

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING & NEW HOMES COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 2 MARCH 2016**

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

**MINUTES**

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

**PART ONE**

**63 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**63a) Declarations of Substitutes**

63.1 There were none.

**63b) Declarations of Interests**

63.2 There were none.

**63c) Exclusion of the Press and Public**

63.3 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.

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

**64 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

64.1 Councillor Atkinson asked for paragraph 56.3 to be changed to read 'Councillor Atkinson was concerned that under the pay to stay proposals people will be possibly encouraged to buy their property. Then if at a later date interest rates go up, it will be difficult for them to pay their mortgage.'

- 64.2 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 49.1. She had received an email from an officer with information about the Oxford Street Housing Office but had not received a full briefing. Councillor Mears had just received a second email from the officer to say he would have to get back to colleagues to see if there could be a full briefing. Councillor Mears hoped that there could be a briefing on this important matter. Her concern was the speed at which this office was closed down. She wanted to know why this housing asset was closed, and details of the build up to the final closing down of the office.
- 64.3 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 61.4, concerning a debate on the overspend on the Mears contract. She had requested an external audit at the committee and at Council in order to have openness and transparency. She had also asked to see a copy of the report but had only received a summary. Councillor Mears had heard a number of rumours circulating which needed clarification. For example, she had heard that when the capital programme came under budget, there is a bonus for a contractor. There were issues around the new gas contract and whether Mears were proposing to buy out the company. Councillor Mears had also heard that Mears were filling in forms for gas checks without visiting properties. Councillor Mears understood that this was being investigated. She requested that officers carried out investigations with Mears to find out exactly what was happening.
- 64.4 The Chair informed Councillor Mears that she could receive more information about Oxford Street but it might take time to gather all the necessary information. The Chair had not heard about the contractor bonus. She would investigate this matter with officers. The new gas contract was due to start in April. Meanwhile, she would take up the issue of gas checks with officers.
- 64.5 The Head of Housing informed Members that officers were currently working through issues with Mears. Officers were also working with internal audit about the best steps to take to strengthen the partnership in the future, which included consideration of expert external advice.
- 64.6 Councillor Mears stressed that she was asking for an external audit to ensure transparency. The Chair stated that the request for an external audit would be included in the above discussions. In the meantime, the Chair would ensure robust checks were in place.
- 64.7 Councillor Hill referred to paragraph 59.4. She would like to see the number of HMO's where conditions had been met.
- 64.8 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the Housing and New Homes Committee held on 13 January 2016 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendment set out in paragraph 64.1 above.

## 65 CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

### Chris Cooke

- 65.1 The Chair stated that on a very sad note, she would like to extend the Committee's sympathies to the family and friends of Chris Cooke, who had died after a fire at a flat in Essex Place over the weekend of 20/21<sup>st</sup> February. The Chair was aware that some

councillors and staff would have worked with Chris over the years, and would miss him dearly. The Committee stood for a minutes silence.

#### **Additional funding from the DCLG – Preventing Homelessness Grant**

- 65.2 The Chair was pleased to be able to formally advise the Committee that the council had been successful in bidding for an additional £200k from the DCLG through the preventing homelessness grant. The one off grant would be used to extend the council's work in preventing homelessness through a range of provisions.
- 65.3 The Council would extend the landlord rescue service, to provide very early intervention to help households retain their tenancies. The Council would, where appropriate, support homeless households to move into private sector tenancies through the deposit and /or relocation packages and the Council would help support households to move directly into private sector housing avoiding the need to move twice. This would also reduce the pressure on the Council's limited temporary accommodation, as well as reduce pressures on health & education budgets.
- 65.4 The Council would enhance partnership working across the city to maximise prevention by earlier intervention through
- officers based in hospital multi-disciplinary teams to identify housing issues at a very early stage
  - working with the local prison to resettle people upon discharge
  - working with health/GPs, to prevent homelessness/seek alternatives

#### **Mears Sub-Contractor Overcharging – Payment from Mears**

- 65.5 The Chair was pleased to advise the Committee that following on from the overcharging issues with a Mears sub-contractor, as discussed at the last committee, she could confirm that the Council had now received £274,866 payment from Mears, in respect of the post-April 2014 over charging. A further settlement from Mears was anticipated in the next few weeks with respect to the pre-April overcharging.

#### **Consultation Event and Repairs Partnership Workshop**

- 65.6 As requested by the Housing & New Homes Committee, the council held a very well attended and successful additional consultation event on the 26<sup>th</sup> January with members of the committee and tenant representatives to discuss and comment on the HRA budget, medium term financial review and the HRA capital programme and feedback was included in the report that went to Policy & Resources Committee.
- 65.7 In addition, a Repairs Partnership Workshop was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February with councillors, officers and managers from Mears to understand why the contract was put in place and what it had delivered over the first five years.
- 65.8 In regard to the on-going pressures on the private sector housing rental market in the city, the Chair was also pleased to confirm Budget Policy & Resources Committee had

approved an additional £39,000 recurrent funding to support raising standards in the private rented sector including appropriate enforcement of licensing and regulations.

**New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme:**

- 65.9 The Chair reported that she and some members of Housing & New Homes Committee visited the Y:Cube innovative modular build scheme in Merton which is used for short term accommodation by the YMCA.
- 65.10 The Chair was pleased to report she would be opening Robert Lodge South block of 9 flats on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March. All members of the committee had been invited to the event.
- 65.11 The Findon Road new build scheme for 57 flats at the site of the former library in Whitehawk had started on site.

