

# Annual Report

to council tenants & leaseholders 2018

Welcome to our annual report, highlighting the difference we have made over the past year, through working with you - our 11,300 council tenants and 2,800 leaseholders, as well as your families, friends and neighbours.

Our overall performance remains steady compared to last year, with seven in ten performance indicators meeting their targets in both 2016/17 and 2017/18 (34 of 48 comparable indicators in both years). These indicators are monitored through our Housing Management Performance Reports, which you can read online at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsg-performance](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsg-performance)

The report also looks ahead and highlights our plans for the coming year to improve your service.

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Brighton & Hove  
City Council



## A welcome from the Chair of Housing & New Homes Committee

As chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee, I've seen first-hand the contribution of the city's Housing services in making Brighton & Hove a better and fairer place. I'm proud to present our 2018 annual report, which highlights the difference we've made for our tenants and leaseholders, and looks ahead to what we'll be doing next.

In the last year, we made great progress towards important goals like building new council homes, and developing young peoples' skills through taking on apprentices with our partners Mears and K&T Heating.

Our staff went the extra mile to reach out to concerned residents following the Grenfell Tower fire in London. We have also been working hard to support those of you affected by Universal Credit, and will continue to do so as more people move over in the coming year.

We know there's work to be done, and it is extremely important to us that we use your feedback to focus on making the changes that matter to you. I'd like to encourage you to take part in the consultation and customer feedback opportunities we offer, including Area Panels, Service Improvement Groups surveys and focus groups – or by simply getting in touch with your thoughts. Finally, I wish to thank you for the valuable contributions you have already made.

**Councillor Anne Meadows**

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## Main improvements

### The difference we have made

- Provided 1,100 people with a secure new place to live by letting 613 council homes.

### Built 104 new council homes.



- Quickly contacted over 1,700 tenants and 600 leaseholders living in high-rise blocks following the Grenfell Tower fire in London, with staff hand delivering information letters and responding to hundreds of your queries. Residents told us they felt safe and reassured as a result.
- Updated the tenancy agreement to give you clear and fresh information about your rights and responsibilities.
- Supported almost 500 tenants affected by Universal Credit and over 2,000 tenants with rent arrears to manage in difficult situations.
- Collected 98.66% of rent while also minimising evictions. This amounts to almost £50 million, and is a small decrease (0.30% in a year) considering the Universal Credit rollout..
- Completed the cutting edge Brooke Mead extra care scheme, which provides 45 safe and secure homes designed for older people with dementia. It includes features such as Stoveguard (an auto timer turn off switch for cookers) fitted with help from the fire service.
- Completed 228 major adaptations in council homes, improving the daily lives of people with mobility needs and increasing their independence. One happy customer said their occupational therapist was "worth her weight in gold."
- With our partners Mears and K&T Heating, took on 30 new apprentices.

## Customer service and feedback

### The difference we have made

- Kept you waiting for less time by answering phone calls to Housing Customer Services within about 30 seconds on average, down from about 40 last year. The team takes 135 calls every working day.

**Increased the number of tenants signed up to the customer online system (COS) to 2,325 (from 2,209 a year ago), so that more of you have 24 hour access to your housing account information.**



- Responded to 82% of your complaints within 10 working days (294 of 360).
- Used your individual written responses within our customer service surveys, which 403 of you took part in, to inform service improvements. In our most recent survey, 87% of you (105 of 121) were satisfied overall with the customer service you received, up from 85% (226 of 265) a year ago.

### Looking ahead

- As part of our work to make the best use of our parking and garage sites, we will develop an online tool so you can see what vacancies are available and apply for them immediately.
- We will introduce digital self-service at Bartholomew House (staff helping customers use computers to get online) and review half our housing web pages.

