

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 5 JULY 2011

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Wakefield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson) and Farrow (Opposition Spokesperson)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1(a) Declarations of Interests

1.1 There were none.

1(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

1.2 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).

1.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 22 March 2011 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

3. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Working Together

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member reported that she was keen to work in partnership with Children & Young People's services and Adult Social Care & Health as well as Housing officers and tenants. Although difficult times lie ahead with services under pressure, there would be a common purpose and consensual solutions. The Cabinet Member stressed that she would do her utmost to provide decent homes for all the citizens of the city.

Housing Centre

- 3.2 The Cabinet Member reported that earlier in the day she had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the new Housing Centre in Moulsecomb.

Cap on Housing Benefit

- 3.3 The Cabinet Member reported that there had been leaked reports of a planned cap on Housing Benefit. Housing officers were investigating how many people in the city would be affected by these changes and how the council should respond.
- 3.4 Councillor Farrow stated that there was great concern at the news of the leaked reports. He considered that these changes could lead to the eviction of families in the city. He hoped officers would investigate this matter and report back.
- 3.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if Chair's Communications was a vehicle for the Cabinet Member to communicate news to the meeting or whether it was an item that could lead to a debate.
- 3.6 The Senior Lawyer replied that the council's constitution allowed some flexibility with regard to Cabinet Member Meetings, which would not be permissible with formal committee meetings.
- 3.7 The Cabinet Member stated that she would prefer matters to be raised in advance of the meeting and placed on the agenda in the form of Letters from Councillors and Written Questions from Councillors. However, in this instance the matter had arisen urgently following weekend press reports.

4. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 4.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

5. PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were none.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 6.1 There were none.

7. DEPUTATIONS

7.1 There were none.

8. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

8.1 There were none.

9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

9.1 There were none.

10. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

10.1 There were none.

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

11.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 10 March 2011.

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

12. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

12.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 7 March & 22 March 2011.

12.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted

13. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING

13.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing which gave an overview on Housing Commissioning in the city. The presentation set out the priorities and principles of the Housing Strategy 2009-2014. It further detailed the average price of property in the city and the annual property price inflation.

13.2 The presentation contained graphs relating to housing affordability, new affordable housing, non-decent housing within tenures, numbers of non-decent housing, homelessness, temporary accommodation and Supporting People.

13.3 The presentation concluded with details of housing and health working together. A map showed overall deprivation in the city and a housing commissioning future framework was set out.

14. AUTHORITY TO AWARD A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR THE BUILDING OF 15 NEW COUNCIL HOMES AT AINSWORTH HOUSE

- 14.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which requested delegated authority to award the contract in relation to the construction works at Ainsworth House. The report summarised the work to procure a contractor.
- 14.2 The Cabinet Member was informed that improving housing supply was one of the key strategic priorities of the City-Wide Housing Strategy. A key goal was to increase the supply of affordable rented housing including building new Council homes. Planning approval for the Ainsworth House proposals was awarded on 27 April 2011.
- 14.3 The Cabinet Member was informed that three tenders had been returned on 13 June 2011. They would soon be evaluated. The development of Ainsworth House would meet high standards of sustainability.
- 14.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the recommendation. He asked if it was not the case that the tender was based on specifications which included the design. He expressed concern that there was mention in a public paper that the contract was for 1.6m. He further asked why there had been slippage in the tender process.
- 14.5 The Head of Housing and Development and Private Sector Housing explained that the £1.6m was the sum of money that the council had indicated as part of the budget but was not the cost of the contract as such. The reference to design and build was a generic term. It was further explained that the slippage was about two weeks, and had been due to the extra bank holiday in April. Officers were hoping to catch up and complete the process on time.
- 14.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the Strategic Director of Place be given delegated authority to award and enter into the design and build contract for Ainsworth House. This requires awarding and entering into a contract with a delivery partner following a competitive procurement process via the Homes and Communities Agencies Delivery Partner Panel. The approximate contract value is £1.6m

15. RENEWAL OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL ASSISTANCE

- 15.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which stated that improving housing quality in the city was one of the key aims of the Citywide Housing Strategy 2009-14. The city's private sector housing renewal assistance programme supported this aim and focused on improving conditions in the private rented and owner occupied sectors.
- 15.2 The programme had been funded since 2008 by successful Brighton & Hove and East Sussex Together (BEST) partnership bids for Regional Housing Board (RHB) private sector housing renewal capital. The 2008-2011 BEST funding programme had now come to an end. The Government announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn of 2010 that further RHB funding for private sector housing

renewal would not be made available. In light of this it was agreed to carry forward some existing capital funding into 2011/12.

- 15.3 As delivery of the renewal assistance programme was subject to availability of resources it was proposed to review the private sector Housing Renewal Policy based on likely future funding.
- 15.4 As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review the council had been awarded £723,000 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding for 2011/12. Approval for this spending was sought.
- 15.5 Councillor Farrow stated that the previous government had made Regional Housing Board (RHB) private sector housing renewal capital available to local authorities. £23 million had been allocated to Brighton & Hove, East Sussex Together Partnership (BEST), over three years to improve the living conditions of households in the private sector. Councillor Farrow considered that adaptations in particular had demonstrated significant cost efficiency and provided jobs for local people. He considered that the government's decision not to make further funds available was short-sighted and urged the administration to do all it could to continue provision.
- 15.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the strategic importance of private sector housing renewal, the successful delivery of private sector housing renewal in the City and the issues outlined concerning future availability of capital funding to support the assistance available to eligible households, be noted.
 - (2) That it is noted that the Lead Commissioner for Housing is undertaking a review of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy with a view to submitting a revised policy based on likely funding streams to a future meeting.
 - (3) That expenditure be approved within Brighton and Hove of the council's 2011/12 Disabled Facilities Grant allocation of £723,000 in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

The meeting concluded at 4.57pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