**66 CALL OVER**

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

**67 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

- 67.1 The Committee considered an extract of the proceedings of Council held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016, and the following petition signed by 1,851 people. Ree from Love Activists was invited to present the petition. She informed Members that the petition recommended 7 proposals. Ree stressed that if finances and resources were in place then everybody would be able to get off the street. She mentioned that she knew of 15 homeless people who had died since March 2015. Ree was accompanied by a fellow Love Activist who stated that homeless people were sleeping in wheelybins because they were warm and dry.

**Solution Based Proposals to End Homelessness**

“We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to consider the following solution based proposals, to end homelessness.

1. Every homeless person is vulnerable and should therefore be considered in priority need, including those in temporary accommodation.
2. The Housing First model should be expanded to offer housing to all of the city's homeless people, offering adequate support to suit each individual's needs.
3. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) should be activated immediately, in any weather which threatens rough sleepers' health, particularly the wet.
4. The council should activate the Extended Winter Provision of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol immediately. The emergency shelters should be opened every night, over the winter and beyond.
5. Affordable social rents should be imposed on private landlords and property investors, prioritising the provision of permanent homes until everyone is securely housed.

6. Reform the LASPO act, to make squatting empty properties safe and equitable for property owners and otherwise homeless people.

7. Because of the so-called 'first mover loses' phenomenon, it will be necessary for local authorities around the country to work together, in order to implement these measures nationally."

- 67.2 The Chair thanked Ree for the petition and said she would ensure she got a written response which would be placed on the council website. The Chair suggested that Love Activists might be interested in the Draft Rough Sleeping Strategy which would be considered later on the agenda. The strategy would be an enormous help in bringing together all the partners that were needed to tackle this crisis.
- 67.3 The Chair quoted the first proposal 'Every homeless person is vulnerable and should therefore be considered in priority need, including those in temporary accommodation.' The Chair stressed that the Government's view was different but she would send Love Activists more detail on that issue.
- 67.4 The Chair stated that she wished the council had the power to deal with all the suggestions outlined in the petition. Unfortunately, it was more the responsibility of the local MP and Government that could rent cap and could carry out the other suggestions. However, the council were working as a local authority with other local authorities. The council had the Rough Sleeping Strategy and there were many other measures being undertaken to work with many of the homeless charities and organisations in the city.
- 67.5 Councillor Mears agreed with the Chair that there were a number of things in the petition which the council did not have the power to change. They would need to be dealt with through Government and local MPs. However, proposals 3 and 4 were within the council's power and were taken very seriously. The council needed to monitor severe weather accommodation and keep it open as a matter of urgency when needed. This was something the council could do better.
- 67.6 Councillor Gibson appreciated the efforts of the Love Activists and hoped the council would engage with them. He agreed that a number of the proposals were not in the gift of the council but of central government. He agreed with Love Activist's views on affordable rents and considered that the council should write to the government calling for powers on rent controls. Councillor Gibson proposed to ask officers to look at Housing First and would be making the following recommendation.

'That officers investigate the merits of expanding housing first beyond its current programme size and evaluate:

- i)The outcomes for homeless people
- ii)The cost savings on other services of such a scheme and
- iii)The cost of such a scheme

That officers report back to a future Housing & New Homes Committee their findings on any proposals that follow on from these findings.'

- 67.7 Councillor Miller stated that if there was the political will, something could be done to end rough sleeping. He supported the above recommendations with regard to Housing First.
- 67.8 Councillor Moonan stressed that the Housing First model was included in the Rough Sleeping strategy and there could be a debate on whether it was cost effective to expand it. The Council had been flexible with regard to the SWEP protocol and emergency accommodation being open for more than one day. Decisions were being made now with regard to the SWEP. Meanwhile the council would implement everything else in the Rough Sleeping Strategy over the next four years. Councillor Moonan was happy to work with other groups to discuss approaches with national government.
- 67.9 The Acting Director of Environment, Development & Housing suggested taking the matter forward through the Rough Sleeping Strategy to enable officers to look at models in the context of the strategy. Councillor Gibson replied that he was happy for his recommendations to be taken forward through the context of the strategy.
- 67.10 Ree from Love Activists stressed that homelessness was not economic. It was cheaper to give people a home. She felt that there could be solutions before June. It was about allocating affordable properties.
- 67.11 The Chair thanked Ree for her attendance. She explained that affordable homes would not be built for a couple of years and could not be built in a few weeks. The council was working hard on a draft strategy which would be going out for consultation.

67.12 **RESOLVED-**

- (1) That the petition be noted and a written response be sent to the petition organiser.
- (2) That officers investigate the merits of expanding housing first beyond its current programme size and evaluate:
  - i)The outcomes for homeless people
  - ii)The cost savings on other services of such a scheme and
  - iii)The cost of such a scheme
- (3) That officers report back their findings any proposals that follow on from these findings as part of the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2016 report.

