4.8 Janet Gearing was informed that there are 7 field officers in total.

## **5 – AREA PANEL REVIEW**

- 5.1 Sam Warren delivered the presentation for this item as seen in the agenda.
- 5.2 Cllr Williams stated that she liked the idea of chairing being shared between a community member and a Councillor co-chair.
- 5.3 Sam Warren stated that attendance policy to area panel meetings has been loosened in practise, but that the review will look at whether the terms of reference should be adjusted to reflect that any community member can attend.
- 5.4 The Chair stated that residents might be more willing to attend area panels than tenants' association meetings should the meetings be open to anyone.
- 5.5 Rosemary Johnson stated that, in her understanding, area panels were specifically related to council housing related matters and were an opportunity for Councillors and local representatives to hold Council staff to account.
- 5.6 Cllr Simson cited the importance of having a member of the Housing Committee attend area panel meetings to promote direct accountability and stated that area panels should focus directly on housing issues.
- 5.7 It was agreed that Chris El Shabba will be listed on the agenda as the primary chair in subsequent meetings.
  - a. **ACTION** – Chris El Shabba to be listed as the chair of East Area Panel in future agendas.
- 5.8 Sam Warren stated that the area panel review report will be taken to January's meeting of the Housing Committee.

## **6 – FUEL/COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

6.1 Justine Harris stated that 50% of applicants accessing discretionary help such as food banks are council tenants which indicates that they are disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis and stated that assistance is being enhanced for tenants through schemes such as furniture recycling. Justine Harris stated that tenants are being proactively contacted using low-income-family data to inform them if they have access to benefits which they are not claiming.

6.2 Grant Ritchie stated that additional insulation can be topped up as a repair and stated that windows can be repaired to prevent drafts.

## **7 -ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET REPORT – ITEM NOT DISCUSSED**

## **8 – POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS**

8.1 Janet Gearing stated that the football pitch, gym and table tennis tables had been finished and commended that they looked amazing.

Janet Gearing also complimented Cllr Simson’s ribbon cutting abilities and requested whether the new amenities could be included in an issue of Homing In to show the benefits of the Estate Development Budget.

- a. **ACTION** – Sam Warren to contact Janet Gearing regarding the inclusion of new amenities in an issue of Homing In.

8.2 Alan Cooke stated that on the following Thursday a meeting had been arranged with an architect to look at the community workshop. Martin Reid informed Alan Cooke to contact him or Justine Harris if he wished to have Council staff present at this meeting.

8.3 The Chair stated that somebody had finally been found to do painting at Robert Lodge. The Chair also stated that she was very happy with her new puppy.

## **9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1 Martin Reid stated that he would follow up with Rosemary Johnson regarding the meeting he had with Rosemary Johnson and Cllr Hugh-Jones.

- a. **ACTION** – Martin Reid to follow up with Rosemary Johnson regarding the meeting he had with her and Cllr Hugh-Jones.

The meeting concluded at 21:30.