

Housing Management Panel: West Hove & Portslade Area

Date: 17 August 2021

Time: 2.00pm

Venue Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Members: Councillor Allcock, Ward Councillors for the Area, Delegates of Tenants Association in the area.

Contact: Thomas Bald
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AGENDA

PART ONE	Page
1 WELCOME, APOLOGIES, AND INTRODUCTIONS	5 - 10
Instructions on Joining the Zoom Meeting (Copy Attached). West Area Panel Agenda 17.8.21 (Copy Attached).	
2 ACTIONS AND MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING	11 - 16
Minutes of the meeting held on 25 th May 2021 (Copy Attached). Actions from the meeting held on 25 th May 2021 (Copy Attached).	
3 POSITIVE COMMUNITY NEWS	
Community Learning – Verbal Update from Claire Johnson	
4 RESPONSES TO RESIDENT'S QUESTIONS	17 - 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- EDB as a resident led budget (20 Mins)- Residents associations and resident involvement (10 Mins)- Maintenance of Estates (15 Mins)- AGM Requirements (10 Mins)	
BREAK (5 MINUTES)	
5 HOUSING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN PROGRESS UPDATE AND HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2021/22	27 - 64
Housing Leadership Team Member Presenting (Report Attached). Leasehold Update (Report Attached).	
6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS	

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact , (01273 291354, email thomas.bald@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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Date of Publication - Date Not Specified

West Area Panel

17th August 2021, 14:00-16:00

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The zoom meeting will be open 15 minutes before the start time, please log in early if possible so we can start the meeting on time. This meeting will be run as individual area-based meetings, you will not have to enter a breakout room when you log on.

You can either join the meeting **online** via a smart phone, laptop or table or you can **dial in** from a landline or phone.

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84259573360?pwd=QjNHWGdNVUgxMng0RTI0bkxNdIRJQT09>

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Meeting ID: 842 5957 3360

Passcode: 0MATwt

Dial in on your phone or landline

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You will receive an email with the link to follow to join on your computer, tablet or smart phone. This will also have the conference ID number and password.

The conference will be open 15 minutes before the meeting is due to start.

How to join the meeting online

To connect by video, you will need to use a smart phone, tablet or desk top computer with an internet connection.

- The phone and tablet will have a built-in microphone and camera, but if you are using a desktop you might need a web-cam for people to be able to see you.
- When it is time to join the meeting, just click on the link emailed.
- If you are using a phone, tablet or computer you can ignore anything asking you to download Zoom – you can join in a Zoom meeting without doing this.
- If you are using an iPad you will need to download the Zoom app
- Turn on video or audio, if it asks you to – you may not need to do this if it is already enabled on your device.
- You will go to a 'waiting room' first of all, and then will be invited in to the meeting.
- You will then see yourself, and everyone else who has joined the meeting.
- You can change the view on your screen to a 'gallery' view, so you see everyone at once, at the same size. This is the best option for this meeting.

Phoning/Dialling In

If you are going to phone to us on an ordinary phone, in sound only, here are the instructions.

- You will need the meeting number and password (another number) (received in email/letter).
- You can use any phone that can make voice calls, so long as it has a keypad with a "*" and a "#" key on it, and it goes "beep" when you press a key, rather than "clickclickclickclick". (Some phones have a switch on the bottom to set this, which should be set to "T" or "TB" or "Tone".)
- You can **mute yourself** on the phone by pressing *6 and unmute yourself by pressing *6 again
- You can **“Raise a hand”** on the phone by pressing *9

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1. Phone one of the following numbers in the email/letter you received.
2. You will get an automatic voice message welcoming you to Zoom and asking you to key in the meeting ID followed by the hash key (#).
3. The automatic voice will then ask you to key in a participant ID. There isn't one, so just press "#" again.
4. It will then ask you to key in the password, followed by "#" again.

5. The voice will then tell you that you are in the meeting, and how many participants there are already and will then put you "on hold" in the waiting room until you are let onto the call by the organiser.

West Area Panel Agenda

Tuesday 17th August 2021

14:00-16:00

Meeting will be open 15 minutes before start. Anyone requiring help joining the meeting can contact the Community Engagement Team for assistance.

1 14:00-14:05 5 minutes	Welcome Apologies & Introductions,	Verbal
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2 14:05-14:20 15 Minutes	Actions and minutes from Previous Meeting	
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3 14:20-14:30 10 Minutes	Positive Community News Community Learning	Claire Johnson
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4 14:30-15:25 55 Minutes	Responses to Residents Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none">- EDB as a resident led budget (20 Mins)- Residents associations and resident involvement (10 Mins)- Maintenance of Estates (15 Mins)- AGM Requirements (10 Mins)	Answers to Residents Questions
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BREAK
5 minutes

5 15:30-15:55 25 Minutes	Housing Committee Workplan Progress Update and Housing Performance Report Quarter 1 2021/22	Verbal + Report Attached Housing leadership team member presentin.
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6 15:55-16:00	AOB 5 minutes	Verbal
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- End -

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: WEST HOVE & PORTSLADE AREA

2.00pm 25 MAY 2021

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Allcock, and O'Quinn

Representatives: Muriel Briault, Alison Gray, Graham Dawes, Roy Crowhurst, Ann Tizzard, Ann Packham, Claire Johnson,

Officers: Diane Coe, Rob Keelan, Sam Warren, Alice Curtis, Tom Matthews, Eddie Wilson

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Pissaridou.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

Positive Community News "Brightstore"

2.2 At the invitation of the Chair a representative from "Brightstore" was in attendance and gave a brief presentation about their work, answered questions from those who were present and explained how further information could be accessed.

3. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair addressed the panel and gave the following communications:

He re-iterated his comments made at the previous meeting and was anxious to acknowledge the feedback that residents and staff had taken time to give and had continued to give in respect of all of the Area Panels during what had been a difficult time for all.

There are challenges with using the internet particularly with software, different devices and networks, it was recognised that this could make meetings more complicated and everyone's patience with issues being resolved was appreciated. The community engagement team were continuing to work with residents to support as many people as possible to access them. Feedback received was being used to help to inform and improve the way that meetings were organised in future. Officer who will be able to put you in touch with the right service or person.

4. WEST AREA PANEL AGENDA

Review of Previous Actions

- 4.1 The Housing Manager referred to an update provided at the previous meeting and stated that an update had been prepared and circulated, although it needed to be acknowledged that this was a work in progress and that there had been some slippage in consequence of Covid.

Responses to Residents Questions

Item 1 – Maintenance Schedules. The following areas were covered:

Housing Repairs & Improvement
External Repairs & Redecoration
Window Replacement
Roof Replacement
Door Replacement

- 4.2 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

Item 2 – Lack of Action from City Clean

- 4.3 This was being kept under review, officers to continue to be informed of issues.

- 4.4 **AGREED** – that the response be noted.

Item 3 – MEARs Payment for Estate Development Budget Work

- 4.5 **AGREED** – Response noted and to be kept under review.

Item 4 – Estate Development Budget

- 4.6 **AGREED** – Response noted.

Item 5 – Environmental Improvement Budget

- 4.7 **AGREED** – Response noted. Also noted, that there was a separate report appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

Item 6 - Buy Local

- 4.8 Responses given to issues raised noted. Noted that issues in relation to Recycling Bins at Woods House were being investigated further and that a further update would be provided in due course.

- 4.9 **AGREED** – that the response be noted.

Item 7 – Major Works Defects Review.

- 4.10 **AGREED** – that the response be noted. Also, that was covered by an update report appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

Item 8 – Getting Back Together (North and Central)

4.11 **AGREED** – that the response be noted.

Item 9 – Citywide Conference, Organising Group New Members Needed.

4.12 **AGREED** – that the response and actions taken be noted.

Item 10 – Communications Between Officers and Residents

4.13 **AGREED** – that the response and actions being taken be noted.

Item 11 – Clearance of Overgrown Areas in City Parks

4.14 **AGREED** – that the response and actions being taken be noted.

Item 12 – Estate Development Budget (EDB) Fencing

4.15 **AGREED** – that the response and actions being taken be noted.

Items for Housing Committee

Environmental Improvement Budget Update (including Appendix including Major Works Defects Review)

5.1 Officers detailed the various issues highlighted, progress made and planned works going forward and the rationale for those decisions. It was recognised that there had been slippage in consequence of Covid and that there would be a time lag. It would take a while to catch up and progress would not be immediate. The same applied in relation to the major defects review, although works identified as the most pressing would be given priority.

5.2 Several of the representatives present sought clarification of the process and expressed concern in respect of some works which they were aware of which had been outstanding for some time, also the need for residents to be kept fully apprised of the process, the different budgets used.

5.3 Questions were also raised in relation to harmonisation of the repairs schedules, how elements of the budget were allocated and non-urgent work prioritised and timescales for repairs generally. Officers agreed to look into the queries raised and to report back in due course.

5.4 **AGREED** – That the information provided and follow up action to be taken be noted.

Annual Report

5.5 The information set out was detailed and amplified by Officers, notwithstanding the impact of Covid work was progressing. Reference was made by those present to the timescale(s) for re-letting empty properties post pandemic. Agreed that a response/update would be provided.

5.6 **AGREED** – That the information provided and follow up action to be taken be noted.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.7 concern was raised regarding watering arrangements for planting provided on estates. This would become increasingly necessary during the summer months. This needed to be able to be carried out safely and the risk of theft or vandalism of equipment minimised. It was agreed that this should not involve costs to tenants' i.e., on their water bill. Agreed that the relevant officers would explore:

Provision of outdoor taps/water butts (enabling rainwater to be re-cycled)

Agreed that access to water needed to be secure and vandal proof – lockable cages to taps? .