68.13 There were no written questions or deputations.

**68 ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS**

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

**69 HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

- 69.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which presented the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Housing Asset Management Strategy 2016-2020. Members were requested to consider the strategy contents within the current policy context.
- 69.2 The report was presented by the Housing Asset Strategy Manager. The Principal Accountant stated that the 30 year financial plan was being updated. Officers were currently waiting for more data about legislation changes.
- 69.3 Councillor Mears referred to page 33 – apprenticeships. She thought that there had been 200. She referred to page 34 – last paragraph. She felt it was not appropriate to name one officer, while not highlighting the whole of the team. Councillor Mears referred to page 37 – reviewing assets to ensure long term viability. There was no mention of this coming back to the committee. Page 41 – Senior housing and over 55's blocks – Councillor Mears was concerned to read that over 55's only blocks would be reviewed. She was aware that there had been changes already. Page 41 – leasehold buyback. Councillor Mears mentioned that some councillors had received an email from a resident who had asked for Information as a Freedom of Information request. The reply from the council stated that there was not currently a buy back policy.
- 69.4 The Chair stated that a report would be submitted to the Regeneration Board on buy back provisions.
- 69.5 The Housing Asset Strategy Manager explained that the 100 apprenticeships figure was where the council was now rather than over the ten years. The results of reviewing assets to ensure long term viability would be presented to the committee. He would respond in writing about the over 55's blocks.
- 69.6 Councillor Mears referred to the recommendations. She considered that the Housing Asset Management Strategy should be noted and brought back to the committee for a final decision. The Acting Director, Environment, Development & Housing stated that the strategy was a living document. It could be approved at the meeting today. If there were material changes, they would need to come back to the committee.
- 69.7 Councillor Moonan asked for an explanation of the table on page 43. The Principal Accountant explained that this showed a surplus i.e. the table was currently showing more income received than planned expenditure over the four years, which would go into reserves.
- 69.8 Councillor Miller stated that there was a choice between renewing the stock the council had at present and potentially increasing density or improving the stock the council had and building less. He asked about the balance of those two options. The Housing Asset Strategy Manager explained that officers undertook a number of consultation meetings with tenants and the feedback received was that they wanted to see an investment in the current stock. That obviously needed to be balanced against the priorities of the council and the investment being made in new build.
- 69.9 Councillor Miller referred to the first paragraph of page 37 which referred to the £414,000 budget saving for responsive repairs. At the Mears workshop Members were

informed that the average responsive repair cost £299 but in this report it stated the figure as £92. He asked which figure was correct. Page 37 also spoke about selling freeholds. How would this affect the council's later ability to potentially increase the density on housing estates? Councillor Miller asked when it was known when density would be increased, how would that be reflected in the planned capital programme?

- 69.10 The Acting Director reported that the council would only sell freeholds where 100% of the flats in the block had been sold. It could potentially fetter the council's ability to undertake future regeneration but at the same time if the council were to regenerate those areas it would have to buy out those leaseholders. As a result, it was unlikely that the regeneration of that area would be financially viable, once it had been factored in by buying 100% of the leaseholds. This would need to be considered in each and every case.
- 69.11 The Housing Asset Strategy Manager picked up on the point about investing in current assets, which may be reviewed later on for potential re-development or different schemes. He stressed that as a landlord the council must keep properties in repair. That would be the aim as a minimum. At this stage the council was not aware of which parts of the housing may be allocated or reallocated differently. The aim at the moment was to ensure health and safety.
- 69.12 The Head of Housing stated that she would get back to Councillor Miller on the cost of average responsive repairs.
- 69.13 Councillor Atkinson stated that he gathered that the strategy would overlap with the housing delivery options paper. He referred to page 37 where it talked about a vision for success. This stated that "We will review the tenancies we provide for new lettings to ensure the best fit between peoples' housing costs and their changing financial and family circumstances." He asked for clarity about that statement. Councillor Atkinson referred to page 40, which referred to households earning over £30,000. Councillor Atkinson had recently read that the Government was being approached by its own advisers to rethink this policy. He asked if officers were aware of this development. The Principal Accountant stated that she had not received any information about that matter. She was still waiting to receive final details on what was to happen.
- 69.14 The Housing Asset Strategy Manager stated that tenancy reviews would take place when the council reviewed its tenancy strategy.
- 69.15 Councillor Gibson welcomed the strategy; however, it was clear that financial constraints could dramatically change over the next six months so it was important to see a revised report. Councillor Gibson referred to priority 2 on page 38 of the report. He asked what efforts were being made to achieve this top priority in the council's housing strategy. The Principal Accountant replied that when officers looked at developments they would look at the net rental streams that were coming in to finance the cost of that development. Because of the increasing costs officers were finding that social rents don't actually cover the costs of delivering those new homes.
- 69.16 The Acting Director reported that officers were always looking to delivering better for less and were looking at different models. For example, Members had recently visited the YCube project. There was a Cross Party Estate Regeneration Board which

- included members of the Housing & New Homes Committee and it was suggested that the Board was the right vehicle to consider specific requests around looking at different delivery models. The discussions of the Board would inform reports to this committee.
- 69.17 Councillor Gibson reported that he would be proposing an amendment. He had circulated paperwork to Members on new build calculations that he considered were accurate and which used the council's own data. It demonstrated that the kind of rents that the council were proposing in the affordable rents for new homes for neighbourhoods were at least double the current social rents. If members looked at the middle household income, according to the council's own figures of people in the city and the measure of affordability that rents should cost no more than a third of disposable income, then these rents were not affordable by that definition for half of the people in the city. The Council's strategy stated that the aim where feasible was to develop social rented housing.
- 69.18 The Acting Director informed members that the document did cover an aim about maximising affordability on new homes. He suggested that if members were concerned about the officers delivering on that aim then the oversight of the delivery should be undertaken by the Cross Party Regeneration Board.
- 69.19 Councillor Gibson agreed that the Cross Party Regeneration Board was an important vehicle for addressing these issues but there were other vehicles and other possibilities.
- 69.20 Councillor Mears informed the Committee that her group did not have a problem with the amendment. It firmed up what had been expressed at the meeting today. Agreement of the recommendation would ensure that Members of the Committee had an opportunity to discuss the matter.
- 69.21 Councillor Gibson proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Mears as follows:
- ‘Add recommendations:
- 2.2. The Committee recommends that the Asset Management Strategy included a commitment to explore a range of options for providing social rented and lower than Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rented housing.’
- 69.22 Members voted on whether the amendments could be accepted for the substantive vote. This was unanimously agreed.
- 69.23 The Committee then voted on the amended recommendations. Members unanimously voted to accept the amended recommendations.
- 69.24 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the Housing Asset Management Strategy as shown in Appendix 1, be approved in conjunction with resolution (2) below.

