

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 15 JUNE 2016**

**FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, SHIP STREET, BRIGHTON**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Meadows (Chair), Councillor Hill (Deputy Chair), Mears (Opposition Spokesperson), Gibson (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Bell, Deane, Lewry and Moonan

**PART ONE**

**1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**1a) Declarations of Substitutes**

1.1 Councillor Deane declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Druitt.

**1b) Declarations of Interests**

1.2 There were none.

**1c) Exclusion of the Press and Public**

1.3 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

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

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

2.1 Councillor Moonan referred to paragraph 67.8 with regard to the SWEP protocol. She asked this paragraph to be amended. The SWEP was not about emergency accommodation. The SWEP would enable a number of hostels to be kept open in bad weather. Normally, the criteria was if there were three days of successive cold the SWEP was put into operation.

- 2.2 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 64.2 with regard to the review of the future use of the former Oxford Street Housing Office. She stressed that she had been informed that the report was to be submitted to the Committee on 2 March 2016. This was then changed to 15 June 2016 but it had not appeared on the agenda. Councillor Mears asked when the report would be brought to the committee. The Head of Housing apologised for the delay and stated that the council was in further negotiations with the HCA about the funding of this work. There was still further work required to formalise the costings which officers would bring to the committee as soon as possible, hopefully in September 2016.
- 2.3 Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 70.19 with regard to the Selsfield Drive scheme. He asked for the last line to read "There was a need for living rents/social rents as well as local *housing allowance* rents".
- 2.4 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 64.4 with regard to the overspend on the Mears Contract. Page 106 of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee agenda of 9 June (Targeted Budget Management report) had quoted that £513,000 had been recovered from overcharging on the partnership contract. Councillor Mears asked for confirmation that this was the final figure. The Head of Housing confirmed that the figure presented to the Policy, Resources and Growth Committee was the figure received.
- 2.5 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 74.8 and 74.9 relating to her questions about homelessness and bed spaces. With the closing of certain hostels there was a shortfall of 14 beds. Councillor Mears asked how these beds would be made up and asked for an update on the current situation. The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care agreed he was happy to provide a response for Councillor Mears on the future hostel provision in the city.
- 2.6 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committee held on 2 March 2016 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendments set out in paragraphs 67.8 and 70.19 above.

### **3 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **Welcome and Congratulations to Councillor Steve Bell**

- 3.1 The Chair welcomed Councillor Steve Bell as a new member of the Committee, and congratulated him on being awarded the CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

#### **New Gas Heating Servicing, Maintenance and Installations Partnership Contract**

- 3.2 The Chair was pleased to inform Members that from the 1st April 2016, Brighton & Hove City Council and K&T Heating had successfully launched the new Gas Heating Servicing, Maintenance and Installations partnership contract.
- 3.3 The contract would run for 5 years and covered all gas work in the council's housing stock. The mobilisation team began planning for the transition in late 2015 and after an intense period of preparation, addressing risk and process implementation across the service, the Chair was happy to report that the council had achieved 100% gas compliancy for the first 2 months of the contract across the city.

- 3.4 Councillor Bell asked what steps would be taken if the contractors found a CO2 battery was not working or had not been hard wired. He expressed concern that in the winter boilers would be shut off until that problem had been resolved, leaving people without heating or hot water. The Business and Performance Manager replied that he would answer that question in a written briefing.

#### **Joint Review of the current Repairs and Maintenance Partnership**

- 3.5 The Chair reported that work was underway to carry out a joint review of the current Repairs and Maintenance Partnership, with support from an independent facilitator to help improve and strengthen the partnership and ensure it is fit for the future.

#### **Annual Citywide Tenant Conference**

- 3.6 The Chair was pleased to note that this year's annual citywide tenant conference was held on 11 June with over 40 tenants attending the event, which was designed and co-produced by tenants representatives with Housing staff. The key theme of the day was how to continue to improve resident engagement and broaden involvement across the tenant movement, producing many positive contributions and new ideas to take forward into the tenant involvement review.

#### **Neighbourhood Initiative – cookery course**

- 3.7 The Chair highlighted a recent highly successful neighbourhood initiative which brought together different generations through a passion for food. Residents at Hazelholt seniors scheme, welcomed students from nearby Portslade Aldridge Community Academy to join them in an eight week cookery course held in Hazelholt's kitchen.
- 3.8 The cookery course was run by Caroline Henderson of Cooking & Company, a Hove based not-for-profit organisation promoting healthy cooking on a budget, and a celebration lunch with local councillors and the Head teacher was held on the completion of the course.