**“I have never received such service as this before and I couldn’t believe how wonderful it was for me.”**

Feedback about Housing Customer Services

## Supporting you

### The difference we have made

- Supported 132 tenants to manage their tenancies, preventing the loss of their homes, and with other positive impacts like improved relationships with family and friends and decluttering their homes.
- Automatically enrolled people accepted for our gardening scheme last year onto this year’s scheme, so they didn’t have to apply again. The scheme helped almost 400 of you with grass and hedge cutting, and is available to tenants receiving disability-related benefits as well as most tenants aged 70 or over.
- Through our discretionary decorating scheme, helped 160 households by decorating a room for them, and helped 53 residents by providing decorating materials where they were able to do the work themselves or knew someone who could help.

**“I wanted to ensure that the team receive my heartfelt thanks for the fantastic job they did in my living room. Everything went very well, the job was done to a high standard and incredibly professionally.”**

Written feedback about decorating scheme

### Looking ahead

- We will review the way we carry out mutual exchanges to make the process simpler for tenants. During 2017/18 we helped 99 households move this way.
- We will help you to get online by offering you regular support sessions at Bartholomew House reception, including help to use the internet for things like shopping discounts and paying bills.

## Building new homes

### The difference we have made

- Built 104 new council homes for rent, providing secure and quality accommodation at the following developments:
  - Brooke Mead extra care scheme, with 45 one-bedroom flats
  - Kite Place, which has 57 one, two and three-bedroom flats
  - Normanhurst, where we converted unused storage space into two new flats.

**Built all our new homes to high design standards, including minimising the impact of noise from neighbouring properties. 12% are fully wheelchair accessible (12 of 104 homes) and rest are designed to be easily adapted if needed in the future.**



### Looking ahead

- We will finish two new developments, which are close to completion:
  - Hobby Place, with 29 one, two and three-bedroom flats
  - Lynchet Close, which has six houses and two flats.

## Resident involvement and empowerment

### The difference we have made

- Resident inspectors used their skills and expertise to improve services, including shadowing repairs and gas jobs to see first-hand how the work is done. Around 20 residents either carried out inspections or took part in discussions.
- Helped you get involved in your community through a new training programme, called 'Learn, Create, Innovate', which provided free skills workshops and activities for tenants and leaseholders.
- Acting on the recommendations from the Resident Involvement Service Review, changed the format of Area Panels so that resident representatives directly set the agendas with the councillors who chair the meetings.

### Looking ahead

- We will conclude the review of Area Panels, to increase representation of residents.

**Receiving the news about moving to a wheelchair accessible flat at Kite Place was absolutely fantastic. We were so excited."**

**"The flat is absolutely perfect for us, I love the open plan kitchen and living room and we have a lovely balcony. A lot of thought has gone into everything, even the corridors and landscaping of the grounds are amazing."**

**"It's amazing to know we're not going to have to move again."**

Feedback from new Kite Place residents

## Your home

### The difference we have made

Used the Housing Revenue Account's repairs and maintenance spend for 2017/18 to invest £9.675m in the following areas:

**£4.592m on responsive repairs to complete 39,000 repairs in your homes - an average of 150 every working day. The repairs helpdesk answered an average of 308 calls every working day, 77% of which were answered within 20 seconds.**



- £1.808m on empty properties, carrying out major work to 256 homes to make them ready for new tenants.
- £3.275m on servicing and other repairs, including safety checking 10,006 gas boilers in tenants' homes. In partnership with K&T Heating, we offer a full range of competitive gas services for leaseholders, from a boiler service to a complete new heating installation.

Used the capital investment programme (which sets out how the council invests in homes and neighbourhoods) for 2017/18 to invest £23.306m in the following areas:

- £10.181m on planned maintenance programmes, including replacing 316 kitchens, 86 bathrooms, 640 windows and 302 doors, so we could make you more comfortable in your homes. We brought forward window replacement work in Woodingdean following residents' feedback.

**“Operatives arrived promptly, were polite and considerate. The repair proceeded very efficiently, with a bare minimum of disruption and was swiftly completed to my full satisfaction.”**

Customer feedback

- £7.806m on major projects, including improvement work at 13 blocks in the city, containing 302 council and 134 leasehold flats. Work at the Clarendon & Ellen estate in Hove was rated highly under the Considerate Constructors Scheme.
- £5.319m on mechanical and electrical programmes, including upgrading five lifts, so we could make bring your facilities up to date.