- (2) That it is recommended that the asset management strategy includes a commitment to explore a range of options for providing social rented and lower than Local Housing Allowance rate (LHA) rented housing.

## **70 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - FINAL SCHEME APPROVAL - SELSFIELD DRIVE, BRIGHTON**

- 70.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which focused on development proposals for the former Housing Office site at Selsfield Drive, which the City Regeneration Team wished to progress through to planning and construction stage. The initial architectural feasibility studies were carried out by Feilden Clegg Bradley studios (FCB) who tested a number of design options. Their preferred option was set out in paragraph 3.3. The FCB feasibility scheme was handed over to the in-house architectural team in June 2015 to work up into a detailed design. The latest scheme had been further developed to make more efficient use of land to meet the growing housing need in the city and address City Plan housing targets as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report. If the recommendations were approved, the scheme would be presented to the Planning Committee in April 2016. Work would commence on site in October 2016.
- 70.2 The report was presented by the Project Manager.
- 70.3 Councillor Miller asked if the costs for the scheme were benchmarked and whether there was a national average. He asked at what point the scheme would be considered too expensive. The Programme Manager, City Regeneration explained that the council appointed an independent quantity surveyor who advised if there was value for money. There were ways of delivering the scheme more cheaply; however, the council were delivering a robust, well designed building. This impacted on costs which were higher than general market housing.
- 70.4 Councillor Miller mentioned that he was a member of the Planning Committee and he requested that the recommendations were taken one by one. This request was agreed.
- 70.5 Councillor Miller raised questions in relation to the difference between the total cost and the scheme costs. He referred to recommendation 2.1 (iii) and suggested that this was a matter that could be reported back to the committee. Councillor Miller raised questions with regard to the break down of estimated costs in the additional information sent to members. The Programme Manager explained that the total scheme costs included everything connected to the scheme such as build costs, labour, a site manager, professional fees for architects and quantity surveyors etc. Officers would report back to the committee through the Targeted Budget Management (TBM) process. The design life was 60 years but was expected to be over 100 years.
- 70.6 Councillor Mears referred to recommendation 2.1 (iii). She stressed that it was important for the committee to have a report on this matter. The council were supposed to be building affordable homes. The costs of this scheme were out of reach of most people on a low income.

- 70.7 The Acting Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing informed Members that in terms of delegations, it was in the gift of the committee to ask for a report to come back. There had been a great deal of feedback from the Committee and the Regeneration Team were listening to these comments. Meanwhile, the team were looking at schemes such as modular build and Y Cube that would supply low cost housing. Selsfield Drive was one of the last of this type of build, and the council would need to look at different delivery models in the future.
- 70.8 Councillor Hill informed members that officers had carried out an excellent consultation on the scheme in her ward. A great deal of thought had gone into the proposals and it was a sensitive design. Councillor Hill expressed concern about misleading reports in the press.
- 70.9 Councillor Gibson thanked officers for their work on the scheme. He considered it to be a great scheme and he was pleased more flats had been added as part of the process. However, he stressed the need to look at lifetime cost/lifetime delivery. The Y Cube could not match those lifetime scales.
- 70.10 Councillor Gibson stated that he would be proposing the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Phillips as follows:
- ‘2.1 iii) delete “for chosen rent model”
- Delete 2.1ii) re-number sequentially
- Add new clauses
- 2.1
- iv) That officers investigate adjusting the financial model to take account of the surpluses generated from new homes high rents that will be accrued in years 40 to 60 and that any scope for using this additional income to provide some new homes at target and or intermediate rents be reported to the next Housing & New Homes Committee for a final decision on the rents levels provided by the scheme.
- v) That officers investigate any scope provided by using the capital receipt from the sale of leasehold to the lions/and or cost savings to provide some new homes at target and or intermediate rents be reported to the next Housing & New Homes Committee for a final decision on the rent levels provided by the scheme.’
- 70.11 Councillor Gibson stated that it was clear that rents proposed in the scheme were more than double council rents. The amendment did not attempt to change financial parameters.
- 70.12 Councillor Mears expressed concern about amendment iv, which she would not support. Future council committees could be fettered rather than enabled with extra rent supplies. She would be interested in hearing officers’ comments on amendment v.
- 70.13 The Chair stated that amendment iv would be loading debt to future generations and fettering future councillors. She called a recess to enable councillors to consider the amendments.