### **4 CALL OVER**

- 4.1 It was agreed that all items be reserved for discussion.

### **5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

- 5.1 The Committee considered an extract of the proceedings of the meeting of full Council held on 24 March 2016, and the following petition submitted by Daniel Harris.

#### **Homelessness Emergency Accommodation**

"We, the undersigned request the council to consider the 10 point action plan listed below to address this matter:

1. Homemove Allocations for vulnerable persons in priority need with a duty of care should be awarded a higher banding than band C (the general band) when placed in Emergency Housing. I am looking for a band A priority.
  2. More inspections of Emergency Accommodation to ensure the living standards meets the needs of the people occupying them.
  3. The council to adopt a plan to bring emergency housing into public ownership by 2020. They MUST pledge to stop funding private landlords who only have an interest in profit.
  4. I want the council to ask all applicants to complete surveys with all emergency housed people to ensure they have a voice.
  5. The right to food, is a human right protecting the right for people to feed themselves in dignity, The council must ensure that emergency housing adequately meets the individual's dietary needs. The current conditions do not allow for a healthy diet which can be a huge issue for vulnerable people.
  6. I want the council to be radical and rather than spend millions of tax payers money in private sector emergency and temporary housing, they should build more storage container homes after the success of the BHT scheme in Brighton.
  7. I want the council to ensure that all persons in emergency accommodation have access to the internet for free.
  8. To revoke the rules on no visitors. Vulnerable people are isolated enough and this in my opinion is discrimination. Even Prisoners are allowed visitors.
  9. For persons who are vulnerable the council MUST provide them with secure social housing to ensure they are able to live life free from FEAR and outside the Private Sector Property Scam.
  10. Ensure hot water is available in emergency housing for persons to wash in comfort.
- 5.2 Council on 24 March 2016 recommended that the Housing & New Homes Committee give due consideration to the following:-
- **An increase in the frequency of inspections of emergency accommodation and report on the outcome of these inspections at regular intervals to Housing & New Homes Committee;**
  - **That satisfaction surveys are undertaken with residents moving into emergency accommodation and the results reported back;**
  - **Exploring along with other relevant committees as a matter of priority the identification of sites and explore the development of council owned low-cost emergency accommodation, either through a council owned company or directly owned by the council. That this exploration focuses on non-traditional, quick to build, construction such as the Y cube and containers be considered for these sites;**
  - **Undertaking a review of the no visitor rules and consider the outcome at a future meeting;**
  - **Adopting a policy of only using emergency accommodation in which hot water supply is guaranteed.**

5.3 The Chair responded to the further recommendations as follows:

- **Increase frequency of inspections to emergency accommodation and report outcomes to H&NH committee**

Monthly inspections of the blocks of B&B style accommodation are already undertaken, and any issues are raised with the landlord in line with the contract specifications.

Whilst there is a current good track record of repairs being completed in timescale, if issues are not addressed within the timeframes they are dealt with under the contract management arrangements.

An annual performance report will be included in the committee papers regarding the number of inspections; actions raised and actions resolved.

- **Satisfaction surveys undertaken with residents moving into TA and results reported back**

Exit surveys will be completed with residents and the information will be included in the annual performance report.

- **Review no visitor rule and consider outcome at future meeting**

A risk assessment was completed for residents placed in temporary accommodation, to ensure the accommodation will be a safe and secure place for them and other residents; taking into account some residents may be very vulnerable and at risk of predatory behaviour.

As the council is unable to carry out risk assessments on visitors, officers can continue to manage the risk and provide a safe environment for all residents by preventing visitors to the accommodation.

- **Adopt policy of using TA which hot water supply is guaranteed.**

Hot water is required and provided in all accommodation provided by the council.

5.4 The Chair reported that she had received two amendments to the recommendations from Full Council. One from the Green Group and the other from the Conservative Group. She had agreed under Chair's discretion to allow consideration of the amendments even though they had been received after the 10.00am deadline.