The meeting concluded at 4.34pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

HLT Area Panel Actions List

Area	Date Raised	Action	Officer	Response
West	May 2021 Area Panel	Service Harmonisation - Repairs Schedules – how elements of the budget are allocated and non-urgent work prioritised and timescales for repairs generally. Justine Harris agreed to look into the specific queries raised and then report back.	Justine Harris	Verbal update to be provided at the next area panel meeting.
West	March 2021 Area Panel	Surveyor and Contractor agreed to bring a list to including data regarding the maintenance plan to share with residents back to a future Area Panel.	Marcus Richardson	Ongoing
West	May 2021 Area Panel	Watering Arrangements for planting provided on estates. Agreed that this should not involve costs to tenants' i.e., on their water bill. Agreed that Rob, Justine and Janet would explore: Provision of outdoor taps/water butts (enabling rainwater to be re-cycled) Agreed that access to water needed to be secure and vandal proof – lockable cages to taps? .	Rob Keelan Justine Harris Janet Dowdell Albert Donnelly	Watering arrangements for planting are being considered via the Environment Improvement Budget. This includes the reinstallation of taps with lockable cages and provision of outdoor water butts. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
West	March 2021 Area Panel	Provide a summary of Housing Managers actions for May Area Panel	Robert Keelan	Complete

West Area Panel August 2021 Resident's Questions

3 Star West

1. Reaffirming the EDB as a resident led budget

Issue: The Estate Development Budget was originally established as a resident led fund, with the process led by representatives from Residents Associations. West residents agreed unanimously that this founding principle is being eroded, with the process now being led by officers, rather than residents. They want the principle of a resident-led budget reaffirmed and acted on.

Background:

EDB process of application and funding has changed beyond recognition.

Although the EDB process has been discussed at some meetings, the nature and extent of the changes were not clearly put and debated. Some residents on the EDB panel, for example, were not consulted or involved and only realised the extent of the changes when asked to score bids at the West EDB meeting. West residents feel that the present system encourages top-down solutions. For example, residents were told that the old system was unfair and what changes had to be made.

A better procedure would have been to put forward clearly the arguments about why the system was unfair; discuss this with residents; agree whether or not it was unfair; look together at what to do about it and come to a joint solution.

The EDB used to be a simple process that really facilitated involvement. It is now more difficult and less helpful. For example, at Woods House the EDB was a quick way of accessing a small amount of money for their garden, which made a big difference to the volunteer gardeners. Last time Woods House applied for this their bid was rejected.

Action: Ask that the Council recognise and acknowledge the issues residents are raising

Reaffirm that the EDB is a resident led process

Engage with residents about what this means in practise.

Response -Keely McDonald-Community Engagement Officer

The Community Engagement team are sorry to hear that residents do not find the current process to be resident led. All project ideas come from residents and they make the decision on whether the bids receive funding.

An internal audit carried out in 2018, identified that there was only partial confidence in the EDB process and improvements needed to be made to make it fairer and more inclusive. In response, the EDB Review Group (resident members from across the city) was set up to look at the findings of the audit and identify what improvements could be made.

This work was then taken on by the Involvement and Empowerment, Service Improvement Group. All Review Group members were offered and encouraged to join the service improvement group, to continue the work and reduce the number of meetings they were attending.

An EDB Task and Finish Group has now been set up to complete the outstanding actions from this work.

The process of applying for EDB and the decision-making structure has not changed. The EDB Panel still decides on quick bids whilst the EDB Area Panel still decides on main bids. Residents are continuing the work of improving the process. The questions groups are asked on the bid form have not changed

The council has a responsibility to ensure the process is fair and inclusive, adheres to financial regulations and accountability, guidance around project feasibility is offered and confirm approval for bids as the landowner/landlord.

In regard to the Repairs and Maintenance team response to EDB bids. We need to carry out a number of checks on bids prior to delivery to ensure that works can be carried out effectively. Delivery time will vary depending on the bid.

We are committed to delivering EDB bids in a timely way however this has been extremely challenging over the last 16 months due to the impact of the Covid-19 and the high number of responsive repairs that the service is currently managing. The Repairs and Maintenance are currently in the process of undertaking significant recruitment, which we expect that this will improve the delivery time for EDB bids.

2. Resident Associations and Resident involvement

Issue: There is a lot of demoralisation and frustration amongst West Resident Association representatives. The following points were raised:

West residents feel that they are not listened to and their opinions are not considered important. Whether or not this is true, it is significant because it is the experience of residents who are engaging in the consultation process.

West residents often experience their involvement as a box-ticking exercise and that they are being informed about decisions that have already been made, rather than involved in a joint process.

It is very difficult to get even small things done, for example with CityClean and grounds maintenance. There is often no response or on-going communication about the progress of complaints or issues raised. The difficulty of getting things done, and feeling that your voice is not heard, takes a toll on individuals mental and physical health, and means people give up because they come to believe there is no point. It was recognised that COVID has made the situation more difficult, but there are underlying issues about how the council relates and communicates with its residents which are not about COVID and which need to change.

Action:

West residents asked for this item to go to Area Panels to (a) register their concerns (b) see if other areas are experiencing similar problems and (c) look for a way forward.

Residents would like clarification as to how are these being actioned and communicated. The question is about communication, so that people know that they are getting things done for what they are being asked for

Response Keely McDonald-Community Engagement Officer

At time of writing, a meeting is being arranged with West residents to listen to the points they've made and see what we need to do to improve communication. This is due to take place early in August. We hope that this meeting will have taken place before the August Area Panel meetings so that we can provide a verbal response.

Response: Robert Walker, Head of Operations-City Parks

- Thank you for your question, I'll answer your points in turn:
 - The weather conditions have caused rapid growth, not just to grass but weeds & shrubs, this is the case throughout the city.
 - We are not mowing any less – longer grass takes longer to cut. To get a quality cut is harder to achieve when the grass is longer & has grown so quickly.
 - Weeds are worse not only from the weather but City Parks have not have had the resource during Covid/Isolating staff and this will have had an accumulative affect.
 - CityParks are currently within our target of within 3-4 weeks mowing in the majority of Portslade & Hove Park area
 - We have started round 5 in the majority of areas –
 - Oak dene Gardens & Foxway Flint/Forge area where operatives are working currently this round is slightly overdue but is now in process.
 - **Ingram Court:** Is not an exception in the amount of growth that the team maintain.
 - There are two full time operatives on this estate, and we have had reports that the maintenance has been very effective prior to the summer weather being creating the excessive growth. There are two rounds – a ride on mowing round and a follow up with a pedestrian mower. The ride on round is faster so may not be completed at the same time & grass areas may look incomplete but should be followed up.
 - Weeds in hard stand areas will be due to no longer using Glyphosate, it will impact these areas.
 - **Footpaths/ROW/Bridleways/Twittens** – There are some complicated land ownership issues but If they are within CityParks operational maintenance remit we are working to get to them. I have been working in partnership with Cllr Atkinson to work through these issues and determine who is responsible for the maintenance and flagging areas to the correct department. We are engaging contractors where possible if budget allows.
 - We do not geographically prioritise areas, all areas have the same targets – the exception is prioritising areas that may cause a health & safety hazard.
 - Complaints are responded to in the first instance by the team leader for the area.

Jonathon Pyle - Assistant Business Support Manager | City Environment, Hollingdean Depot

What happens when complaints are made/issues raised for CityClean, what is the process for when complaints are made? Where are they sent to, how are they dealt with?

Complaints received from customers directly into the CityClean Inbox (cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or via a call-back request from Switchboard (for those currently using the Accessibility Line.)

When an expression of dissatisfaction with the service provided by City Clean is first received into the Cityclean inbox, a Customer Advisor (CA) will firstly review the email to assess both the nature of the issue and whether this is the first time the customer has contacted us about the issue. If there has been no previous contact from the customer and the complaint relates to a general issue (such as a missed collection or weeding issue*,) the CA will provide details of the complaint to the relevant Team Leader and their manager and request that an investigation is carried out and a response provided in order to respond to the customer. The CA will then respond to the customer to advise of the action they have taken and update the customer on the action they have taken.

**Very often for any street cleaning issues the CA will also raise a 'Report A Problem' case which is then sent over to the Streets Team to action.*

If, however, the same customer then contacts us again regarding the same issue, the CA will raise the issue as an "Ops Referral Complaint" via our internal Customer Management system (CHAS), that gets automatically sent through to the relevant Team Leader to investigate. The Team Leader will then investigate the complaint and provide feedback, either directly to the resident (if the resident has requested a response via telephone) or email the CA with the outcome of their investigation, for the CA to update the customer (if the customer has stated they would prefer to be contacted via email.)

If a customer has contacted us and within the body of the email, the customer has requested to raise a complaint, or if the nature of the complaint is more serious (such as staff/crew conduct issues) then the CA will immediately raise a complaint on CHAS irrespective of whether the customer has contacted us before.

Following the recent introduction of a new Customer Management system, all Operations Team Leaders and Manager have 'live' access to all the complaints that have been raised by the CA's and a report can be run at any time. A 10 day turnaround has been agreed with Operations in which to provide feedback to the customer and resolve the complaint, however, it has recently been identified that a number of responses from the Team Leaders fall outside this timeframe and following a meeting on 13th July 2021 between the Contact Centre Manager and The Operations Managers, it has been agreed that from next week every Team Leader will book in some designated time each week to respond to any complaints they are responsible for. The Operations Managers have also agreed to review the cases on a regular basis with the Team Leaders to ensure both timely and effective responses are provided.