- 70.14 Following the recess Councillor Moonan referred to amendment v. Although she was sympathetic to the idea of using a lump sum of money to reduce rents, she stressed that such pots of money were precious in the current climate. She thought it was important to look strategically to how the council could invest money. Without being able to see what other options or priorities money might be set against, it was difficult to allocate it to one particular area.
- 70.15 Councillor Atkinson stated that there was a risk in delaying the project if the Committee agreed amendment iv. He felt that it was important to move on. It did not prevent the committee from looking at options for future projects.
- 70.16 Councillor Miller considered that shifting borrowing from 40 years to 60 years would be prolonging the housing crisis. He felt that it was not responsible to rob the next generation. He agreed with the intention of the amendment but felt there was a need to lower building costs.
- 70.17 Councillor Phillips commented that if the council wanted to supply affordable housing it was necessary to look at what was on the table now, not what might happen in the future. She felt that there was ample time to amend the finances before the report was presented to the Policy & Resources Committee.
- 70.18 Councillor Mears informed members that she would not support amendment iv. She understood why the amendment had been proposed and acknowledged that the council were not building an affordable scheme; however, it would be necessary to look to future projects that would keep costs down. Councillor Mears considered that amendment v would not be financially practical.
- 70.19 Councillor Gibson stressed that the Committee had a responsibility to investigate the possibility of lowering rents. It was feasible to come back with some ideas. He asked members to consider supporting the amendment. There was a need for living rents/social rents as well as local rents.
- 70.20 The Chair commented that the level of return diminished from year 41 onwards. These homes were built to a high efficiency standard with lower fuel costs. The money from the sale of the leasehold to the lions would be better spent in future capital programmes. She had a number of concerns about the amendments.
- 70.21 Councillor Gibson stated that he was suggesting putting money into the capital programme to contribute to build costs, to enable a different rent mix. It was a priority to supply some housing that was affordable. Double the social housing rent was not affordable.
- 70.22 At this point Members voted on whether the amendments could be accepted for the substantive vote. This was agreed by 8 votes with 2 abstentions.
- 70.23 The Committee then voted on the amended recommendations as follows:
- Amendment 2.1 iv) – Members voted by 2 in favour and 8 against. The amended recommendation was therefore not agreed.

Amendment 2.1 v) - Members voted by 2 in favour and 8 against. The amended recommendation was therefore not agreed.

Amendment 2.1 iii) – It was agreed that this amendment was no longer relevant.

70.24 The Committee then voted on the substantive recommendations set out in the report. Members voted 9 in favour and one abstention for 2.1 (i). The other recommendations were unanimously agreed.

70.25 **RESOLVED:-**

(1) That the Housing and New Homes Committee approve:

- i. The final scheme design;
- ii. The scheme rent levels;
- iii. The estimated levels of additional investment required from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the chosen rent model and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Environment, Development and Housing and the Executive Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Estate Regeneration Member Board to agree reasonable amendments to that subsidy if changes arise;
- iv. That the site of the former Housing Office, Garages and Stores, Selsfield Drive, Brighton is appropriated for planning purposes and the development of new housing.

(2) That the Housing and New Homes Committee recommend to Policy & Resources Committee to:

- v. Approve a budget of £6.875 million for Selsfield Drive in the HRA Capital Programme which will be financed through a mixture of HRA borrowing and retained Right to Buy capital receipts.

**71 NEW HOMES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS - FINAL SCHEME APPROVAL - WELLSBOURNE, WHITEHAWK**

71.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which focused on development proposals for the site at Wellsbourne, Whitehawk, which the City Regeneration team wished to progress through to planning and construction stage. Initial architectural feasibility studies were undertaken by Feilden Clegg Bradley studios (FCB). The scheme was handed over to the in-house architectural scheme in October 2015. The proposal was for a 29 unit (1,2, and 3 bed) three/four storey scheme that fitted comfortably below the Whitehawk Hub and new library and the context of the Whitehawk Valley. If the proposals were agreed the scheme would be presented to the Planning Committee in July 2016.

71.2 The report was presented by the Programme Manager, City Regeneration Unit.

- 71.3 Councillor Mears supported the scheme but questioned the way it was being financed. She asked if the council was getting value for money and wanted to know what had been paid in and out of the general fund. The Programme Manager explained that the sites had been marketed to assess their value. The Principal Accountant explained that the general fund would receive receipts from the Housing Revenue Account.
- 71.4 The Chair welcomed the scheme. It was a sensitive build, residents were supportive and wheelchair accessible homes would be included in the scheme.
- 71.5 Councillor Gibson stated that he would like to see more affordable rents explored. He proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Phillips as follows:

'2.1 iii) delete "for chosen rent model"

Delete 2.1ii) re-number sequentially

Add new clauses

2.1

iii) That officers investigate adjusting the financial model to take account of the surpluses generated from new homes high rents that will be accrued in years 40 to 60 and that any scope for using this additional income to provide some new homes at target and or intermediate rents be reported to the next Housing & New Homes Committee for a final decision on the rents levels provided by the scheme.

iv) That officers investigate any scope provided by using the capital receipt from the sale of leasehold to the lions/and or cost savings to provide some new homes at target and or intermediate rents be reported to the next Housing & New Homes Committee for a final decision on the rent levels provided by the scheme.'

- 71.6 The Committee then voted on the amended recommendations. Members voted by 2 votes in favour and 8 against. The amended recommendations were therefore not agreed.
- 71.7 The Committee then voted on the recommendations set out in the report. Members voted 9 in favour and one abstention for 2.1 (i). The other recommendations were unanimously agreed.

71.8 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Housing and New Homes Committee approves:
- i. The final design.
  - ii. The scheme rent levels.
  - iii. The estimated levels of additional investment required from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the chosen rent model and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Environment, Development and Housing and the

Executive Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Estate Regeneration Member Board to agree reasonable amendments to that subsidy if changes arise.