5.5 Councillor Gibson proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Deane:

***“That the Housing & New Homes committee agrees to undertake:-***

- An increase in the frequency of inspections of emergency accommodation and report on the outcome of these inspections at regular intervals to Housing & New Homes Committee;

- That satisfaction surveys are undertaken with residents moving into emergency accommodation and the results reported back;
- A review of the no visitor rules and consider the outcome at a future meeting; **with a brief to devise workable systems that enable residents to have visitors**
- **To acknowledge the Emergency & Temporary Housing Residents Action Group (ETHRAG) and work in partnership with the group and landlords to improve housing standards and quality of life for residents in emergency accommodation**
- **To immediately establish an emergency accommodation board comprised of representatives from the Emergency & Temporary Housing Residents Action Group (ETHRAG), service providers, residents, landlords and elected members and council officers. The board will meet regularly to review conditions, complaints, evictions and to develop a strategic plan for recommendation to the Housing & New Homes Committee.”**

5.6 Councillor Mears proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Lewry:

“That the Housing & New Homes committee agrees to:-

- ~~Exploring along with other relevant committees~~ **As a matter of priority the identification of sites exploration of options for the development of council-owned low cost emergency accommodation, either through a council-owned company or directly owned by the council. That this exploration focuses on non-traditional, quick to build, construction such as the Y cube and containers be considered for these sites;**
- Adopting a policy of only using emergency accommodation **which satisfies the Brighton & Hove Standard[1], including guaranteed hot water** ~~in which hot water supply is guaranteed.”~~

5.7 Councillor Gibson thanked the Chair for allowing the amendments to be heard under Chair’s discretion. He was proposing to firm up the hastily composed recommendations of Full Council. It was clear that the first two recommendations of full council were being addressed so they had not been altered. With regard to no visitor rules, it was suggested that workable ways of allowing visitors should be investigated. Councillor Gibson stressed the emotional importance of having visitors.

5.8 Councillor Gibson mentioned that he had attended the launch of the Emergency & Temporary Housing Residents Action Group (ETHRAG) the previous week. He had found it a very moving meeting where people had spoken of their experience of poor living conditions and unfair treatment. Some people had reached rock bottom and were vulnerable. Councillor Gibson stressed the need to acknowledge the group and work with landlords.

- 5.9 Councillor Bell stated that he hoped some of the above issues could be resolved straight away. He considered that it was time to act rather than go away and write reports.
- 5.10 Councillor Mears referred to the no visitor rule. She stressed the need to accept that support from close family and friends was important. She accepted that there would be a need for an officer report at the next meeting of the Committee due to the financial implications. The Conservative Group supported both amendments, and considered that it was necessary to look at the bigger picture particularly in regard to emergency accommodation.
- 5.11 Councillor Deane congratulated those people who had formed the Emergency & Temporary Housing Residents Action Group. These people now had a voice.
- 5.12 Councillor Hill asked for clarification on which recommendations could be agreed at this meeting. The Senior Lawyer replied that some of the recommendations had financial implications and the setting up of the Board might need the sanction of the Policy, Resources and Growth Committee.
- 5.13 Councillor Moonan welcomed the petition and agreed that the people involved were very vulnerable. Councillor Moonan felt that the no visitor rule should be reviewed. There were important suggestions to consider and she looked forward to a report to the next meeting.
- 5.14 The Chair agreed that there needed to be an officer report. She asked for the words 'give due consideration to:' to be added to the amendments.
- 5.15 Councillor Mears stated that the Conservative amendment was to firm up the recommendations. She needed to be satisfied that emergency accommodation was suitable. Councillor Mears stated that she would support a report back to the next committee meeting.
- 5.16 At this point members voted on both amendments which were unanimously agreed with the words "That officers prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee giving due consideration to the following" added to the resolution.
- 5.17 **RESOLVED-** That officers prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee giving due consideration to the following:-
- An increase in the frequency of inspections of emergency accommodation and report on the outcome of these inspections at regular intervals to Housing & New Homes Committee;
  - That satisfaction surveys are undertaken with residents moving into emergency accommodation and the results reported back;
  - As a matter of priority the identification of sites exploration of options for the development of council-owned low cost emergency accommodation, either through a

council-owned company or directly owned by the council. That this exploration focuses on non-traditional, quick to build, construction such as the Y cube and containers for these sites;

- A review of the no visitor rules and consider the outcome at a future meeting; with a brief to devise workable systems that enable residents to have visitors.
- Adopting a policy of only using emergency accommodation which satisfies the Brighton & Hove Standard[1], including guaranteed hot water.
- To acknowledge the Emergency and Temporary Housing Residents Action Group (ETHRAG), and work in partnership with the group and landlords to improve housing standards and quality of life for residents in emergency accommodation.
- To immediately establish an emergency accommodation board comprised of representatives from the Emergency and Temporary Housing Residents Action Group (ETHRAG), service providers, residents, landlords and elected members and council officers. The board will meet regularly to review conditions, complaints, evictions and to develop a strategic plan for recommendation to the Housing & New Homes Committee.