If the customer remains dissatisfied with the service provide or the outcome of any action taken (or lack of) the CA would offer to raise a Formal Stage 1 Complaint for the customer, under the council's formal complaints procedure. (Previously customers would be advised of how to do this themselves at this stage, however, the CA's are now more pro-active and will offer to raise one on the customers behalf.) It is important to note that customers also have the option or raising a Formal Stage 1 Complaint themselves via the website or by contacting the Customer Feedback Team (CFT) directly without going through any of

the above steps. When a Stage 1 Formal Complaint is raised the customer is sent an acknowledgment of their complaint by the CFT and the complaint is passed on to the relevant Manager at Cityclean to carry out an investigation and respond directly to the customer. The timeframe for these responses is also 10 working days. If the customer remains dissatisfied following their Formal Stage 1 response, the Customer can then escalate the matter to a Stage 2 formal Complaint. At this stage the complaint is reviewed by a Customer Feedback Manager from the council's Customer feedback Team, this may lead to a further independent investigation by them, and can lead to recommendations for service improvement or a specific remedy to the complaint if it is upheld. Stage 2 responses are sent by the Customer Feedback Manager usually within 20 working days.

There is ongoing training to be provided to all CA's in respect of how to respond to queries and complaints, with some specific complaints training currently being scheduled for all staff prior to the Environmental Services telephone line re-opening in September. It has been identified, however, that there have been occasions where the above process has not been followed as it should. When this is identified the individuals have been provided with additional training or had their performance managed more formally.

- What are the current communication procedures to let residents know the progress of complaints/issues raised?

If a customer has contacted City Clean via cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk or via the Accessibility Line, then they will be advised that the issue has been passed on to the relevant team to investigate and resolve. If a customer has requested a further update then this request will be included in the communication between the CA and the relevant Team Leader.

When a complaint has been raised on CHAS it is then the responsibility of the Team Leader who has been assigned the complaint to either update the customer directly or update the CA in order to provide an update to the customer.

If there is a delay to responding to a Formal Complaint at Stage 1 then the customer should be notified of the reason for the delay and provided with an expected timescale of when they will receive a full response. Following a recent review of this process it was identified this was not always happening and additional measures have been put into place to ensure this does happen going forward.

If you require any further details or would like me to look into any specific queries or complaints from customers that were not resolved satisfactorily, please feel free to pass these details onto me and I will investigate these myself to identify where the process has fallen down and respond with an explanation.

3. Lack of Maintenance of estates

Issue: Inadequate grass cutting and grounds maintenance.

Background:

Ingram Court: an incomplete job was done when the grass was cut, with some areas left at least 2 feet high, obstructing pavements and causing a hazard. Residents were told these areas had been left as a strimmer was needed, which wasn't available. Weeds are climbing up walls in the carpark and covering paving, fences and buildings.

- North Portslade: alleyway completely overgrown.
- Hangleton and Knoll: overall lack of maintenance to public areas.

- Different areas of the city seem to get different treatment, with some having more regular and frequent grass cutting and maintenance than others.
- Residents attending the Estates Task and Finish group have been disappointed with this and hoped for more progress.

Action:

West residents want to see an improvement in the maintenance of estates generally.

It was agreed that overgrown pathways and public areas can be a health and safety hazard and this must be taken seriously.

They asked for responses to the following issues:

- Why has the grass cutting and grounds maintenance service been so poor?
- What plans are there to improve this service and give value for money?
- How is it decided what area is getting what?
- Why are workers not provided with the correct equipment to complete a job?

Response Robert Walker, Head of Operations-City Parks

We have brought bank cutting specialists contractors with specialist machinery at Fitch Drive which has a similar problem with bank maintenance. I am unable to confirm further detail however, I can confirm that to date none of them have been able to help tackle the problem. In this case it is a steep bank down to the back of a high-rise block. At time of writing in spite of the cutting back of the overgrown bushes two weeks ago, this is still reported to be a continuing problem. A further update will be provided verbally at the next meeting.

4. AGM requirements

Issue: Residents have been told they must have a generic mobile phone and email address to meet the council's recognition criteria for Residents Associations.

It was agreed it is important residents have an easy way of contacting their Association, but it should be up to the Association to decide what works best for them. One solution should not be imposed by the council.

Action:

Request for more discussion on (a) how best to facilitate communication between residents and their Association and (b) a more flexible approach to how this is done.

Response

In all areas the use of glyphosate has been stopped, this means that hard surfaces are no longer treated with weed killer. To date no satisfactory substitute has been found, any control on hard surfaces has to be done manually. This is far less effective than chemical control in most situations. We can supply details for any Housing sites where tasks such as grass cutting have been done. This information will be different for different sites.

The situation with verges is quite different to maintenance on Housing land. The Environment Transport and Sustainability Committee will consider whether they change mowing frequencies on verges. The Lewes Rd central reservation is intentionally left long for the wildflowers and will not be cut until September or October. If an area is affecting the vision of drivers it will be cut back.

In relation to verges, as we are behind on cutting, we will not be strimming around lamp posts and spraying around these is no longer an option. There are inconsistencies across the City, these are not

intentional and are caused by other operational factors, such as staffing. City Parks currently have contractors and agency staff assisting the gardeners in the north area, due to them having the highest number of staff shortages. We expect staffing levels to improve, once less people need to quarantine due to notifications on the NHS track and trace app. City Parks will then use the current hot spell to get on top of outstanding work

Community Engagement Team

Thank you for your question. We sent out some AGM guidance to offer support for residents associations with AGMs going forward. In the letter, we stated that new requirements are for residents to have an association phone number and email address. Apologies for the lack of clarity in our initial letter, we acknowledge that these requirements should be flexible for each association and that the community engagement team can support associations in acquiring the phones, phone numbers and email addresses on how they can be used. There is not the expectation for residents to be “on call” or the phone number to be accessible at all times. One example of use could be, that the could be “office hours”, the groups could advertise around their area that the phone numbers are available on a certain few hours a week for people to contact them. The community engagement team can support associations and groups in advertising these times.

3 Star North

5. Overgrown brambles at the bottom of Davey Drive

See Minutes of North Area Residents Only Meetings: Items 2 and 6 from 19th January 2021 and Item 2 from 23rd March 2021.

Issue:

The overgrown brambles on the bank between the bottom of Davey Drive and Horton Road are a hazard for local residents.

Hollingdean Residents Association has tried many different avenues to get this resolved over the last few years but none have resulted in effective action.

Background:

When requests to get the bank cleared regularly were not successful the Residents Association submitted an EDB bid for the work to be done, which was approved in April 2019. The work still wasn't done, and despite ongoing reports and written responses to Area Panel, the matter still hasn't been resolved.

In a written response to Area Panel 7th January 2021 Justine Harris stated:

“Housing Services will invite representatives from the Residents Association to attend the inspection in the new year. The piece of land belongs to Housing. CityParks are not asked to cut it as they have no safe way of doing this. This bank cannot be cut with a tractor mounted flail I'm (sic) because of the uneven sloped verge at the bottom, obstacles in the verge such as trees/lamp posts etc and the fact that it is single carriageway, however CityParks are going to be purchasing a new machine that may be able to reach further so it will be trying it out. In the meantime CityParks have confirmed that they will endeavour to keep the overgrowth cut back off the path and steps. The only obligation is to stop any overhang onto the highway which includes the footpath.”

However, this didn't result in the bank being cleared and more local people have since been injured, including a young boy on a skateboard whose face was severely cut by the brambles. The issue was re-submitted to Area Panel on 26th May 2021 but no written response was forthcoming. Direct discussions between Hollingdean Residents Association and CityParks have also not resolved this problem, and explanations about a lack of appropriate machinery and a lack of staff have been repeated. Residents' representatives have attended the Estates Task and Finish Group to raise this, as it is recognised that a similar problem exists in other areas of the city. This hasn't yet led to a satisfactory solution, but the discussion is ongoing.

The meeting agreed to respond to this lack of effective action by:

Asking Housing to investigate the use of contractors with suitable equipment to clear the bank.

Asking the Health and Safety Officer to inspect the area to assess the risk to local residents and action required to mitigate that risk.

Contacting the Argus to ask them to run a report to highlight the problem.

Action:

Residents have proposed that the use of external contractors with appropriate machinery be considered to clear overgrown banks. Information is requested on whether this option has been considered and details of the outcome of any attempts to use contractors.

Response

In all areas the use of glyphosate has been stopped, this means that hard surfaces are no longer treated with weed killer. To date no satisfactory substitute has been found, any control on hard surfaces has to be done manually. This is far less effective than chemical control in most situations. We can supply details for any Housing sites where tasks such as grass cutting have been done. This information will be different for different sites.

The situation with verges is quite different to maintenance on Housing land. The Environment Transport and Sustainability Committee will consider whether they change mowing frequencies on verges. The Lewes Rd central reservation is intentionally left long for the wildflowers and will not be cut until September or October. If an area is affecting the vision of drivers it will be cut back.

In relation to verges, as we are behind on cutting, we will not be strimming around lamp posts and spraying around these is no longer an option. There are inconsistencies across the City, these are not intentional and are caused by other operational factors, such as staffing. City Parks currently have contractors and agency staff assisting the gardeners in the north area, due to them having the highest number of staff shortages. We expect staffing levels to improve, once less people need to quarantine due to notifications on the NHS track and trace app. City Parks will then use the current hot spell to get on top of outstanding work.