- (2) That the Housing and New Homes Committee recommends to Policy and Resources Committee to:
- iv. Approve that the land at Wellsbourne is appropriated to the HRA for a capital receipt of £360,000 for planning purposes and the development of new housing.
  - v. Approve a budget of £7.077m for the Wellsbourne scheme in the HRA Capital Programme which will be financed through a mixture of HRA borrowing and retained right-to-buy capital receipts.

## **72 PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF HRA OWNED GARAGES**

- 72.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which proposed the demolition of eight unused and unviable garages on Graham Avenue, Portslade, which had become unsafe to let. Graham Avenue had three separate garage sites. The report sought permission to demolish part of one site, namely eight garages (207-214). The demolition of HRA owned buildings required Committee approval.
- 72.2 The report was presented by the Housing Stock Review Manager.
- 72.3 Councillor Phillips stated that she was interested in the long term use of the site. She referred to paragraph 6.2 which stated that in the long term the site could be redeveloped for affordable housing. The report did not explain what scope there was for housing on the site. She asked if parking on the site would make it more difficult to develop in the future.
- 72.4 The Housing Stock Review Manager explained that it was not a development report. The site was on a long list of potential sites for development. If the recommendations were approved the provision of car parking spaces would not prove an obstacle to future development of the site. The Head of Housing confirmed that parking would not impede any future development.
- 72.5 Councillor Atkinson informed the Committee that he and Councillor Gilbey supported the recommendations, as Ward Councillors.
- 72.6 Councillor Barnett asked officers to ensure that the area was treated before work commenced to prevent rat infestation. There had been a problem with rats on a similar site in Hangleton. The Chair stated that officers would take her comments on board.
- 72.7 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That it be agreed to demolish eight garages (numbers 207-214) on Graham Avenue, Portslade, on grounds of health and safety, replacing them with HRA car parking spaces for rent.

### **73 HOUSING DELIVERY OPTIONS**

- 73.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which recommended funding for legal and financial advice to progress the establishment of a Joint Venture and/or Special Purpose Vehicle to deliver new homes and to inform development of specific proposals for report back to Housing and New Homes Committee and Policy and Resources Committee.
- 73.2 The report was presented by the Interim Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy.
- 73.3 Councillor Phillips asked if social rents/living rents could be included in the proposals. The Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy replied that the consultation included a whole range of models.
- 73.4 Councillor Mears stated that many questions remained unanswered. Paragraph 5.1 showed that tenants would not be consulted on specific schemes until the planning stage. Councillor Mears felt that tenants had been side-lined. There was no mention of living wage rents in the report. Councillor Mears expressed concerns about the financial implications in paragraph 7.3. This gave no idea of the total costs of setting up a company. There were no staff in place to protect the board. The Conservative Group would abstain from voting on the recommendations as there was not enough information in the report.
- 73.5 Councillor Miller concurred with the above comments. He considered that the proposals were quite high risk and was concerned that there had been no risk analysis. The council would be borrowing from the general fund to build homes. If the market were to crash the general fund would take the risk. He asked if other means of borrowing could be explored.
- 73.6 The Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy explained that government funding had been allocated to investigate a range of options. The report sought permission to carry out more work and seek specialist advice which would be brought back to Members.
- 73.7 The Acting Executive Director, Environment, Development & Housing assured Members that the consultation paper stated that there would be scheme consultation through the planning process. Impacted tenants would be consulted.
- 73.8 Councillor Atkinson saw the report as an enabling paper. It set out the direction of travel for the local authority and flagged up difficult issues. Councillor Atkinson highlighted the adverse economic impact on key workers as stated in paragraph 3.10. Councillor Atkinson stated that the paper provided a way forward and he supported the recommendations.

- 73.9 Councillor Gibson welcomed the idea of having a mix of rents including living rents. He asked for a definition of living wage rents. The Acting Director Environment, Development & Housing explained that living wage rents were a percentage of a person's living costs.
- 73.10 Councillor Gibson informed members that he agreed with Councillor Atkinson's comments but shared Councillor Mears' reservations about the lack of detail. On balance, he considered that the proposals should be agreed. He requested a further briefing on this matter. Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 3.21 and asked for an explanation of intermediate rent levels. He further referred to page 168 of the agenda (Page 36 of the Savills report) and asked for an explanation of the calculations. The Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy explained that rents could be modelled at any level, depending on what worked. The intermediate rent reflected a notional rent for key worker housing. He would provide information to Councillor Gibson on temporary accommodation figures.
- 73.11 The Chair stated that a briefing could be arranged for all members of the committee.
- 73.12 Councillor Moonan found the proposals exciting and believed that they needed to be explored. She agreed that there were gaps but she thought the council should proceed. It would be a good investment of money and could lead to a solution to some of the housing problems in the city. The Chair concurred and stated that it was an opportunity to explore delivering housing in a different way.
- 73.13 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the options which are likely to be available in funding and structuring a new Council vehicle to support delivery of additional housing supply be noted.
  - (2) That the Policy & Resources Committee be recommended to agree that the Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing, in consultation with Executive Director of Finance & Resources, procure specialist legal and financial advice in order to evaluate and progress the proposals for the delivery of alternative models for the supply of affordable housing as detailed in the report, for report back to Housing & New Homes and Policy and Resources Committees.
  - (3) That the Policy & Resources Committee be recommended to allocate £0.100m of the 2016/17 Strategic Investment Fund towards specialist legal and financial advice.

