

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 7 JULY 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Kennedy (Opposition Spokesperson – Green) and Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson – Labour).

PART ONE

14. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

14(a) Declarations of Interests

14.1 Councillor Simpson declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV she is a Board Member of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

14 (b) Exclusion of Press and Public

14.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

14.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

15.1 *Bevendean Community Garden Proposal* – The Cabinet Member reported that she would be meeting with the Bevendean Community Garden Project Group on 8 July to look at potential sites.

15.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 26 May 2010 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

16. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS**Private Rented Sector Letting Agents**

- 16.1 The Cabinet Member reported that she had met with the cross party working group members, Councillors Marsh, Randall and Watkins. They had requested a scrutiny panel on this issue as it had city wide implications. The recommendations would come back to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting or the Strategic Housing Partnership.

Council House Building

- 16.2 The Cabinet Member mentioned that at the last Housing Management Consultative Committee she had reported that the council were planning to build more council properties. A Working Group with tenant members had been set up to discuss the project. Martin Reid confirmed that a provisional date of 21 July had been scheduled for the Working Group to meet. The outcome of this meeting and further meetings would be reported back to the Housing Management Consultative Committee.

Pat Miles

- 16.3 The Cabinet Member reported the sad news that Pat Miles had passed away at the weekend. Pat had been ill for some time but had still been attending meetings such as the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, the Housing Management Consultative Group and the Hove and Portslade Area Housing Panel. A letter of condolence would be sent to her family.

17. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 17.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion.

18. PETITIONS

- 18.1 There were none.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 19.1 There were none.

20. DEPUTATIONS

- 20.1 There were none.

21. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 21.1 There were none.

22. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 22.1 There were none.

23. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

23.1 There were none.

24. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

24.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 10 May & 14 June 2010.

24.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

25. SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2009-10

25.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which was the second annual update of the 3-year Supporting People Strategy (2008-2011) that outlined key achievements and progress in implementing year 2 of the strategy, 2009-10. Appendix one detailed progress made against all objectives and strategic actions of the strategy.

25.2 Councillor Simpson stated that she hoped future cuts in this budget would be modest. The relative impact of the cuts would be huge. This would be a false economy as it would have an impact on other budgets such as health. Councillor Simpson congratulated people working in the Supporting People Team.

25.3 Councillor Kennedy agreed with Councillor Simpson. She also congratulated the team. She hoped that the cuts would not be severe. She would welcome a decision to lobby the government about this issue.

25.4 The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy reported that the last two years had been challenging. A move towards a commissioning process would share the budget across the council, health and the PCT.

25.5 The Cabinet Member congratulated the staff in the team. She reported that earlier in the year she had been asked by the Health Minister and St Mungo's to do work relating to the Homelessness Task Force. Some London authorities were envious of how money in the Supporting People Team was used. Brighton & Hove City Council and the work done in the Supporting People Team had been recognised.

25.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That progress made on delivering strategic actions of the Supporting People Strategy during year 2 of the strategy, 2009-10 be noted.

26. REPORT ON THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2007 -2010 AND INTERIM ACTION PLAN FOR 2010-2011

- 26.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which covered the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010, detailing key achievements of the strategy action plan for that period. It also covered the interim action plan for 2010-2011.
- 26.2 Councillor Kennedy was pleased to hear of the work being carried out in difficult times. She expressed concern about the cuts to housing benefit and the impact of those cuts on the Youth Homelessness Strategy.
- 26.3 The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy reported that officers were waiting for more details about cuts to benefits, particularly changes to transitional relief.
- 26.4 Councillor Simpson congratulated officers who had worked on the strategy. She considered that one of the most successful aspects of strategy was the work to prevent young people becoming homeless and helping them to stay at home. Councillor Simpson was impressed to see that officers were planning to work with younger teenagers. She suggested that this would push the achievements even higher.
- 26.5 The Cabinet Member congratulated the team. She made the point that the real benefits of the strategy would not be seen for years to come. Many people became homeless at a very young age, and there was a need to break that cycle.
- 26.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the report be noted and the interim action plan for 2010-2011 be approved.

27. REFRESH & UPDATE EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY UPDATE

- 27.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out an update to the Empty Property Strategy which ran from 2006-2009, bringing it up to date and aligning the dates with the Housing Strategy (2009-2014). The refreshed Strategy linked into the Housing Strategy 2009-2014 and contributed to the 20:20 Community Strategy under Improving Housing and Affordability where private vacant dwellings brought back into use was a key target.
- 27.2 Councillor Kennedy referred to a recent compulsory purchase order in Preston Park Ward. She was pleased to see such a pro-active approach. Councillor Kennedy said that she understood the need to look at the grant funding process. She asked if it was possible for resources to be diverted to the Council's empty properties.
- 27.3 The Empty Property Officer explained that the council were looking at a wider range of funds available. The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy explained that 1% of the council housing stock was empty. There had been a continuous improvement. Officers were ensuring that properties were brought back into use as soon as possible. The Local Delivery Vehicle would be used to bring back properties into use.

