

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 22 MARCH 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

112. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

112(a) Declarations of Interests

112.1 There were none.

112(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

112.2 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).

112.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda. (There was no discussion of item 129).

113. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

113.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 16 February 2011 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

114. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

114.1 There were none.

115. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

115.1 **RESOLVED** – That item numbers 123, 124, 125, 127, and 128 be reserved for debate and determination. Item 126 is agreed without discussion.

116. PETITIONS

116.1 There were none.

117. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

117.1 There were none.

118. DEPUTATIONS

118.1 There were none.

119. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

119.1 There were none.

120. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

120.1 There were none.

121. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

121.1 There were none.

122. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

122.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 6 January 2011.

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

123. SERVICE PLEDGES FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS IN COUNCIL MANAGED HOUSING

123.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which provided an overview of the development of service pledges with residents and included the service pledges that had been agreed with residents in the appendices. The service pledges met the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) requirement to produce local service offers by 1 April 2011, which was still a requirement of all councils who are landlords.

123.2 A wide range of consultation was carried out with resident on the development of the service pledges and this was detailed in 3.1 to 3.7 of the report.

- 123.3 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion informed the meeting that the report had been well received by the Housing Management Consultative Committee. There had been some comments about how tenants should understand some of the Brighton & Hove Standards and as a result a leaflet would be produced explaining in plain English how these standards should be interpreted.
- 123.4 Councillor Simpson referred to paragraph 3.16 to 3.20 which related to standards not being met if two or more of the other building components were old and needed replacing or required immediate repair (these related to kitchens, bathrooms and heating distribution systems). Councillor Simpson considered that there should be clarification for tenants about these standards. She asked for confirmation that the Brighton & Hove Standard did not conflict with Decent Homes Standards.
- 123.5 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that there was no conflict with the Decent Homes Standards.
- 123.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the Housing Cabinet Member approves the Service Pledges attached in appendices 1, 2 and 3.

124. ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

- 124.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Lead Commissioner for Housing which explained that the current Housing Register Allocations Policy was approved by committee on 6 January 2005 with an update in March 2009 agreed by the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting. However, following tenants' dissatisfaction it was agreed that the area of Choice Based Lettings and systems for allocating accommodation be subject to a fundamental review. This review had now been undertaken resulting in recommendations for changes to the way the Housing Register was to be operated. The recommended changes to the Allocations Policy were attached as Appendix 1 for approval. If approved the changes would be implemented by May 2011.
- 124.2 A full 12 week consultation with the City had been concluded. This further report brought back final recommendations for implementation.
- 124.3 The Head of Temporary Accommodation and Allocations reported that following consultation, recommended changes to the policy were set out in Appendix 7 of the report.
- 123.4 Councillor Simpson expressed her concern at the part of the policy relating to 50% of social housing stock being advertised with a priority being given to tenants who were working. She felt this was excessive and unnecessary. Many estates had mixed communities living in them and many households were unemployed and would become unemployed at this time. It would be a negative step to exclude them from housing. She asked for a revision of this aspect of the policy.
- 124.5 The Cabinet Member replied that she had not been in attendance at the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 7 March but had been assured by Councillor

Mears who chaired the meeting, that the recommendations had been supported by the Committee. 50% of properties would still be available for people not working.

- 124.6 The Cabinet Member commented that in certain areas such as the east area of the city, there was massive poverty and that the intention was to improve and bring income to the estates. She did not consider it an unjust policy and stressed the need to be proactive about poverty. She considered that council housing was not necessarily the best accommodation for people on housing benefit as they could access other forms of housing.
- 124.7 Councillor Simpson replied that she considered that the policy would not alleviate poverty and that it would take longer for the most disadvantaged to find permanent accommodation.
- 124.8 The Cabinet Member remarked that some people assumed that people on housing benefit were most in need. She considered that many people were on the edge and could end up on housing benefit if they did not get help and support. These people did not have access to the private rented sector.
- 124.9 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the changes recommended in Appendix 1 be approved. (Appendix 6 was a full policy document with the changes highlighted).

125. BRIGHTON AND HOVE LANDLORD SOLUTIONS

- 125.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Lead Commissioner for Housing concerning a proposal to amalgamate the various ways in which the council were working with the private sector under the name Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions and to expand the work the council were doing to incorporate joint work with other organisations on head leasing with the universities in the City. There could also be other opportunities where a social letting agency would deliver accommodation more strategically.
- 125.2 Bringing all the current schemes together into Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions would enable Brighton & Hove City Council to have a clear identity in the private market from which to attract further landlords and developers to enable access to good quality housing.
- 125.3 The Chairman considered the report to be timely and important. The result of the universities and council working together would bring peace of mind to students, parents and residents.
- 125.4 Councillor Simpson supported the proposal which she considered a good initiative.
- 125.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That bringing together all the current work with private landlords and developers into Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions, be approved.

- (2) That it be approved that Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions incorporate joint head leasing with the Universities, and undertake joint management functions with the Universities to provide efficiencies and value for money for each organisation.