6. Grass cutting

Issue:

There are ongoing problems with the frequency and quality of grass cutting throughout the area.

Background:

- The grass cutting teams cut some of the grass areas on estates but leave others uncut.
- They don't strim around trees and lampposts, leaving the long grass and weeds to grow.

- Grass and weeds are left to grow in the cracks in pavements causing a trip hazard for pedestrians.
- The central reservation along Lewes Road and other main roads are not mown, leaving the weeds to grow very tall and obstruct the vision of drivers.

Action:

A report is requested from City Parks on: the planned schedule for grass cutting throughout the north area; and how many tasks on the schedule are being missed or done late.

Response – Justine Harris

In all areas the use of glyphosate has been stopped, this means that hard surfaces are no longer treated with weed killer. To date no satisfactory substitute has been found, any control on hard surfaces has to be done manually. This is far less effective than chemical control in most situations. We can supply details for any Housing sites where tasks such as grass cutting have been done. This information will be different for different sites.

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7. Estate Development Budget – Communication

Issue:

There are ongoing problems with communication after bids have been submitted by Residents Associations. This needs to be improved so that:

- the specification of work can be clarified before it commences
- the work can be checked afterwards
- local residents affected by work can be kept informed

Action:

Residents are requesting that the procedures for EDB bids be reviewed to ensure Residents Associations are:

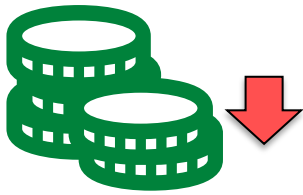
- informed of the outcome of all bids;
- contacted before work is carried out to check the location and specification; and
- informed when the work is completed so they can check it has been carried out correctly.

Response

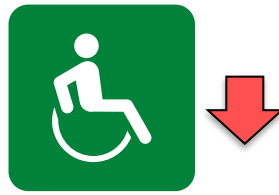
We apologise for any instance where residents did not receive the level of communication they were expecting around EDB bids. The Community Engagement and the EDB Team are working together to improve this and ensure groups which have submitted bids have access to updates on their bid progress in good time. The Estate Development Budget Task and Finish Group will be looking at the process of communications around EDB and will be making recommendations around how residents can be better informed at all stages. I will ensure that the points raised here about contacting bid applicants in advance of, and on completion of works are included in that discussion. The recommendations made by the EDB Task and Finish Group will be presented at future Area Panel meetings at the end of this year.

Council housing performance

Quarter 1 2021/22 (Apr to Jun 2021)



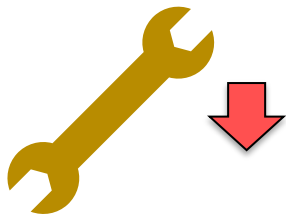
96.38%
Rent collected



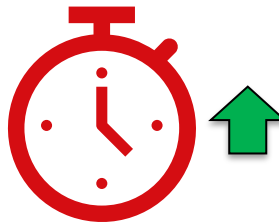
7.9 weeks
Waiting time
for adaptations



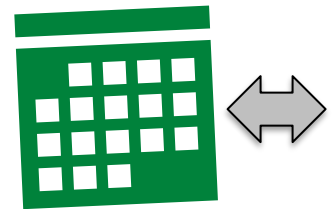
88 days
Empty home
re-let time



97.7%
Emergency
repairs within
24 hours



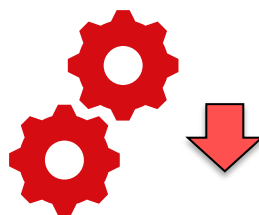
36 days
To complete
routine repairs



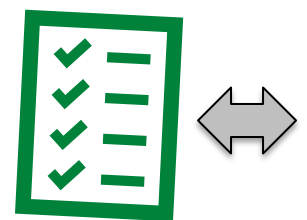
97.9%
Repairs
appointments
kept



98%
Tenants
satisfied with
repairs



91%
Lifts restored to
service within
24 hours

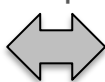


100%
Gas safety
compliance

Performance since previous quarter is:



Better



Same



Worse



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Quarter 4 2020/21 council housing performance – key trends

Top 5 scores (compared to target)

1. Major adaptations – average time to approve applications (7.9 weeks vs 10 week target)
2. Tenants satisfied with repairs (98% vs 96% target)
3. Repairs appointments kept (97.9% vs 97% target)
4. Rent collected from council tenants (96.38% vs 95% target)
5. Council homes with a valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record (100% vs 100% target)

Bottom 5 scores (compared to target)

1. Average re-let time excluding time spent in major works (88 days vs 21 day target)
2. Lifts – average time taken to respond (5.2 hours vs 2 hour target)
3. Average time to complete routine repairs (36 days vs 15 day target)
4. Surveyed ASB victims satisfied with how their case was handled (50% vs 85% target)
5. Routine repairs completed within 28 calendar days (69.7% vs 92% target)

5 biggest improvements (since previous quarter)

1. Average re-let time excluding time spent in major works (105 to 88 days)
2. Average time to complete routine repairs (41 to 36 days)
3. Routine repairs completed within 28 calendar days (65.90% to 69.70%)
4. Tenants satisfied with repairs (96% to 98%)
5. Four other indicators in joint fifth place remained the same (Appointments kept as proportion of appointments made, Dwellings meeting Decent Homes Standard, Energy efficiency rating of homes, Council homes with a valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record)

5 biggest drops (since previous quarter)

1. Lifts – average time taken to respond (2.8 to 5.2 hours)
2. Lifts – average time taken to restore service when not within 24 hours (5 to 9 days)
3. Major adaptations – average time to approve applications (5.6 to 7.9 weeks)
4. Surveyed ASB victims satisfied with how their case was handled (67% to 50%)
5. Lifts restored to service within 24 hours (96% to 91%)

DRAFT Committee workplan progress update and Housing performance report

Quarter 1 2021/22

This report provides updates on the Housing Committee priorities and work plan for 2019-23, as well as a range of performance indicators. Delivery of a complex Housing service during the Covid-19 crisis has been, and continues to be, a challenge, but staff have worked very hard in difficult circumstances to continue to deliver vital services for council tenants, leaseholders and other residents across the city.

While there continue to be areas of good performance, with 50% (17) of Housing Committee Work Plan objectives on track for delivery and 8 performance indicators on or above target, the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the additional work burdens and priorities this has placed on Housing has inevitably resulted in a drop in performance against some indicators. These include functions such as lettings and routine (non-emergency) repairs which need to be delivered differently and are taking longer. The service is keeping its plans to rectify areas where performance has been adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic under regular review.

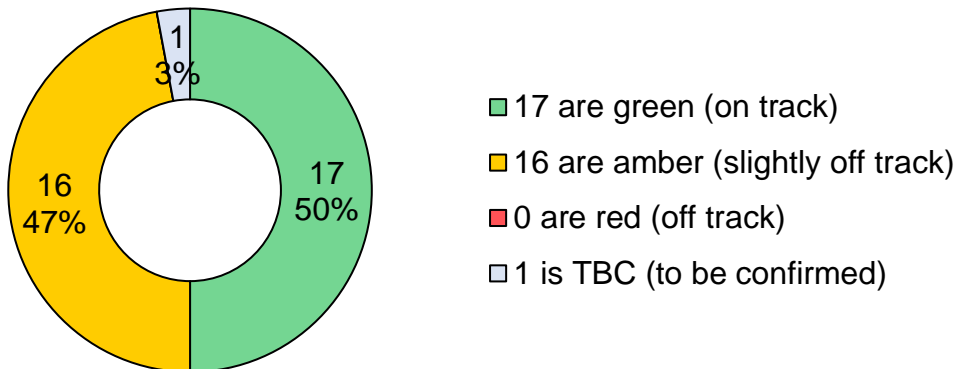
Performance areas	Page
Housing Committee priorities and work plan	
Additional council homes	4, 5, 17
Other additional affordable homes	6
Council home buy backs	4, 8, 18
Right to Buy sales	5, 17
Sites identified for Community Land Trust development	5
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing	6, 15
Private sector housing 'requests for assistance' received	6
Rough sleepers and Covid-19 placements	7
Housing First placements	8
Energy efficiency rating of council homes	9, 21
Private sector empty homes returned to use	12, 15

Performance areas	Page
Performance indicators	
Customer feedback	
Compliments and complaints – all Housing Services	14
Housing major adaptations	
Private sector housing adaptations	15
Council housing adaptations	15
Housing Options and allocations	
Homelessness preventions	15
Homelessness acceptances	15
Social housing waiting list	15
Temporary accommodation	
Households placed	16
Rent collected	16
Gas safety compliance (Seaside Homes and leased)	16
Council housing supply	
Additional homes by rent level	17
Council housing management	
Rent collected	19
Universal Credit	19
Tenants evicted	19
Anti-social behaviour	19
Tenancies sustained	19
Empty homes and re-let times	20
Council housing repairs and maintenance	
Repairs completion times	20
Repairs appointments kept	20
Tenants satisfied with repairs	20
Repairs completed at first visit	20
Repairs Helpdesk	20
Decent Homes Standard	21
Gas safety compliance (council homes)	21
Lift breakdowns	21
Leaseholder disputes	22







This housing performance report covers Quarter 1 (Q1) of 2021/22 alongside end of year results. It uses red, amber and green ratings to provide an indication of performance.