5.18 There were no written questions or deputations.

## **6 ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

6.1 There were no Petitions, Written Questions, Letters or Notices of Motion from Councillors.

## **7 ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2016**

7.1 The Committee considered the report of the Interim Executive Director Health & Adult Social Care and Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture which presented the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2016 for approval. The city's current approach to rough sleeping had been re-assessed to ensure that the city's commissioners, service providers and those supporting people sleeping rough are working in partnership to a clear strategic plan. This plan would reduce rough sleeping in the city and improve outcomes for people sleeping rough and those at risk of rough sleeping. The report was presented by the Housing Strategy Manager and the Assistant Director, Adult Social Care.

7.2 Members were informed that there had been extensive consultation on the strategy. This was set out in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.12 of the report. Paragraph 5.11 set out the five priority areas

- Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Rapid assessment and reconnection
- Improving health
- A safe city

- Pathways to independence
- 7.3 Councillor Atkinson thanked officers for the work they had carried out. He stressed that prevention was key to the success of the strategy. He referred to page 68 of the agenda in relation to the Street Outreach Service run by St Mungo's. Councillor Atkinson saw this as an integral part of the strategy and asked for an update on the street outreach service. He also asked how easy it was for St. Mungo's to see if someone was a new rough sleeper.
- 7.4 Councillor Atkinson stressed that discouraging begging should not be linked to homelessness and it should not be assumed that rough sleepers and street drinkers were one and the same.
- 7.5 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the report. She referred to paragraph 3.3 on page 32 of the agenda. Supported accommodation needed to be delivered as soon as possible. Councillor Mears referred to page 33 with regard to assessment centres and noted that there was no detail. She considered that more detail was needed on the priorities listed on page 34 and she would be interested to know how St Mungo's were operating. Councillor Mears questioned the benefits of a sit up bed. Councillor Mears referred to the section in the strategy on Housing Related Support Commissioning Strategy 2015. She asked if Housing Services were paying for this rather than Adult Social Care. Councillor Mears referred to the financial benefits of the strategy as set out on page 58. She considered that these benefits had all been carried out through Supporting People. Finally, Councillor Mears stressed the strategy was important to the city and timescales were urgent.
- 7.6 The Housing Strategy Manager assured members that a monitoring report would be brought back to the committee each year. The waiting list was increasing and some actions were already in place. No decision had yet been made on the Assessment Centre and this would come back to the Committee for approval. Sit up beds did not take up so much room and were now widely used, for example with blood donors.
- 7.7 The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care explained that he would be happy to bring a report back to the committee on the findings with regard to St Mungo's. Housing Related Support was managed by a team in Adult Social Care and he was happy to bring housing related matters to the committee.
- 7.8 Councillor Gibson gave credit to Councillor Moonan in assuring a wider consultation. He was pleased to see the well written strategy. Councillor Gibson stressed that the strategy had to be seen in the context of national policy. Rents were becoming more unaffordable and people were faced with unaffordable housing along with a shortage of accommodation. The council had to implement austerity and had to cut back on homeless prevention work. Councillor Gibson welcomed the inclusion of Housing First in the partnership. He was not able to see information on potential cost savings to other services.
- 7.9 Councillor Gibson did not support the idea of sit up beds and considered that there should be an attempt to find more space. Councillor Gibson referred to pages 80 and 81. He considered that the Strategic Action Plan: Priority 4: A Safe City was more orientated to the safety of the public rather than to homeless people. He asked what could be done to stop people picking on people sleeping in the street. Talk about

begging needed to be tactfully dealt with as too much stress on this issue could fuel negative stereotypes. Meanwhile, Councillor Gibson welcomed aspects of quick build, low cost accommodation such as the Y Cube.

7.10 The Housing Strategy Manager referred to Housing First. Housing First support costs were around £10,000 to £11,000 per client each year (excluding accommodation charges beyond housing benefit rates). An evaluation of the pilot programmes suggested Housing First can deliver savings of up to £15,000 a year per client.

7.11 Councillor Moonan had led on the strategy over the last year and added thanks to the Housing Strategy Manager, the Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and to a significant number of other officers at the council. She considered that this was a good example of breaking down silos. She also thanked all the partners who had worked together on the strategy. It was an ambitious target and involved a very vulnerable group. There needed to be action now and a great deal of work around that action had already commenced. Councillor Moonan agreed that there was probably need for a members' briefing. She would suggest this to the Members Development Working Group.