We have also made a difference through other developments including the following:

- Started our SHINE ('sustainable houses in an inclusive neighbourhood') energy efficiency advice project, helping you through free home visits offering personalised energy saving tips and installing some small energy saving measures.
- Carried out a full review of customer contact, complaints and compliments processes on the repairs partnering contract. We have seen the number of new complaints about the service decrease from 305 in the previous year to 247 this year.

### Looking ahead

- We are working to reduce fuel poverty through our new Energy Strategy, which includes work to make your homes more energy efficient and offering advice on finding better deals for gas and electricity.
- We will be testing new gas boiler technology which will allow us to remotely diagnose faults before visiting properties.
- We will work with leaseholders and councillors to develop new proposals to further improve how we engage with leaseholders of around 2,800 properties.

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## Welfare reform

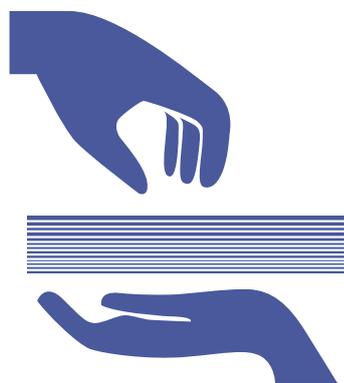
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### The difference we have made

- Expanded our 'Rent Matters' communication campaign by contacting over 300 households at risk of complications relating to Universal Credit, to provide them with advice and support.
- Helped over 60 tenants into work, volunteering or training through our Housing Employment Support Team.

The team has also supported 19 tenants to successfully appeal benefit decisions, increasing their annual income by an average of about £5,800 each.

**19 tenants  
+ £5,800**



### Looking ahead

- Although it has taken longer than expected, we will launch the 'Better Start' online guide this summer. The guide will help new tenants get the best start in managing a home and their tenancy.

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## Seniors Housing

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### The difference we have made

Held hundreds of social events across our seniors housing schemes, including meals, games and exercise classes. Many of you have told us about the positive changes these events make to your lives, including becoming more active and making new friends.



- Widened the range of activities we offer you by running a series of dance workshops with South East Dance at Leach Court, including one that brought together seniors housing residents and local families with children.
- Worked with LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Switchboard to host the opening of the Rainbow Café at Brooke Mead, which 70 people attended. The café is a friendly and supportive place for LGBT people concerned about memory loss or dementia, as well for as their loved ones or carers.
- Worked with the Red Cross to provide first aid training to seniors housing residents, to help them know what to do in an emergency.

### Looking ahead

- We will increase our work with Age UK Brighton & Hove, for example by inviting them to host advice and information sessions in our schemes.

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## Your neighbourhood and community

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### The difference we have made

Our Estate Development Budget provided funds for the Craven Vale Community Association to plant a mini orchard of fruit trees on the estate, which has improved the look of the estate and brought residents together to care for the trees.



- Completed almost 3,800 jobs to remove bulk waste and fly-tipped items, to keep your hallways and communal areas clear and safe.

### Looking ahead

- We will work to reduce fly-tipping through promoting appropriate ways to dispose of unwanted household goods, electronics and furniture. These include furniture recycling, the Cityclean pick-up service, and charities that can take reusable items.

**“I’ve always considered our estates team to be a service that just keeps on giving.”**

## Tenancy fraud update

Tackling tenancy fraud remains a key priority for the council. During 2017/18, we took back 20 properties following fraud investigations, therefore providing secure homes for people on our waiting list.



If you suspect someone got their council tenancy fraudulently, is illegally subletting their home, or keeping their tenancy while living elsewhere, please contact our fraud team in confidence by calling 01273 291847 or emailing [anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

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## Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

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### The difference we have made

- Worked with the Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service to bring neighbours together to help settle their disputes.
- Ended the tenancies of five households causing a nuisance, by using the legal enforcement powers available to us to deal with ASB and criminal behaviour.
- Helped people experiencing domestic violence to avoid moving where possible, eg through installing home security measures for them. This meant they could stay in their local communities.