#### **74 ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2016: CONSULTATION DRAFT**

- 74.1 The Committee considered a report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which presented the draft Rough Sleeping Strategy 2016 and requested permission to carry out formal consultation to shape the final version that would be brought back for adoption later in the year. The City's current approach to rough sleeping was being re-assessed to ensure that the city's commissioners, service providers and those supporting people sleeping rough worked 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.

- 74.2 The report was presented by the Housing Strategy Manager. He was accompanied by the Head of Adults Assessment.
- 74.3 Councillor Phillips queried why the responsibility for rough sleeping was shared by three different meetings, namely the Housing & New Homes Committee, the Neighbourhoods, Communities & Equalities Committee and the Health & Wellbeing Board. Councillor Phillips questioned how there could be a city wide approach with such a fractured decision making structure. Councillor Phillips mentioned that Supporting People (now housing support services) had been a housing services responsibility, which had now been moved to Adult Services. She considered that it would make more sense to move the service back to Housing Services. The Housing Strategy Manager stressed that the council was responsible for rough sleeping and this involved housing services, health and adult social care.
- 74.4 Councillor Phillips expressed concern about preventative support. There had been cuts to Housing Support Services and she asked how the council would cope with the increasing numbers of people who needed this service. The Head of Adult Assessment explained that the council needed to make better use of existing services. The Acting Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing stressed that prevention would be an essential part of the Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 74.5 Councillor Phillips noted that the vision of the strategy was making sure no-one had the need to sleep rough in Brighton & Hove by 2020. She asked for reassurance that it would not be achieved by moving people elsewhere. The Housing Strategy Manager replied that if someone had moved to Brighton and Hove due to problems such as domestic violence there would be no question of them being re-connected to their family/friends.
- 74.6 Councillor Mears asked for more information with regard to what will our strategy achieve? (Paragraph 3.8), specifically 2. Assessment Centre, 3. Multi-agency plan and 5. New accommodation for homeless people with complex needs. Councillor Mears referred to the Housing Related Support cost benefit analysis. She agreed with Councillor Phillips remarks about Supporting People.
- 74.7 Councillor Mears stated that the council used to have a rough sleeping team. It concerned her that there was now a housing panel made up of agencies who met once a week. As a result people were now waiting for up to a week for help.
- 74.8 Councillor Mears expressed concern about the reduction of rough sleeper beds and asked for clarification about St Mungo's using the West Pier hostel with no support.
- 74.9 The Head of Adults Assessment replied that he had no knowledge of St Mungo's using the West Pier hostel. It had not been commissioned by the council. He acknowledged that there would be a reduction in beds but stressed that the council must make the best use of the available accommodation. There was a need to create a turnover rather than people remaining in hostel provision. Moving people on would require support through Adult Social Care & Housing. It was a joint responsibility.
- 74.10 The Housing Strategy Manager explained that in relation to paragraph 3.8, it was not known yet where the permanent assessment centre would be situated. All hostels were

being remodelled. Officers would come back with information on new accommodation for older homeless people.

- 74.11 Councillor Gibson welcomed the report. He was slightly reassured on the reconnection issue but stressed that many people had fled friends and families. He asked if he could be informed of the exceptions to the re-connection policy. Councillor Gibson made a general point about the process of the development strategy and the importance of building on partnership working with Love Activists and listening to the voices of homeless people. There was a need to have a respectful dialogue and to 'think out of the box'. The Housing Strategy Manager replied that the consultation would take place over the next few months and would include dialogue with the Love Activists.
- 74.12 Councillor Gibson referred to the table on page 190. He considered that it would be helpful if there was an official street count. Councillor Gibson referred to the consultation paper on page 247 – Improving Health. He was concerned about the last bullet point which related to quality of emergency and temporary accommodation impact on health. He hoped that officers could look at the standard of temporary accommodation and look at options for making improvements. He had heard of good proactive work in Leeds. The Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing stated that there could be a briefing on standards in temporary accommodation.
- 74.13 Councillor Atkinson noted that the report stated that 61% of rough sleepers had no local connection. He stressed that it was important to reconnect people to their own communities. Councillor Atkinson mentioned that he was aware of a mobile phone App called Street Link which enabled people to report rough sleepers. Councillor Atkinson mentioned that he had witnessed problems shopkeepers were experiencing with people sleeping rough in doorways. The Housing Strategy Manager replied that officers wanted to engage more with businesses. He would investigate the Street Link app.
- 74.14 Councillor Moonan thanked the officers for the report. She stressed that the strategy was still a draft and that there was more work to be carried out. Comments would be taken on board. She stated that the table on page 190 was confusing and could be improved. However it did show that numbers of rough sleepers were going up and that pressure was increasing. There would be a number of consultation events and it was important to speak to rough sleepers. She suggested that Members could inform her of matters which they would like built into the strategy.
- 74.15 At this point in the proceedings, Councillor Mears proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Miller as follows:
- '2.1 delete 'the Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee'
- Rewrite (3) so that it reads:  
Note that it is intended for the final strategy to come back to a new meeting of the Housing and New Homes committee for formal adoption and permission to implement.'
- 74.16 The Chair stated that either committee could approve the document as there was a cross cutting theme over different functions.