7.12 **RESOLVED:-**

(1) That the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2016 (Appendix 1) be approved.

(2) That the Interim Executive Director Health & Adult Social Care and Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture be authorised to carry out any actions necessary to implement the strategy and respond appropriately to related Fairness Commission recommendations (see section 5.12).

## **8 FUEL POVERTY AND AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY**

8.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture which informed members that a Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy for Brighton & Hove had been developed by the Housing and Public Health departments, in consultation with key partners in the city. The strategy had been developed in response to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance released in March 2015 entitled 'Excess winter deaths and morbidity and the health risks associated with cold homes' and the national fuel poverty strategy for England, 'Cutting the cost of keeping warm'.

8.2 The NICE guidelines proposed that year round planning and action by multiple sectors was needed to reduce these risks and that Health & Wellbeing Boards are best placed to develop a 'strategy to address the health consequences of cold homes'. The strategy (attached as Appendix 3) would also be presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board on the 20 September 2016 for approval. The report was presented by the Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager.

8.3 Councillor Atkinson was pleased to see the report. He was concerned to read on page 155 that Brighton & Hove had higher figures of fuel poverty than other authorities in the south east. Councillor Atkinson referred to objective 1 on page 170 and stressed that he wanted to see residents encouraged and supported to access advice and support. He highlighted 1.4 of objective 1 in relation to working with private landlords, letting agents

and tenants. He asked for more detail with regard to 2.2 and 2.5 – Objective 2 (supporting residents struggling with their energy bills) on page 171.

- 8.4 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager explained that officers were working with landlords and a private landlords associations, and the report had been discussed with them. Officers would continue to look at different models to enable tenants to see energy improvements to their homes, although it was acknowledged that this was a significant challenge. The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager referred to 2.2 on page 171 (support the provision of tailored solutions via the single point of contact. Affordable Warmth Referral System for people living in cold homes.) He explained that this was a phrase taken from NICE; there would be a single point where people could receive help. This was seen as key to the success of the strategy.
- 8.5 Councillor Mears thought the report made interesting reading. She referred to paragraph 3.7 on page 122 of the agenda. This highlighted the housing stock in the city and the difference with other parts of the country. Councillor Mears asked if there was anything that could be done to provide information to people to ensure they knew what help was available.
- 8.6 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager agreed that it was important to refer people for assistance. People were often surprised that there was support for changing a new boiler. The council was a partner of 'Your Energy Sussex' and could refer people to the scheme, which provided funds towards the cost of a new boiler.
- 8.7 Councillor Gibson referred to objective 4.5 on page 172 (Explore through the Strategic Housing Partnership how the housing sector can work in partnership with health, social care and voluntary sector providers to tackle fuel poverty). He stated that it would be helpful to see the minutes of those meetings. The Chair stated that officers would look at ways of making the minutes available to Councillor Gibson.
- 8.8 Councillor Gibson referred to the question of energy efficiency in the private sector. He asked if officers thought that the licensing scheme for HMOs was now a proven way of improving fuel efficiency.
- 8.9 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager replied that he was aware that licensing schemes set standards around thermal efficiency of the home. They were not necessarily set at a level to meet all expectations, and they might not be able to specify the ability to heat the home affordably.
- 8.10 The Housing Sustainability & Affordable Warmth Manager stated that he worked closely with the Private Sector Housing Team to ensure those standards in HMO's are kept and aligned to the objectives in the report. There was also some national legislation that came into effect in April 2016 which was significant for both HMO's and non HMO private accommodation in terms of setting a minimum energy efficiency standard of EPC. Following a soft launch, from 2018 onwards there would be a requirement on landlords to achieve EPC in properties they rent out.
- 8.11 Councillor Gibson recommended that the suggestion that the licencing scheme could be expanded to areas of poor energy efficiency be added to objective one.

8.12 Councillor Hill was pleased to see the support for the report. She was surprised to see how many winter deaths there were. More work was required with regard to landlords and the private rented sector. Licensing helped HMOs but did not deal with the affordability issue. The more important thing was to provide tools or incentives for landlords.