Part one provides an update of performance against the Housing Committee work plan objectives 2019-23:

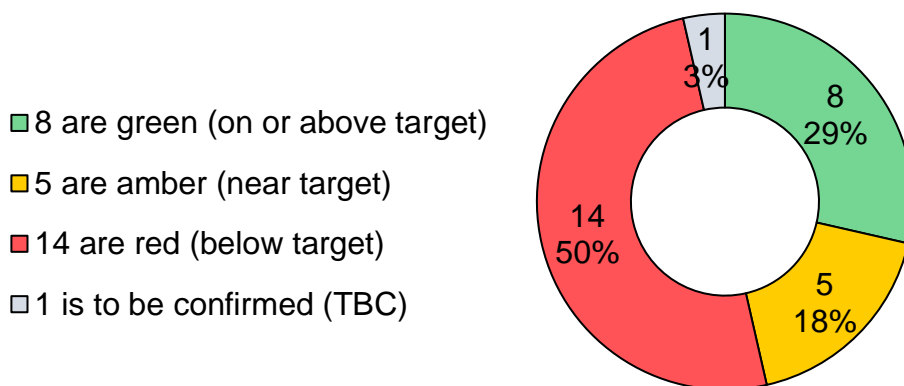
Work plan objectives



Part two presents results for a range of performance indicators across Housing and similarly uses red, amber and green ratings, as well as trend arrows. During Quarter 1, the ratings and trends were as follows:

-  **Green – on or above target**
(8 indicators)
-  **Amber – near target**
(5 indicators)
-  **Red – below target**
(14 indicators)
-  **Improved since last time**
(6 indicators)
-  **Same as last time**
(4 indicators)
-  **Poorer than last time**
(17 indicators)

Performance indicators – Quarter 1



Part one: Housing Committee priorities and work plan 2019-23

1. Provide additional affordable homes

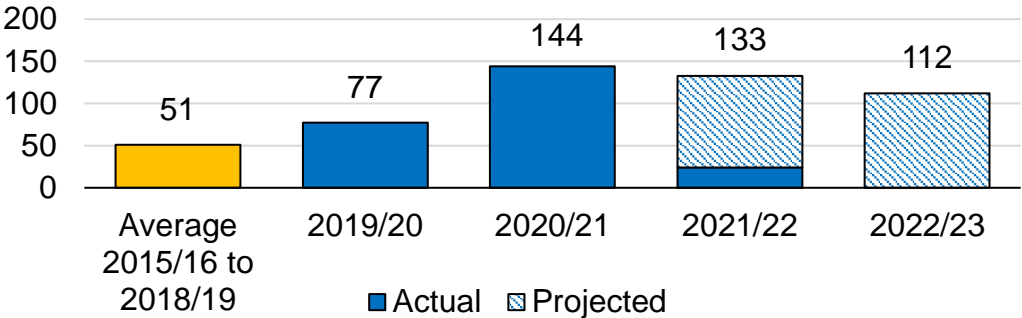
Regular updates on progress are provided to Housing Supply Member Board

1.1 Slightly off track: Achieve 800 additional council homes (including develop the existing Hidden Homes strategy)

Total of 466 homes projected for 2019 to 2023:

- 2021/22: 133 homes – buy backs (105), Hidden Homes (14), Frederick Street (4), and Oxford Street (10)
- 2022/23: 112 homes – buy backs (50), Hidden Homes (4), Rotherfield Crescent (3), Victoria Road (42) and potential further schemes (13)
- Completion dates for 408 homes have changed from 2022/23 to early 2023/24 (including 176 Homes for Brighton & Hove dwellings)

Additional council homes per year

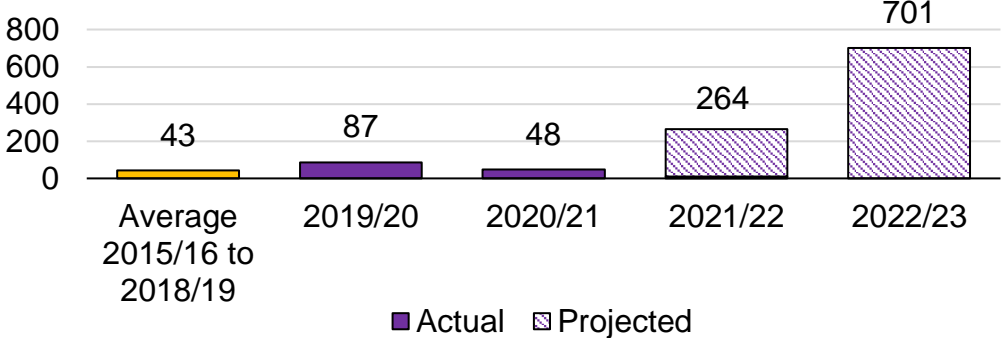


1.2 On track: Achieve 700 other additional homes (registered provider, affordable rented, shared ownership)

Total of 1,100 homes projected for 2019 to 2023 (379 rent and 721 shared ownership):

- 2021/22: 264 homes – Preston Barracks (19), Anston House (30), Edward Street (33), Falmer Avenue (13), Hangleton Way (33), Longley (22), Lions Gardens (10) and School Road (104)
- 2022/23: 701 homes – Preston Barracks (226), Eastergate Road (30), Dunster Close (2), Hinton Close (4), Graham Avenue (125), Lyon Close (154), Sackville Hotel (7), Sackville Estate (56) New Church Road (5) and King’s House (92)

Other additional homes per year



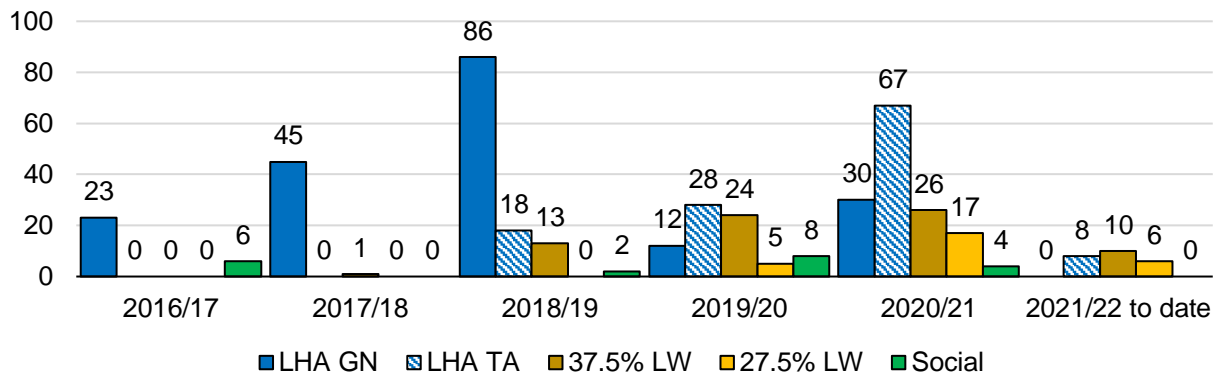
1. Provide additional affordable homes

Regular updates on progress are provided to Housing Supply Member Board

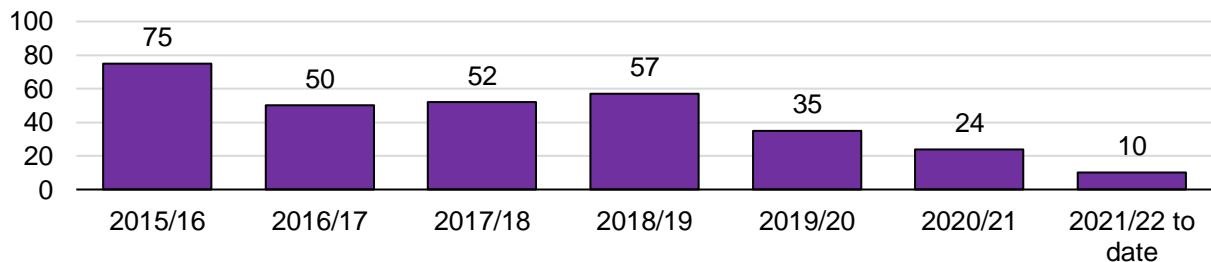
1.3 On track: Review the rent policy to maximise the number of council homes replaced at social or living wage rents (especially those at 27.5% Living Wage)

38% of new general needs council homes (6 of 16) delivered so far during 2021/22 are at social (0) or 27.5% Living Wage rents (6) with the others at 37.5% Living Wage rents (10). The temporary accommodation (TA) council homes are at Local Housing Allowance rates.