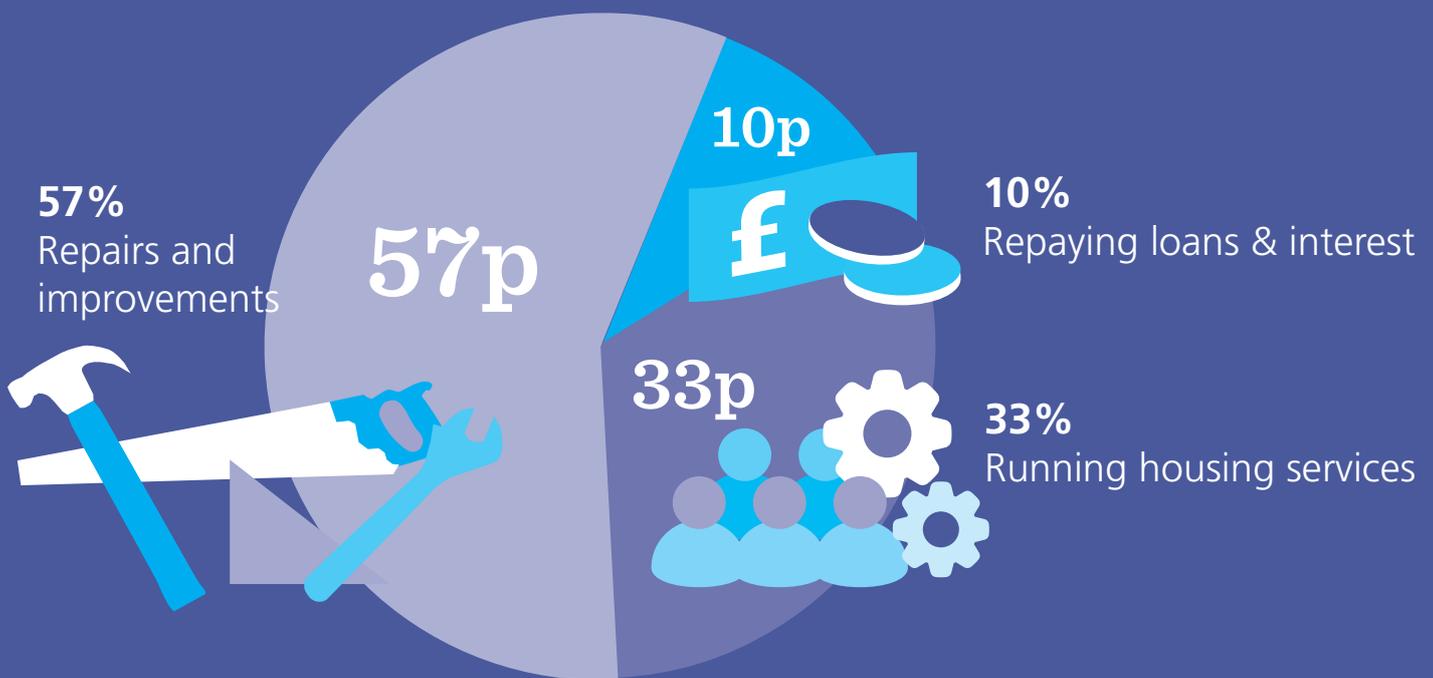
### Looking ahead

- We will improve how we carry out ASB victim satisfaction surveys, to gather feedback from more of you. During 2017/18, 83% of people surveyed (29 of 35) said they were satisfied with our ASB service overall.

# How do we spend the money

## Income and expenditure

Each £1 of rent and service charge income pays for:



Total income: : **£58.4 million**

Total expenditure: **£57.8 million**

The difference in income of £0.6 million has been added to reserves in the Housing Revenue Account to fund future investment in your homes and build new ones.

You can find more information on our performance at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsg-performance](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsg-performance)

If you have any comment on this annual report or if there is anything you'd like to see in future editions we would welcome your feedback.

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