8.13 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the content of the report be noted.
- (2) That the draft strategy attached at appendix 1, and the objectives as they relate to housing in the city, be approved.
- (3) That it is recommended that the strategy is adopted by the Health & Wellbeing Board at its meeting of the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

**9 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD - SMALL SITE DESIGN COMPETITION**

9.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture which focused on the results of the recent Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Design Competition targeted at four of the council's smaller, more challenging sites included within the Small Site Strategy. These were Hinton Close, Natal Road, Frederick Street and Rotherfield Crescent. The design competition was one of a number of innovative pilot projects identified in the Strategy to deliver housing units on the smaller sites within the New Homes for Neighbourhood Programme. The report recommended that all four winning designs be taken forward for further design development work. Members were shown a presentation showing visuals of the four winning schemes. The report was presented by the Project Manager and Programme Manager City Regeneration Unit.

9.2 The Chair stated that it was exciting to see that small garage sites could be developed in this way.

9.3 Councillor Moonan stated that she was now a member of the Planning Committee and was aware that there were issues involving planning in the process. She asked if Housing tenants would be housed in these properties.

9.4 The Project Manager explained that all the Regeneration Team's schemes were 100% social rented schemes. In terms of planning, there had been early engagement and a planning map had been formulated. The architects were aware of the planning constraints. All 20 shortlisted designs had been sent to planning colleagues.

9.5 The Senior Lawyer advised Councillor Moonan that if she voted in favour of the design at this committee she may be seen to have pre-judged the principle of development of the site and design at the Planning Committee. She advised Councillor Moonan it might be safer to abstain from voting at this committee.

9.6 Councillor Bell welcomed any form of new building in the city but raised some concerns. He wanted to know how the architects intended to design plans for the solar gain by the amount of glass that could be seen. There did not appear to be much financial

engineering or cost effectiveness in the design in what could be achieved for the square foot for the amount of people who moved in. He would like to know what the cost per metre square was in the budget and details of the long term management and the replacement for the items the council had responsibility for.

- 9.7 The Programme Manager City Regeneration Unit explained that the designs were at an early stage. The detailed costings would be reported at the next stage. During the process the architects would be asked to value engineer. An independent quantity surveyor had been employed, and worked up plans would ensure value for money.
- 9.8 Councillor Bell asked about long term maintenance costs. The Programme Manager City Regeneration replied that the architects were being asked to work to the council's long term design specifications. The next stage would look at the procurement contract.
- 9.9 Councillor Bell stated that the budget should be brought forward at the design stage. He considered that the committee were not in a position to say if the schemes could go forward at this stage. The Programme Manager City Regeneration replied that officers were asking for initial approval, not detailed approval. All the more detailed costings would be brought to the committee for approval. Officers would try and answer all Councillor Bell's questions and would arrange a briefing for members.
- 9.10 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the report and presentation. Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 2.3 and asked about the Frederick Street and Rotherfield Crescent schemes. She also asked about timescales. The Project Manager replied that a meeting with both architectural practices would take place in June/July. Rotherfield Crescent and Frederick Street were more challenging sites with constraints that needed to be considered. For example, there was a proposal to build a basement at Frederick Street. The architects would be asked to undertake a survey to provide cost certainty and ensure that the schemes were viable and deliverable. There would be a further report to committee on both schemes.
- 9.11 The Project Manager stated that she believed that the designs were deliverable and in terms of long term maintenance the schemes were brick built, rather than rendered. The cost of brick could initially be high but there were long-term savings with regard to maintenance.
- 9.12 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the winning designs for the four sites included within the RIBA Design Competition, namely: Hinton Close, Natal Road, Frederick Street and Rotherfield Crescent (see Appendix 1), be noted.
  - (2) That the two highest scoring designs (Hinton Close and Natal Road) are taken forward to detailed design stage and undergo further financial appraisal before coming back to Committee for final scheme approval.
  - (3) That further site investigation and surveys are undertaken in relation to the two remaining schemes (Frederick Street and Rotherfield Crescent), in order to achieve greater cost certainty to support the detailed design development work.

**Note:** Councillor Moonan abstained from voting on the above recommendations as she is a member of the Planning Committee.