- 27.4 The Cabinet Member asked about the impact of the move from grants to loans. The Empty Property Officer explained that loans would still be subsidised. It would therefore be preferable to use loans rather than approaching the banks. The council would still be giving grants but on a smaller scale.
- 27.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That it be agreed that the Strategy be refreshed in line with the Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014.
 - (2) That it be agreed that the revised Strategy should go out for consultation to key stakeholders
 - (3) That the Assistant Director be given delegated powers to agree any proposed changes to the Strategy post-consultation and in agreement with the Cabinet Member.

28. PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL & HOUSING ADAPTATIONS

- 28.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which reported that Brighton & Hove City Council was the lead authority for the delivery of the 2008-2011 Private Housing Renewal Programme for Brighton and Hove and East Sussex (The BEST consortium). The consortium received funding from the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board (RHHB) and received the largest allocation of funding across the South East for 2010/11, and the sixth highest allocation in the country, (£8,579,190).
- 28.2 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was individual government grants towards capital spending on providing disabled adaptations to housing. The DFG grant covered 60% of the DFG expenditure and Brighton & Hove City Council used the RRHB grant to match fund this grant. The council received £660K DFG grant settlement in 2010-11, and this would be match funded by £440K BEST funding.
- 28.3 The Cabinet Member made the point that private sector housing affected the majority of people in the city. Adaptations and insulation made a huge impact. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development reported that 10,000 homes in the city needed to be made decent. There were high levels of houses in multiple occupation in the city.
- 28.4 Councillor Simpson congratulated officers on the past years performance. She hoped that there would be sufficient funding in future for private housing work. She stressed that the disabled facilities grant was an enormous benefit to people living in their own homes. Councillor Simpson referred to the shift from grants to loans and asked for further details. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development explained that the council used interest only loans. Targeting older people was important and loans were seen as the way forward as the council received the money back.
- 28.5 Councillor Kennedy congratulated officers on the excellent work carried out.
- 28.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That it is noted that that the council has been awarded £8,579,190 Private Housing Renewal Grant from the Regional Housing & Regeneration Board for 2010/11. This has been allocated across the BEST consortium according to the agreed split below.

B&HCC	£4,514,369
Hastings BC	£1,871,979
Eastbourne BC	£1,319,479
Rother DC	£277,107
Wealden DC	£290,834
Lewes DC	£305,419
	£8,579,190

- (2) That it is noted that the council's share of the 2009/10 £1m mini-bid, £566,200, has been carried forward to 2010/11.
- (3) That is noted that the council has been awarded £660,000 by the government for expenditure in 2010-11 on Disabled Facilities Grant.
- (4) That the progress made by the BEST partnership in year 2 of the RHB private sector renewal programme 2009/10 be noted.

29. TENANT HANDBOOK REVIEW

- 29.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing Culture & Enterprise which presented a proposed draft of the new tenant handbook. The report also presented the results of the tenant led Working Group review of the tenant handbook for tenants living in council housing. Minor changes had been made reflecting the feedback from the Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- 29.2 The Cabinet Member mentioned that the report had been generally welcomed at the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 14 June 2010.
- 29.3 Councillor Simpson considered the document to be clear and comprehensive. She referred to the section on unauthorised alterations or DIY. Two of her constituents were an elderly couple who had been asked to put right alterations made to their property after a 37 year tenancy. Councillor Simpson stressed that it was important to ensure that inspections of properties were carried out by qualified people and that the age and vulnerability of tenants should be considered. Councillor Simpson was pleased that an apology had been made to the couple in question and that they had received a visit from the Assistant Director, Housing Management.
- 29.4 Councillor Simpson referred to the useful contacts list in the handbook and asked for the local Age UK details to be included.
- 29.5 The Cabinet Member reported that the section on fire safety had been amended since the HMCC meeting in order to make it clearer. She thanked the working group and considered the handbook to be an excellent piece of work.

29.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the conclusions of the working group outlined in the report be noted.
- (2) That the implementation of the new tenant handbook attached at appendix 1 be agreed.
- (3) That it be agreed that minor changes may be required and made to the tenant handbook between the Housing Cabinet Meeting and printing to ensure it reflects the latest local context, with significant changes requiring approval from the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise.

30. **CESP - COMMUNITY ENERGY SAVING PROGRAMME**

30.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which outlined the background to the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), the discussions and project work currently underway with an energy company to access the potential benefits of this programme to residents of the City and the likely timescale for seeking a decision on whether to progress any offer of additional funding arising from the current negotiations.

30.2 The paper also noted the importance of continuing to work with potential partners such as energy companies to explore means of maximising investment to meet the council's strategic housing goals of improving the quality of housing in the city, reducing fuel poverty and minimising CO2 emissions.

30.3 The Cabinet Member agreed that the report should be referred to the next Sustainability Cabinet Committee for information.

30.4 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the current project work and negotiation being undertaken with an energy provider to assess and maximise the potential investment opportunity arising from Community Energy Savings Programme as a means of meeting strategic housing goals of improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty, be noted.
- (2) That it is noted that any final decision on any funding offer from the energy provider is likely to be subject to further Cabinet Member approval given the potential nature and scope of the programme.

The meeting concluded at 5.02pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of