Additional council homes by rent level



Council homes sold through the Right to Buy (RTB)



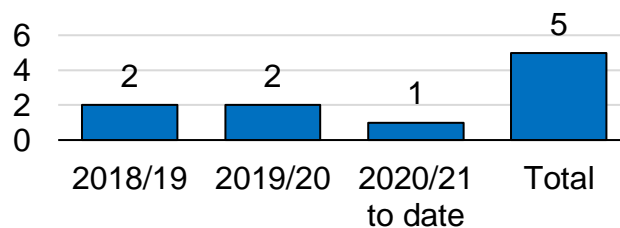
1.4 On track: Develop a policy for the council to take the role of developer on major sites

- Homes for Brighton & Hove Joint Venture is becoming a delivery company

1.5 On track: Bring a report to committee identifying suitable sites to work in partnership with Community Land Trust (CLT) for development

- Aim is to identify 10 sites for Community Land Trust development

Sites identified



2. Improving private rented housing

2.1 Slightly off track: Review and resubmit selective licensing scheme proposal to improve the management and standards of private rented sector homes in the city

- Private Sector Housing Update report went to Housing Committee in June 2021, which was noted and will be followed by a further report in September 2021



2.2 Slightly off track: Research and review an ethical loan scheme

- Committee report due for November 2020 – deferred due to Covid-19 priorities

2.3 Slightly off track: Develop or commission an information or advice hub for private renters and consider options for a private tenants' forum

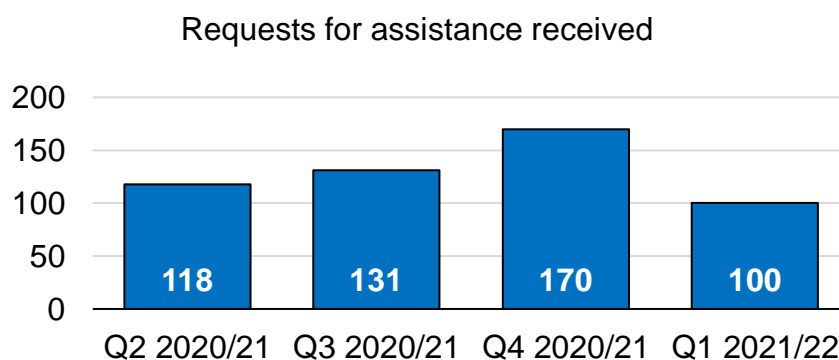
- This has been delayed while resources have been allocated to the Covid-19 response but is planned to be picked up over the next few months
- Also exploring forums that currently exist for private tenants and discussing with councillors whether these will meet requirements – briefing to go to Housing Committee in September 2021

2.4 Slightly off track: Research and develop a social lettings agency

- Research work was deferred due to Covid-19 response
- Private Sector Housing Update report went to Housing Committee in June 2021, which was noted and will be followed by a further report in September 2021

2.5 On track: Develop the enforcement approach to private sector housing to reflect the full range of potential options available to improve management and standards

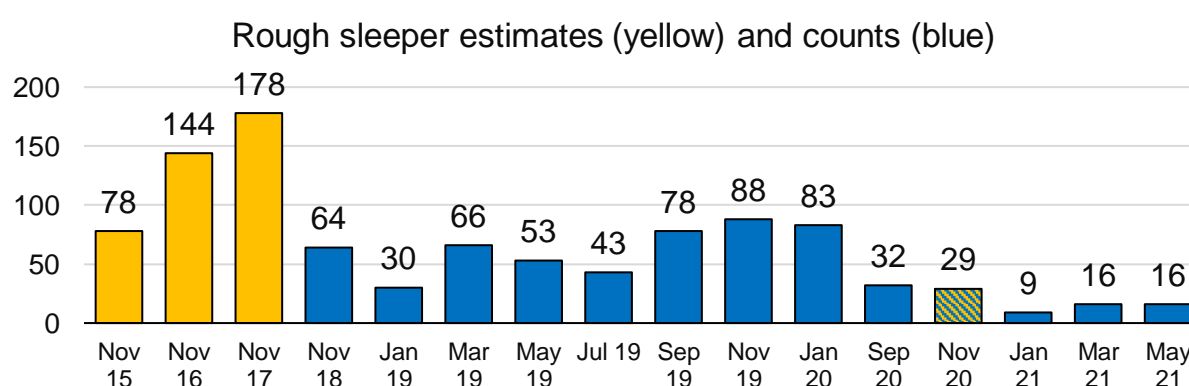
- Request for assistance top categories during Q1: disrepair (25%), dampness (11%), nuisance from neighbour's disrepair (11%)



3. Alleviating homeless and rough sleeping

3.1 On track: Develop a rough sleeping strategy (to include partnerships with community homeless and faith projects and delivery of homeless enterprise projects)

- An update on the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) was noted at June 2021 Housing Committee. NSAP is funded through bid approved by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) for the costs of providing housing and support to all those accommodated due to Covid-19
- The number of rough sleeper and other Covid placements has decreased from 392 at end March 2021 to 258 at end June 2021. Of the latter, 90 were 'Covid 1' placements (funded through NSAP, includes verified rough sleepers) and 168 are 'Covid 2' placements (not funded through NSAP)



The November 2020 figure used a blended methodology of an estimate with a spotlight count. Please note that estimates have only been carried out at times when counts have not been. While it would have been desirable to do both simultaneously and compare them, staff capacity has not allowed this over the last few years

3.2 On track: Review/consult/adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights

- Values of the Homeless & Rough Sleeper Strategy approved by Housing Committee in June 2020 align to the Homeless Bill of Rights. Strategy states that *'The Homeless Bill of Rights should be viewed as a standard against which the Council and its partners judge our policies and practices'*
- The Homeless Bill of Rights has since been adopted by full council in March 2021 and is an aspirational document against which to measure services
- Progress of the aspirations contained in the Homeless Bill of Rights will be monitored by the Homeless Reduction Board

3.3 TBC: Provide a 365 day night shelter

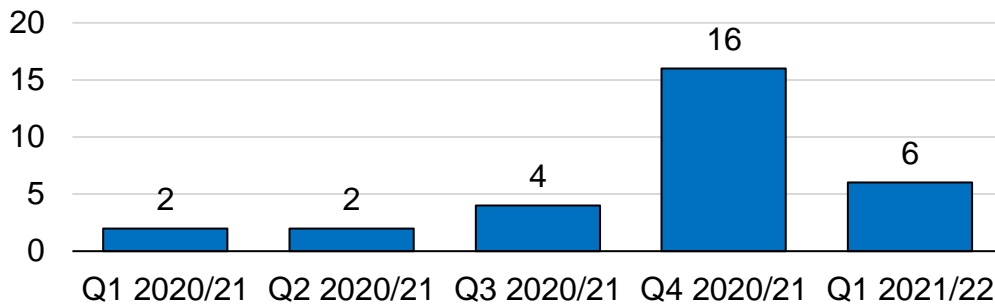
- Night shelter closed in early April 2020 on the advice of MHCLG and Public Health England due to accommodation having shared facilities. The advice from MHCLG is that congregate sleep space services should not be (re)commissioned
- We have expanded provision of the street offer of accommodation of an additional 30 beds funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative. Mobilisation is gradual between July and September 2021.

3. Alleviating homeless and rough sleeping

3.4 On track: Expand Housing First

- The total number of Housing First units was brought to 60 in 2020/21 with further units to be delivered through buy backs during 2021/22
- 21% of (30 of 145) buy backs delivered so far are for Housing First / Next Steps

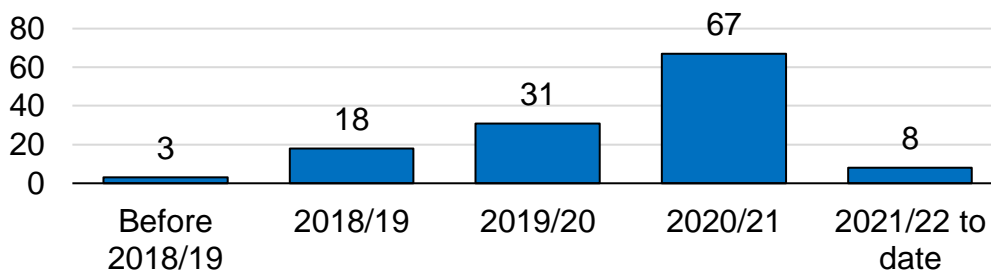
Housing First / Next Steps buy backs per quarter



3.5 Slightly off track: Develop a strategy for the provision of council run temporary accommodation including Seaside Homes

- Hartington Road (38 homes) – became ready in February 2021
- Oxford Street refurbishment (10) – expected completion delayed to August 2021
- Buy backs – 58 of 145 are for temporary or Next Steps / Housing First (8 during 2018/19, 13 during 2019/20, 29 during 2020/21 and 8 during 2021/22 to date)

Council owned temporary accommodation by year delivered (including Next Steps / Housing First)



3.6 On track: Develop a homeless strategy, ensuring homeless people are involved in the design and development of services which directly affect them

- Homeless Reduction Board has been meeting since September 2020 and its role includes monitoring progress of the aspirations contained in the Homeless Bill of Rights and making recommendations to Housing Committee
- Homeless Reduction Operational Board will meet for the first time in spring 2021 and will include people with a lived experience of homelessness

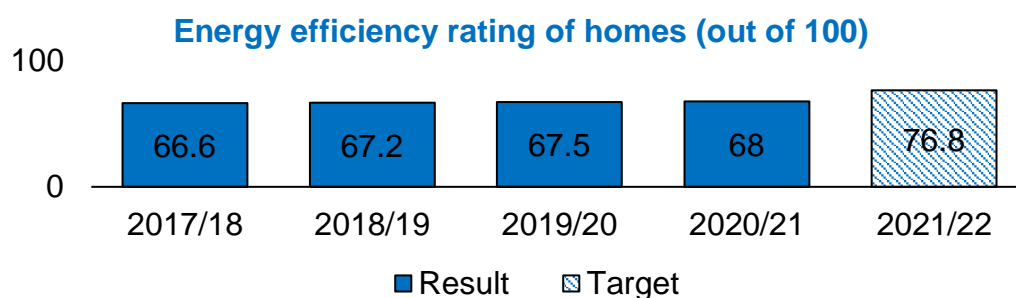
4. Achieving carbon reductions and sustainability in housing including address fuel poverty

4.1 On track: Develop an action plan to set out how we will work collaboratively to ensure housing contributes to making the city carbon neutral by 2030