## **10 RETENDER OF WHOLE SYSTEMS ICT PLATFORM FOR HOMELESSNESS, THE HOUSING REGISTER AND SOCIAL HOUSING LETTING**

- 10.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture which explained that Brighton & Hove City Council and most of East and West Sussex district and borough councils had a shared ICT platform, Sussex Homemove Partnership, to support and manage their respective Housing Register and homeless lettings, including bidding for homes. The current ICT contract, which sits with BHCC as the lead partner, was set up in 2005 and now required renewal.
- 10.2 A Value for Money exercise had been completed that concluded that it would be advantageous for Brighton & Hove City Council to remain in the partnership and benefit from the savings generated from sharing costs. In accordance with Contract Standing Orders, a waiver was agreed to extend the current contract to 31 March 2018 to allow a retender exercise to be carried out. The report sought formal permission for Brighton & Hove City Council to tender for a new ICT supplier on behalf of Sussex Homemove Partnership. The report was presented by the Project Manager and the Housing Strategy Manager.
- 10.3 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 1.4. She asked if the waiver had been agreed at the Members Advisory Procurement Board on 23 May. Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.16 which stated that based on soft market testing, the new system would cost Brighton & Hove City Council in the region of £30,000 to £220,000 over 5 years. The range of figures was vast and she would like to see a final report with costings.
- 10.4 The Housing Strategy Manager confirmed that authority had been given by the Executive Director after consultation with the Chair to grant the waiver last year. A contract discount had been received. The Housing Strategy Manager agreed to update the committee on costings once the preferred provider had been selected. Councillor Mears replied that the waiver should have been reported to an earlier meeting of the committee. In future she would like the committee to be kept properly informed. The Housing Strategy Manager apologised for not providing a report earlier.
- 10.5 Councillor Atkinson referred to paragraphs 4.3 and 4.5 which related to financial risk to the council. He asked if there would be a possibility of partners reneging on the contract. The Project Manager replied that all partners had been working with Brighton & Hove City Council for 10 years. There had been no incidents with any of the partners. An agreement would be tied to the contract.
- 10.6 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the Housing & New Homes Committee recommends to Policy, Resources & Growth Committee to:
- (a) Authorise the Acting Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture to carry out a procurement of a whole systems ICT platform for homelessness, the housing register and social housing lettings.

- (b) Grant delegated authority to the Acting Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture and the Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing to award and let a contract with the preferred supplier for a period of 5 years with an option to extend by 2 years.
- (c) Note that Brighton & Hove City Council will lead the procurement on behalf of the Sussex Homemove Partnership.

## 11 ANNUAL REPORT 2016

- 11.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture which presented the draft Annual Report 2016 to council tenants and leaseholders. The Annual Report had been provided to council tenants and leaseholders since 2010. The regulatory framework for social housing in England from the Homes and Communities Agency set out the requirements for the areas that must be covered in the report, including information on repairs and maintenance budget, timely and relevant information, and support for tenants to build capacity and be more effectively involved. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement and the Head of Tenancy Services.
- 11.2 Councillor Mears asked for more information about the production of a video which would provide the information in an easy to view format. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that the video was expected to be produced in time for the report being published. She could offer advanced viewing of the video which would last for 2 minutes and was similar in style and format to past council videos, with animation and bullet points. A link would be sent to councillors to the relevant part of the council website where the video would be published.
- 11.3 Councillor Gibson referred to a sentence on the last page of the Annual Report which read 'The difference in income of £2,037,000 has been added to reserves in the Housing Revenue Account to fund future capital investment.' He asked if this could be reworded to make it more understandable. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the Draft Annual Report had already been presented to the reading panel and the area panels for comment. Tenants had not asked for this sentence to be amended. However, she could go back to tenants and ask them if they wanted to make a change to the wording.
- 11.4 Councillor Barnett expressed concern about the section on anti-social behaviour. She felt the report should have highlighted that people had been the victim of anti-social behaviour. There had been problems in Hangleton and Councillor Barnett considered that more should be done to resolve cases more quickly.
- 11.5 The Head of Tenancy Services replied that she was sorry to hear about individual cases where the council had not been able to evict people. However, early intervention had been working very successfully and she hoped that the new approach would ensure that there were not long entrenched cases. Mandatory powers meant that the council was expected to demonstrate that it had helped tenants to sustain tenancies. However, it was now easier for local authorities to evict someone.

- 11.6 Councillor Barnett stated that problems sometimes arose because families were placed too close to the elderly. More thought should be given to where tenants were housed. For example, it was not suitable to house a family with of three children above an elderly person. The Head of Tenancy Services appreciated the point but stressed that there were limits on what could be done with the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. There was also equalities legislation to consider. Mediation was a good solution.
- 11.7 The Chair referred to the positive aspects of the Annual Report such as regaining 26 properties that had provided much needed housing for applicants on the waiting list (Tenancy Fraud Update) and more tenants signed up to direct debit (Value for Money). She thought the Annual Report was very good and easy to read.
- 11.8 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the draft Annual Report 2016 to council tenants and leaseholders (attached as appendix 1) be approved. It is noted that the report will be sent to all residents with the summer edition of Homing In and will also be available to view on the council's website.
  - (2) That the production of a video be approved to provide an additional and alternative method for the report information to be presented.