126. OUT OF HOURS SHELTERED SERVICE

- 126.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion concerning recommended changes to the weekend call service and the service to sheltered housing tenants after out of hours.
- 126.2 Twelve proposals to revise the out of hours and weekend service provided to sheltered tenants were identified by the tenant led focus group, and agreed by the Sheltered Housing Action Group.
- 126.3 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the twelve proposals set out in section 3 of the report be approved.

127. THE PROVISION OF LOFT CONVERSIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO ASSIST OVERCROWDED COUNCIL TENANTS

- 127.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which explained that the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for 2011-2014, approved by Council on 3 March 2011, included setting aside £388,000 per annum to fund a programme of loft conversions and extensions to alleviate overcrowding in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties. The report set out how a loft conversion and extension programme could operate.
- 127.2 The Business Improvement Manager reported that there would be 10 conversions a year. The selection criteria broadly mirrored the Allocations criteria.
- 127.3 The Cabinet Member was pleased that people from outside the housing list were included in the scheme. She remarked that many people on the housing register needed more room and did not necessarily want to move. This was a good option for some families and a good use of resources.
- 127.4 Councillor Simpson welcomed the initiative. Many families were living in overcrowded accommodation. Her one criticism of the report related to the selection criteria which stated that 50% of properties selected would be tenanted by working households. Councillor Simpson considered that the selection criteria should be based on helping those who were most overcrowded, rather than based on whether people were in or out of work.
- 127.5 The Cabinet Member suggested that after completion of works to the first 10 properties, it would be a good idea to invite a couple of families to the Housing Management Consultative Committee to speak about their experience and how this project had benefited them.
- 127.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:

- (1) That the selection criteria, set out in Appendix A be approved.
- (2) That the selection criteria, set out in Appendix A be approved.
- (3) That discretion be awarded to the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion to amend the selection and prioritisation criteria in accordance with any relevant changes agreed to the council's Allocations Policy. (These will primarily concern priority for working households and those making a positive contribution to the city).
- (4) That the key events in the process and the estimated timetable for each event to be completed, be noted as set out in Appendix B.

128. HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT OPTIONS

- 128.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Lead Commissioner Housing which explained that the Housing Revenue Account Capital programme for 2011-14 included home energy efficiency investment as a housing commissioning investment priority for possible future investment. In order to maintain the Council's current level of performance and meet the Council's strategic priorities it was necessary to explore alternative funding streams to enable the continued delivery of home energy efficiency programmes in both the private sector and council stock. Previous reports and presentations to the HMCC and Housing Cabinet Member Meeting had noted the importance of continuing the work with potential partners such as energy companies to explore means of maximising investment to meet the Council's strategic housing goals, including potential opportunities offered by the Government backed Feed in Tariff scheme.
- 128.2 The Council had the opportunity to install solar PV panels onto its Council owned residential properties. This had arisen out of the Government's new Feed-in-Tariff incentive scheme.
- 128.3 The Cabinet Member reported that the Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing had consulted all the Housing Area Management Panels and the Energy Efficiency Working Group on these proposals.
- 128.4 It was confirmed that the report had been supported by the Housing Management Consultative Committee and had been approved by Cabinet.
- 128.5 Councillor Simpson welcomed the proposals. She mentioned that she had heard that the climate change minister had stated that feed in tariffs could be reduced for large scale installations over 50 kw (the equivalent to 20 houses). She would be concerned if feed in tariffs were to be reduced.
- 128.6 The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing replied that his understanding of the review was that the changes would relate to larger installations.
- 128.7 The Chairman considered the proposals to be exciting opportunities and stressed the need to move the proposals forward quickly. She asked about timescales. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development confirmed that the plan was to develop the

procurement opportunities as quickly as possible. The Council was ahead of other local authorities both in terms of feed in tariffs and other energy initiatives.

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

- (1) That the Home Energy Efficiency Investment options and opportunities available to the Council, its tenants and residents through installation of solar photovoltaic panels on council and other homes to take advantage of the Feed in Tariff scheme, be noted.
- (2) That the outcome of the initial options appraisal undertaken by Climate Energy be noted. This indicated that there is an outline business case to support delivery of a solar photovoltaic scheme across the council housing stock and to meet strategic housing and other council priorities, including private sector housing renewal, reducing fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions.
- (3) That it is noted that existing sub-regional local authority partners in the BEST consortium are also undertaking similar initiatives to install solar panels to take advantage of the Feed in Tariff scheme and that we have identified significant potential advantages to working in partnership to move quickly to enable economies of scale to be explored through procurement arrangements.
- (4) That it be agreed that BHCC works with partners in the current BEST consortium to ascertain whether BHCC can take forward any procurement of the supply and installation of solar PV panels together with those partners in order to establish actual costs to inform economies of scale and further consideration of business case and appropriate funding model. In addition, consideration will be given to procuring the supply and installation of solar PV panels with our partner Mears Ltd.
- (5) That it be noted that any final decision on funding options, level and source of funding to progress this scheme together with any procurement supply and installation of solar PV panels as set out in this Report will be subject to Cabinet approval.

129. PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

129.1 The Cabinet Member noted the Part Two minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2011.

129.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Part Two minutes be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member.

The meeting concluded at 4.31pm

Signed

Cabinet Member

Dated this

day of