- A report on 'Housing action towards carbon neutral 2030' was approved at Housing Committee in January 2021. This includes a draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Carbon Neutral Strategic Action Plan for 2021 to 2025 with a commitment to produce a fully costed retrofit plan towards the end of 2021
- The HRA Budget report approved at the same committee proposed to set up a reserve for £4.010m which will be used to fund the cost of delivering sustainability initiatives in the HRA including retrofit work required on existing housing stock

4.2 On track: Develop a new PV and energy efficiency strategy for council homes to include standards for new homes

- Standards for new council homes are guided by the revised new build specification – minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating of A



4.3 On track: Review the energy efficiency and provision on all new developments

- A report providing an 'Update on Sustainability Measures for New Homes and Housing Supply Sustainability Policy' went to Housing Committee in January 2021 and the committee endorsed a draft New Build Housing Sustainability Policy
- Victoria Road new build scheme will pilot a low energy 'microgrid' heating and electricity solution integrating ground source heat pumps and solar panels to reduce residents' bills

4.4 On track: Investigate and report the possibility of bulk buying PV panels and other energy saving resources

- Procurement of domestic solar PV programme on council homes (1,000 by 2023) will happen once additional project management support recruited
- Solarise projects:
 - Delivered first 'block tariff' on a council housing new build, through which residents can benefit from the solar panels on their communal roof
 - Completion of two new large solar PV arrays on a seniors housing scheme
 - Installation of solar PV arrays on new Hidden Homes flats currently on site

5. Improving council housing and community involvement

5.1 Slightly off track: Work with tenants to develop a 'decent environment' standard

- Currently on hold due to service pressures and other priorities due to Covid-19
- Consultation with residents will begin in September 2021 in line with lockdown easing, and a report will be taken to Housing Committee in November 2021

5.2 On track: Develop a fire safety programme in conjunction with tenants and residents

- Sprinklers are now fitted as standard in all council new build homes
- Sprinkler systems at St James's House and Essex Place – currently reviewing following feedback from residents
- Council is working to consider the likely impacts of the proposed Building Safety legislation including proposed resident engagement strategy for building safety
- Fire Risk Assessments are carried out regularly to council housing buildings
- Currently engaging consultancy services to support a review of the new building safety guidance and implementation

5.3 On track: Review and develop a new tenant and community involvement policy/strategy for housing, ensuring we learn from the lived experience of our clients, meet the 'Involvement and Empowerment' standard and that co-production is at the heart of our tenant and resident involvement work

- New Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy was approved at Housing Committee in March 2021
- Next stage will be to coproduce an implementation plan with residents' groups to bring to Area Panels in October 2021

5.4 Slightly off track: Extend participatory budgeting

- Report approved at March 2021 Housing Committee, having been deferred from June 2020 due to Covid-19 priorities

5.5 Slightly off track: Develop the work undertaken with leaseholders to develop a new leasehold involvement policy, setting out how leaseholders can be supported to be more proactively involved in capital works and other leasehold matters

- Consultation with leaseholders on new planned maintenance and improvement programme contracts has concluded and contracts are now operating. Leaseholders are being consulted where the council has plans to undertake works under these contracts on a block-by-block basis
- Engagement with tenants and leaseholders is underway for proposed projects that will be tendered through the major works framework.
- The council is continuing to update tenants and leaseholders that sit on the 'task and finish' group that is working on the programme. Online sessions are now operating for this group
- The council has completed a survey of all leaseholders and will share the results of this with the Leaseholder Action Group shortly

6. Enabling more affordable home ownership

6.1 On track: Work with Community Land Trust (CLT) to develop self-build opportunities

- CLT focus is on affordable rented homes which are likely to be self-build

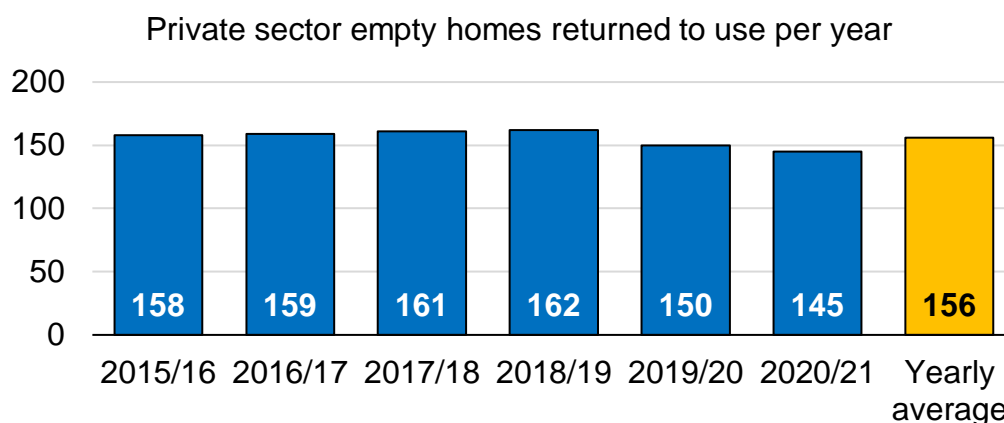
6.2 Slightly off track: Work with Homes for Brighton & Hove and registered providers in the city to develop 500 shared ownership properties for essential workers who live and work in the city

- The Living Wage Joint Venture, Homes for Brighton & Hove, has planning permission for its first two sites totalling 346 homes
- Homes for Brighton & Hove is becoming a delivery company, with 168 Hyde shared ownership homes and 178 rented homes (176 council and 2 Hyde)
- Target completion dates are in early 2023/24

7. Make fuller use of shared housing capacity

7.1 Slightly off track: Review our empty homes policy to ensure 650 empty homes are brought back into use

- Progress restricted by Covid-19 restrictions – 23 homes brought back into use during 2021/22 to date



7.2 Slightly off track: Develop a policy to incentivise households to relinquish council tenancies as an alternative to right to buy

- Committee report due for September 2020 – deferred due to Covid-19 priorities

7.3 Slightly off track: Investigate the possibility of supporting a ‘lodger’ scheme and report to Committee

- Committee report due for March 2021 – deferred due to Covid-19 priorities

7.4 On track: Undertake an impact assessment of short-term holiday lets and Air BnB in the city and consider options that may inform an approach to alleviate the most detrimental issues arising

- Report on Regulation of Short-Term Holiday Lets was agreed at Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture and Housing committees in March 2020. It included using existing powers to deal with complaints, ensuring coordinated approach to enforcement between services and lobbying central government for enhanced enforcement powers and a national registration scheme
- Officers have met to develop an easier reporting mechanism for the public so that relevant council teams can take appropriate enforcement action regarding holiday lets where possible

8. Alleviating poverty

8.1 Slightly off track: Ensure the in house repairs services include measures to: provide opportunities for young people to develop skills for example through apprenticeships; maximise community benefits, including through use of local firms and labour for supply chain as well as planned and major works; and, develop pathways to employment that are inclusive in offering opportunities to all the communities we serve

- Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the planned and major works procurement was paused as were other areas of the programme, including taking on apprentices
- Some existing apprentices were moved to empty property works so they could physically distance while working, but it has not yet been possible to recruit additional apprentices
- However, the service hope to take on two electrical apprentices in September

8.2 Slightly off track: Review arrears policy to ensure all action is taken at the earliest stage, support given and eviction is used as a last resort








- Business Process Review of income collection, including arrears policies, has been delayed while resources have been diverted to the Covid-19 response
- 96.38% of rent collected from council tenants during 2020/21






8.3 Slightly off track: Develop an arrears policy for temporary accommodation, which gives tenants the same level of support and assistance as those in permanent accommodation






- Policy is in place for long term temporary accommodation which matches that in council owned housing
- All new emergency accommodation contracts are to have minimal use of or specific service charges under re-procurement, although this has been delayed due to the Covid-19 response


Part two: Performance indicators













The council is responsible for managing 11,700 council owned homes and 2,355 leaseholder homes, as well as providing temporary accommodation for 2,113 households including rough sleepers and others accommodated as a result of the Covid-19 response




	Customer feedback – all Housing services	Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
9.1	 Compliments received from customers	Info	82	73	n/a	n/a
9.2	 Stage one complaints responded to within 10 working days	80%	71% (77 of 108)	81% (83 of 102)		
9.3	Stage one complaints upheld	Info	50% (54 of 108)	58% (59 of 102)	n/a	n/a
9.4	Stage two complaints upheld	18%	7% (1 of 14)	9% (1 of 11)		

 Private sector housing		Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
10.1	New licences issued for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	Info	144	56	n/a	n/a
10.2	HMOs where all special conditions have been met (for licences issued over 12 months ago)	47%	49.8% (821 of 1,649)	52.38% (1,069 of 2,041)		
10.3	Private sector empty homes returned to use	32	35	23		

 Housing adaptations		Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
11.1	Private housing – average weeks taken to approve Disabled Facilities Grant applications	10	19.8	23.6		
11.2	Council housing – average weeks taken to approve applications and commence works	10	5.6	7.9		

 Housing Needs – Housing Options and allocations		Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
12.1	Households prevented from becoming homeless	187	114	TBC	TBC	TBC
12.2	New households accepted as homeless	Info	40	TBC	n/a	n/a
12.3	Number of households on the social housing waiting list	Info	6,982	TBC	n/a	n/a