- 74.17 The Senior Lawyer stated that the Housing and New Homes Committee had overall responsibility for homelessness. The Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee delegations included 'to coordinate the Council's policies and actions with the view to reducing and eliminating street homelessness and, in conjunction with the Policy & Resources and Housing and New Homes Committee and the Health & Wellbeing Board, to ensure that appropriate action is taken.' The constitution stated that 'Where a function is delegated to more than one Committee or Sub-Committee, any one of those Committees or Sub-Committees may exercise the function.' The intention had been to present the final strategy to a joint Committee for approval.
- 74.18 Councillor Moonan stated that the complex joined up strategy involved officers working across teams. A joint committee would be a visible way of working across the council. All Members would have voting rights. The Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee also had non-voting external speakers who would contribute important viewpoints.
- 74.19 Councillor Hill stressed that as the council faced challenges it needed to work more collaboratively.
- 74.20 The Chair considered that the Neighbourhoods, Communities and Equalities Committee should be part of the decision making process. There was a cross cutting theme to the strategy. She stressed that these were difficult times with the government withdrawing funds. There was a need to think more widely on how to deliver services and there needed to be a joined up approach.
- 74.21 Councillor Miller felt it was strange that there was duplication in the constitution. Councillor Gibson considered that it would be more helpful if only one committee was responsible for homelessness.
- 74.22 Councillor Mears stressed that homelessness was a statutory function of the Housing & New Homes Committee and she wanted a decision to be made by this committee. She asked what would happen if there was a joint meeting and the two committees voted different ways. Who would take the priority? The Senior Lawyer replied that the constitution was silent on that issue.
- 74.23 The Housing Strategy Manager stated that it had been planned to hold a joint meeting on 11 July.
- 74.24 At this point Members voted on whether the amendments could be accepted for the substantive vote. This was agreed by 9 votes in favour and one abstention.
- 74.25 The Committee then voted on the amended recommendations. Members voted by 5 votes in favour and 4 against with one abstention. The amended recommendations were therefore agreed.
- 74.26 **RESOLVED:-**
- (1) That the Housing & New Homes Committee approves the consultation draft of the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2016 (Appendix 1).

- (2) That the Executive Director, Adult Services and the Executive Director, Environment, Development & Housing be authorised to carry out consultation on the draft strategy.
- (3) That it be noted that it is intended for the final strategy to come back to a new meeting of the Housing and New Homes committee for formal adoption and permission to implement

## **75 HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2015/16**

- 75.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Executive Director Environment, Development and Housing which covered the third quarter of the financial year 2015/16. The report was presented by the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement.
- 75.2 Councillor Mears thanked officers for the additional information in the report and acknowledged that there had been some positive news since the last quarter. She stated that it would be helpful to have another column to show the quarter before, in order to make sense of the movement. This would be a good indicator when things were going well. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that reports used to have this information but it had been decided to use the trend arrow instead. However she would amend the report as requested by the committee.
- 75.3 Councillor Miller referred to Page 328 and welcomed the average re-let time at 1a at 16 days. He asked why there was a difference between 1b and 1c. Was it because it was harder to re-let senior housing. On paragraph 4.2 No 3. - Mutual exchanges he wondered if the 42 days figure should be reviewed. Councillor Miller referred to page 329, paragraph 4.3 No 6. – Responsive repairs passing post inspection. He found the 90% figure rather concerning. He asked why this figure was not higher. Councillor Miller referred to page 330, where he noted that 172 of post inspections failed. 123 due to the cost of the work being over claimed by the contractor. He found this concerning. Councillor Miller referred to page 342 – Long term empty properties. He asked when empty homes were reported to the committee, whether they were reported every time or were they reported once and then taken off.
- 75.4 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement explained that in relation to long term empty properties, the report sometimes listed different properties. Sometimes the properties remained the same but the number of days that they had been empty would have changed since the last report. These were always properties that were over 6 weeks. With regard to re-lets, there was a difference between 1b and 1c because officers wanted to provide additional information to highlight that there was a particular issue with seniors housing. In terms of mutual exchanges, it was pointed out that the figure was not at 100% at the start of the quarter. The council had now met the target.
- 75.5 The Interim Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy responded on the issue of post inspections. He reported that since the last committee, officers were undertaking weekly quality assurance meetings with Mears who had looked to improve the oversight and quality assurance of their post inspections. It was predicted that there would be more failures in the short term. Members had also asked for a report to be brought back after 6 months on the overcharging issue, which would include the remedies put in place to ensure this did not happen again. Mears were looking to employ more direct labour rather than sub-contracted labour.

- 75.6 Councillor Gibson congratulated officers on the positives in the report. He commented on the red arrow with regard to responsive repairs post inspections. He accepted the previous point but asked when the sub-contractor employed by Mears (discussed at the last meeting) would cease to carry out work. The Interim Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy confirmed that the sub-contractor ceased to carry out work in September 2015.
- 75.7 Councillor Gibson suggested that some of reasons for the red arrow might be due to other sub-contractors. The Interim Head of Property & Investment/Head of Housing Strategy reported that officers were working with Mears to look at all other sub-contractors and working with quality assurance to double check this matter. More detail would be brought back in the report that had been promised.
- 75.8 The Acting Director of Environment, Development & Housing stated that he believed that the 123 failed responsive repairs due to the cost of the work being over claimed by the contractor were post inspections in relation to the issue related to the one sub-contractor. If this was not the case, officers would need to report back to members.
- 75.9 The Interim Head of Property & Investment stated that officers would report back to members with a more detailed briefing on this issue.

75.10 **RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the report be noted along with the comments of the Committee.

**76 ITEMS REFERRED FOR FULL COUNCIL**

76.1 **RESOLVED:-**

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

The meeting concluded at 9.13pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of