## 12 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR 2015/16

- 12.1 The Committee considered a performance report of the Acting Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture which covered quarter four of the financial year 2015/16, alongside end year results. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement who explained that additional information had been provided on benchmarking data (appendix 3). This compared the cost and performance of Brighton & Hove as a social landlord with other local authorities and housing associations. The benchmarking data was for the year 2014/15.
- 12.2 Councillor Gibson referred to the section on major works and cyclical maintenance (appendix 3) and asked why this was so undesirably high. Councillor Gibson referred to the table in paragraph 4.0 (page 215). No. 5 - Rent loss due to empty dwellings showed that the council did well last year. He questioned whether the council should be setting a target which was lower this year than already achieved. Councillor Gibson noted that £42,000 had been lost in rent over the year. Whereas No 6 – Former tenants arrears had received a red status yet had only lost £40,000. Councillor Gibson welcomed the appendices with benchmarking information. It was helpful to note the direction of travel. Benchmarking costs had been taken back to the previous year. He requested to see the results from the 2011 Star Survey.
- 12.3 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement answered these questions as follows.
- Major works (appendix 3) - The higher costs reflected the money spent on meeting decent homes standards by December 2013 and maintaining those standards in 2014/15. Meanwhile there were various reasons why costs could vary between local authorities and between housing associations and local authorities. A big factor was the regional differences across the country. In areas

of higher deprivation there were a higher number of households with greater vulnerability.

- Table in paragraph 4.0 (page 215) - No. 5 - Rent loss due to empty dwellings – Officers tried to set targets that were better than the previous one. However, sometimes setting an improvement target could be counterproductive as they needed to be achievable. The slightly lower target this year was due to welfare reform and changes in benefits. Officers factored in the possibility of having to move approximately 900 people who would be impacted by the spare room rules. It was known that when people were moved by transfer that there would generally be a period of 4 weeks between tenancies.
- Rent loss of £42,000. Officers were committed to report on all targets that were amber and red.
- Request for further information - The results of the 2011 Star Survey had been reported to the Committee. The council was just about to conduct the next Star Survey.

12.4 Councillor Gibson stated that he would like to be sent a link to the previous Star Survey. He stressed that Decent Homes Standards was achieved in 2013 and the figure he was referring to was 2014/15. The comparisons with all local authorities were not good and there was a need to scrutinise this. He wanted to see the total cost per property for the year before and the year before that.

12.5 In response to the Chair, the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement confirmed that previous performance reports are on the website. The Business and Performance Manager stated that the major works figure purely reflected money spent on capital improvements, and does not have a value judgement as to whether that is or is not a good thing.

12.6 Councillor Mears referred to page 215 in relation to No 5 - rent loss due to empty dwellings. This had shown a housemark last time but was under benchmarking this time. Councillor Mears asked if there was a difference between the two. Page 218 talked about not being able to present HCSTs using the same indicators as the repairs helpdesk. Councillor Mears asked if anything was being done about that. Councillor Mears referred to page 222 in relation to lift performance. She was aware of significant issues in the city around lift breakdown.

12.7 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement answered these questions as follows.

- Benchmark/housemark question – Rent loss – Councillor Mears would receive a written reply.
- Page 218 – repairs helpdesk. The council and Mears Ltd used different telephone systems. Until they used the same system there would be two separate information reports on this subject.
- Lift breakdown – Residents' concerns were recognised with regard to the distress caused when lifts were not fixed quickly enough. There was a lift replacement programme. As lifts were replaced, officers would ensure spares of obsolete parts were kept.

12.8 Councillor Lewry asked for clarification regarding the figures in the far left column of pages 234 and 235. He asked if these related to days properties were left empty.

Some of these figures were quite high and the property in Woodingdean had been empty for 18 months.

12.9 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that the figures did relate to the time properties were left empty. Sometimes this was due to difficulties experienced in carrying out necessary works and in some cases it was due to properties being set aside to be transferred to Seaside Homes. Until they were transferred they had to be counted as empty properties.

**12.10 RESOLVED:-**

(1) That the report which went to the Special Area Panel on 18 May 2016 be noted along with the comments of the Committee.

**13 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL**

**13.1 RESOLVED:-**

(1) No items were referred to the next Council meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of