

**Subject:** Living Rent - Extract from the Proceedings of the Council Meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014

**Date of Meeting:** 12 November 2014

**Report of:** Monitoring Officer

**Contact Officer:** Name: Mark Wall Tel: 29-1006

E-mail: mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk

**Wards Affected:** All

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE*****Action Required of the Housing Committee:***

To receive the item referred from the Council for consideration:

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee give consideration to the following:

- (i) developing a licensing scheme for all private landlords as has happened in Newham;
- (ii) highlighting the hardship caused to residents of the city by unaffordable private sector rents and call on the government to set up a Living Rent Commission;
- (iii) writing to the government to replace 6 month tenancies to 3-5 year tenancies, as is the case in some other European countries;
- (iv) looking into developing ethical lettings agencies in the city, as well as supporting the expansion of the ethical lettings agency at Sussex university;
- (v) looking at setting up an ethical landlord accreditation in order; and
- (vi) supporting the building of homes at a living rent rate so that affordability is based on people's incomes and not the market rate.

## COUNCIL

4.30 pm 23 October 2014  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

## DRAFT MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Fitch (Chair), Barnett, Bennett, Bowden, Brown, Buckley, Carden, Cobb (Deputy Chair), Daniel, Davey, Deane, Duncan, Gilbey, Hamilton, Hawtree, Hyde, Janio, Jarrett, A Kitcat, J Kitcat, Lepper, Littman, Mac Cafferty, Marsh, Meadows, Mears, Mitchell, Morgan, A Norman, K Norman, Peltzer Dunn, Phillips, Pidgeon, Pissaridou, Powell, Robins, Rufus, Shanks, Simson, Smith, Summers, Sykes, C Theobald, G Theobald, Wakefield, Wealls, Wells, West and Wilson.

PART ONE**30. (a) LIVING RENT**

- 30.1. The Mayor stated that the council's petition scheme provided that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at a Council meeting. He had been notified of one such petition which had sufficient signatures to warrant a debate and therefore would call on the lead petitioner to present their petition before opening the matter up for debate.
- 30.2. The Mayor noted that there was an amendment from the Green Group to the recommendation contained in the covering report on the petition, which Councillor Mac Cafferty would move during the debate. He also called on the Monitoring Officer to clarify the procedural matters in relation to the e-petition.
- 30.3. The Monitoring Officer noted the amendment which had been circulated listed Councillor Phillips as its proposer however this had changed as outlined by the Mayor and that recommendation 2.1 should refer the petition to the Housing Committee and not the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee.
- 30.4. The Mayor thanked the Monitoring Officer and then called on Ms. Rimmer to present the petition concerning the issue of a Living Rent.
- 30.5. Ms. Rimmer thanked the Mayor and stated that the petition signed by over 2,500 people to date sought to highlight the cost of private sector rents and the severe impact this had on a number of families and residents within the city. She then outlined examples of how people living in the city had been affected by the uncontrolled increases in rents to highlight just how real the situation was. The petition asked the council to support the need for a living rent and an ethical landlord scheme and to call on the government to institute rent controls on the private sector. She hoped that the council would support the aims of the petition and do whatever it could to help those affected by the high costs of rents in the city.

- 30.6. Councillor Phillips thanked Ms. Rimmer for presenting the petition and stated that it highlighted five important areas that needed to be addressed. These were the unacceptable level of increases in private sector rents, unaffordable rents, the need for ethical letting agencies and landlord accreditation and a review of the private rented sector. She fully supported the petition and hoped that the Green amendment would be accepted and supported by the council.
- 30.7. Councillor Mac Cafferty then moved an amendment to the recommendation in the report, requesting that the Housing Committee should give consideration to a number of aspects that had been highlighted by the petition and Councillor Phillips and he hoped that a report could be brought forward to the committee in due course.
- 30.8. Councillor Wakefield formally seconded the amendment and stated that there was a clear need for a living rent in the city and she hoped that the amendment would be fully supported.
- 30.9. Councillor Hawtree stated that the issue raised a number of concerns and he hoped that they could be addressed at some point. He acknowledged that there were good landlords in the city but felt that there was a need to find ways to support residents who faced uncertainty and the prospect of having to move because of increases in rent levels.
- 30.10. Councillor Wilson stated that the Labour & Co-operative Group supported the amendment and whilst there were many excellent landlords in the city, there were still too many who did not look after their properties or had any thought for their tenants. She believed there was a real need to look at what the council could do to support those residents and hoped that every effort to find ways to improve matters would be investigated.
- 30.11. Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that he had some reservations with regard to the points listed in the amendment as he was unsure that they would result in a benefit to residents or the city. However, as it was for the Housing Committee to give consideration to the points and the potential benefit to be realised from each, he was happy to support the amendment.
- 30.12. Councillor Phillips welcomed the comments and stated that she hoped there would be an opportunity to give full consideration to the points listed in the amendment and following which some real change to the current situation that existed in the city.
- 30.13. The Mayor noted that an amendment to the recommendation in the report had been moved and put it to the vote which was carried. He then put the recommendations as amended to the vote which was also carried.
- 30.14. **RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the petition be noted and referred to the Housing Committee for consideration; and
  - (2) That the Committee give consideration to the following:

- (i) developing a licensing scheme for all private landlords as has happened in Newham;
- (ii) highlighting the hardship caused to residents of the city by unaffordable private sector rents and call on the government to set up a Living Rent Commission;
- (iii) writing to the government to replace 6 month tenancies to 3-5 year tenancies, as is the case in some other European countries;
- (iv) looking into developing ethical lettings agencies in the city, as well as supporting the expansion of the ethical lettings agency at Sussex university;
- (v) looking at setting up an ethical landlord accreditation in order; and
- (vi) supporting the building of homes at a living rent rate so that affordability is based on people's incomes and not the market rate.