

<b>Council</b>	<b>Agenda Item 66</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> December 2015	Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Extract from the Proceedings of the Housing Committee meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015 - Response to Scrutiny Panel Report on Private Sector Housing</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11 November 2015</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Acting Executive Director Environment, Development &amp; Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Caroline De Marco</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 01273 291063
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

<b><i>Action Required of the Council:</i></b>
To receive the item referred from the Housing & New Homes Committee for information:
<b>Recommendation:</b>
That Council note the report referred for information from Housing & New Homes Committee.

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE  
11 NOVEMBER 2015**

**MAIN MEETING ROOM – THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE**

**Present:** Councillor Meadows (Chair) Councillors Hill (Deputy Chair), Mears (Opposition Spokesperson), Gibson (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Barnett, Lewry, Miller, Moonan and Phillips.

**PART ONE**

**41 RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT ON PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

41.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which informed members that in 2014 a request was

received from the Citizen's Advice Bureau to look at the private rented sector using a scrutiny panel, because of the '...worrying increase in the number of people seeking advice from the CAB' in relation to the private rented sector and letting agents. A Scrutiny Panel was established and the Panel's formal report and recommendations were published in March 2015 and presented to the Housing and New Homes Committee on 17 June 2015 with a proposal that officers bring a report back to the Committee with a formal response to the recommendations.

- 41.2 The current report was the formal response. It was proposed that the scrutiny recommendations within the remit of Housing & New Homes Committee were taken forward as part of the development of the Housing Strategy Action Plan. The report was presented by the Interim Head of Property & Investment and Head of Housing Strategy, Development & Private Sector Housing.
- 41.3 Councillor Hill stated that as lead councillor for private rented sector housing she had participated with some of the task and finish groups with the universities. She hoped to see work with various organisations in the city in terms of areas outside the remit of the council. A task and finish group could be set up with the strategic housing partnership. A workshop had been held on HMOs which highlighted a number of issues. There needed to be closer working with community groups such as LATs.
- 41.4 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 3.12 (number 7 – Improve the identification of empty private sector homes and voids, and maximise the use of these properties). She asked how this could be achieved. The Interim Head of Property & Investment and Head of Housing Strategy, Development & Private Sector Housing replied that the council had a successful empty properties service. The council were looking to review the enforcement protocol to ensure that it was using all the protocols available.
- 41.5 Councillor Mears referred to page 55 of the agenda in relation to Article 4 directions. She felt that there was not a clear policy on student housing. She recommended that the council looked at this matter carefully and brought forward a policy.
- 41.6 The Chair shared the concerns that prime spots were taken for student accommodation.
- 41.7 Councillor Miller referred to page 84 of the agenda relating to selective licensing. Would these options be taken back for committee consideration? The Interim Head of Property & Investment and Head of Housing Strategy, Development & Private Sector Housing replied that further reports would be brought back to the committee.
- 41.8 Councillor Atkinson referred to page 78 which referred to intermediate rents and housing market intervention and increasing the supply of more affordable homes. He asked for more information about these matters. Councillor Atkinson referred to page 80 which referred to exploring ways of increasing the supply of affordable social housing for key workers. Councillor Atkinson could not see much information about key workers.
- 41.9 The Interim Head of Property & Investment and Head of Housing Strategy, Development & Private Sector Housing replied that these issues were linked. The Housing Strategy identified a gap with regard to key worker housing. In October 2014, a report was taken to Policy & Resources Committee about the potential of the council

having options to buy and build homes off plan for key workers. The council had received some funding from DCLG to investigate this matter.

- 41.10 Councillor Gibson thanked officers for a thorough report. With regard to recommendation 1 (to support a strong and buoyant local private sector housing market); Councillor Gibson felt that in reality the private rented market in the city was overheated. There needed to be a focus on working with the private sector. There were different ways of dealing with this issue. Councillor Gibson referred to page 64 which referred to the loss of student accommodation. He asked if there was any evidence for that statement. Page 63 referred to pressure points. Councillor Gibson asked where these were. Councillor Gibson welcomed the idea of living wage rent models. The average rent in the private sector was 50% of a person's income. Councillor Gibson suggested that due to the housing shortage in the city, couples with a spare room should be encouraged and supported to take in a lodger. Councillor Gibson suggested a review in 6 months.
- 41.11 Councillor Miller concurred with Councillor Gibson with regard to his comments about spare rooms. He stated that people should be encouraged to downsize in both the council's own stock and the owner occupied sector. He stressed that one way of making the Private sector work more functionally was to have a smaller private sector. Councillor Miller stressed that the most security someone could have was to own their own home. He asked what work was going on to help people buy their own homes.
- 41.12 Councillor Hill referred to Councillor Mears' comments on the need for a policy on student housing. The report did refer to some research being done at the moment which would lead to a student housing strategy. She agreed that there needed to be a much clearer idea about how to deal with this situation. Councillor Hill considered that a progress report on the HMO licensing scheme was a really good idea. Councillor Hill also considered that the report should be reviewed again in six months and broken up into themes.
- 41.13 The Interim Head of Property & Investment and Head of Housing Strategy, Development & Private Sector Housing stated that in terms of lost student housing, comments had been incorporated in the report from a number of different people. Some of the comments had been from students at risk of losing their accommodation because landlords continued to let it despite not having planning permission. The Council had therefore agreed with the universities to have a much more proactive protocol around article 4, so that students did not rent properties that were not compliant with planning permission. With regard to pressure points, a great deal of work had been carried out with the universities with regard to encouraging more head leasing schemes.
- 41.14 The Chair stressed that a progress report would need to be submitted to a future committee.
- 41.15 **RESOLVED:-** That the proposed response to Scrutiny Panel Report on Private Sector Housing (Appendix 1) in relation to matters within the remit of the Housing & New Homes Committee, be approved. Other non-Housing matters will be reported to the relevant policy committee for consideration.