 Housing Needs – temporary accommodation	Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4	
13.1	Total households in temporary accommodation (homeless and through service level agreements)	Info	2,111	2,113	n/a	n/a
13.2	Rent collected for emergency accommodation (year to date including loss from empty homes)	89.21%	78.35% (£4.5m of £5.7m)	73.90% (£1.2m of £1.6m)		
13.3	... as above but excluding rent loss from empty homes	Info	87.30% (£4.5m of £5.2m)	92.56% (£1.2m of £1.2m)	n/a	n/a
13.4	Rent collected for leased temporary accommodation properties	96.10%	96.96% (£7.3m of £7.5m)	94.57% (£1.6m of £1.6m)		
13.5	... as above but excluding rent loss from empty homes	Info	102.21% (£7.3m of £7.1m)	99.60% (£1.6m of £1.6m)	n/a	n/a
The indicator above (like the other rent collection indicators in this table) measures the actual amount of rent collected during the year to date compared to the amount due within the same period. It is sometimes possible for the former to be larger, thereby producing results over 100%.						
13.6	 Rent collected for Seaside Homes	91.00%	89.81% (£4.5m of £5.0m)	90.31% (£1.1m of £1.3m)		
13.7	... as above but excluding rent loss from empty homes	Info	95.46% (4.5m of 4.7m)	94.30% (£1.1m of £1.2m)	n/a	n/a
13.8	Empty temporary accommodation homes (all types)	For info	112	135	n/a	n/a
13.9	Seaside Homes with a valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record	100%	99.8% (425 of 426)	99.3% (423 of 426)		
13.10	Leased properties with a valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record	100%	96.9% (625 of 645)	91.4% (571 of 625)		

 Council housing – supply		Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22
14.1	 Additional council homes	31	24
14.2	... at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rents	61% (19 of 31)	33% (8 of 24)
*All eight homes at LHA rates from Q1 were buy backs for use as temporary housing			
14.3	... at 37.5% Living Wage rents	19% (6 of 31)	42% (10 of 24)
14.4	... at 27.5% Living Wage rents	13% (4 of 31)	25% (6 of 24)
14.5	...at social rents	6% (2 of 31)	0% (0 of 24)
14.6	Council homes sold through the Right to Buy	7	10
Of the 10 homes sold during Quarter 1, 5 were flats (2 one bed, 3 two bed) and 5 were houses (1 two bed, 4 three bed).			
14.7	Net change in the number of council homes – all rent levels	+24	+14
14.8	Net change in the number of council homes – social and 27.5% Living Wage rent homes only	-1	-4
14.9	 Total council owned homes	11,686	11,700
The figures in the row above have been adjusted to exclude 11 long term leases to housing associations, which are no longer categorised as council owned. Total stock of 11,700 includes 10,696 general needs, 877 seniors housing and 127 temporary housing (including dwellings not yet handed over).			

14.10 Council housing – buy backs (Home Purchase and Next Steps / Housing First)

Buy backs by application date	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 to date	Total
Total applications	5	53	88	159	56	361
Of which, became purchases	2	32	53	58	0	145
Council declined	1	13	11	15	3	43
Owner declined offer	1	5	12	14	1	33
Owner withdrew	1	3	12	31	5	52
Outcome pending	0	0	0	41	47	88

Completed buy backs by rent level	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 to date	Total
Completed purchases	1	13	43	64	24	145
... general needs social rent	0	0	1	3	0	4
... general needs 27.5% Living Wage	0	0	5	18	6	29
... general needs 37.5% Living Wage	1	5	24	14	10	54
... temporary housing at LHA rates	0	8	13	29	8	58











Summary of all buy backs since start of programmes, September 2017






Total purchases	Social rent	27.5% LWR	37.5% LWR	LHA rate	No. rent reserve applied	Total rent reserve applied	Net modelled subsidy (surplus) over all properties to date (£)
145*	4	29	54	58	26 **	£1.233m ***	£104,000

















* Of which 127 are flats (4 studio, 52 one bed, 61 two bed, 10 three bed) and 18 are houses (3 two bed, 14 three bed, 1 four bed)

















** Following Housing Committee decision to use rent reserve to keep rents as low as possible

*** Applied during 2019/20 – a further £827k is anticipated to be used during 2021/22

 Council housing – management		Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
15.1	 Rent collected from council tenants	95.68%	96.40% (£51.0m of £52.9m)	96.38% (£51.3m of £53.2m)		
The indicator above measures the forecast amount of rent collected by the end of 2021/22 compared to the forecast amount of rent due during the same period, excluding rent loss from empty properties but including arrears from before.						
15.2	 Tenants known to claim Universal Credit (UC)	Info	25% (2,886 of 11,297)	25% (2,837 of 11,292)	n/a	n/a
15.3	UC tenants in arrears who have an alternative payment arrangement	Info	50% (762 of 1,534)	49% (775 of 1,593)	n/a	n/a
15.4	Arrears of UC tenants as a proportion of total arrears	Info	69% (£1.3m of £1.9m)	70% (£1.3m of £1.9m)	n/a	n/a
15.5	Tenants evicted due to rent arrears	Info	0	0	n/a	n/a
15.6	Tenants evicted due to anti-social behaviour (ASB)	Info	0	0	n/a	n/a
15.7	 New ASB cases reported	Info	208	217	n/a	n/a
15.8	Closed ASB cases	Info	203	257	n/a	n/a
15.9	Average days taken to resolve ASB cases	Info	156	148	n/a	n/a
15.10	Active ASB cases (quarter end)	Info	295	255	n/a	n/a
15.11	Surveyed ASB victims satisfied with how their case was handled (year to date)	85%	78% (7 of 9)	50% (2 of 4)		
The number of survey responses has been lower than would usually be expected and the service is looking into ways to boost the response rate in order to provide a more statistically representative picture of satisfaction with ASB case handling.						
15.12	Tenancies sustained following difficulties	98%	95% (21 of 22)	92% (22 of 24)		


	Council housing – management	Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
15.13	 Average re-let time (calendar days) excluding time spent in major works	21	105 (103 lets)	88 (108 lets)		
15.14	Average 'key to key' empty period (calendar days) including time spent in major works	Info	156 (103 lets)	122 (108 lets)	n/a	n/a
15.15	 Empty council homes (includes new homes)	Info	311	301	n/a	n/a

	Council housing – repairs and maintenance	Target	Q4 2020/21	Q1 2022/22	Status against target	Trend since Q4
16.1	Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	99%	98.3% (3,377 of 3,437)	97.7% (3,129 of 3,204)		
16.2	 Routine repairs completed within 28 calendar days	92%	65.9% (2,572 of 3,902)	69.7% (2,845 of 4,081)		
16.3	Average time to complete routine repairs (calendar days)	15	41	36		
16.4	 Appointments kept as proportion of appointments made	97%	97.9% (6,653 of 6,798)	97.9% (6,357 of 6,492)		
16.5	 Tenants satisfied with standard of repair work	96%	96% (1,291 of 1,351)	98% (889 of 903)		
16.6	Repairs completed at first visit	92%	90.2% (6,622 of 7,339)	89.5% (6,522 of 7,285)		
16.7	Repairs Helpdesk – calls answered	Info	94% (18,695 of 19,786)	TBC	n/a	n/a
16.8	Repairs Helpdesk – average call answering time (seconds)	Info	37	TBC	n/a	n/a

 Council housing – repairs and maintenance		Target	Q3 2020/21	Q4 2020/21	Status against target	Trend since Q3
16.10	 Dwellings meeting Decent Homes Standard	100%	91.88% (10,747 of 11,697)	91.88% (10,750 of 11,700)		
16.11	Energy efficiency rating of homes (out of 100)	76.8	68.0	68.0		
16.12	 Council homes with a valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record	100%	100% (10,026 of 10,026)	100% (10,043 of 10,043)		
16.13	 Lifts – average time taken (hours) to respond	2	2.8	5.2		
16.14	Lifts restored to service within 24 hours	95%	96% (301 of 303)	91% (215 of 236)		
16.15	Lifts – average time taken (days) to restore service when not within 24 hours	7	5	9		

Please note that new performance indicators relating to planned and major works are currently being developed and will accompany future versions of these performance reports. Updates are as follows:

- Planned works and improvement programmes**
 Long term agreements with contractors to deliver planned maintenance and improvement programmes are now in place and planned programmes are underway.
- Major Capital Works framework (MCW) update**
 The mobilisation period for the framework is now being complete and the first round of mini-competitions for proposed projects will commence shortly. Engagement with tenants and leaseholders for projects ahead of tendering is also underway.

 Leaseholder disputes		Q4 2020/21	Q1 2021/22
17.1	Stage one disputes opened	3	0
17.2	Stage one disputes closed	1	3
17.3	Active stage one disputes (end quarter)	22	19
17.4	Stage two disputes opened	0	3
17.5	Stage two disputes closed	1	1
17.6	Active stage two disputes (end quarter)	1	3
17.7	Stage three disputes opened	1	0
17.8	Stage three disputes closed	0	0
17.9	Active stage three disputes (end quarter)	2	2
<p>The figures in this table count individual disputes, which can involve one or several leaseholders because they range in scale in complexity. The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions has made it harder to arrange the home inspections required to resolve many disputes</p>			

Subject:	Leasehold Payment Options and Updates		
Date of Meeting:	23 June 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities		
Contact Officer:	Glyn Huelin	01273 293306	
	Name: Geof Gage	Tel: 01273 293235	
	Email:	Glyn.huelin@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
		Geofrey.gage@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is responsible for keeping our residential blocks of flats in good repair including, where necessary, carrying out major works. Leaseholders are responsible for meeting the relevant costs of works under the terms of their leases so long as:
- The costs are reasonably incurred
 - The works are carried out to a reasonable standard
 - The consultation requirements have been complied with
- 1.2 Where substantial repairs and improvements are carried out to blocks this can mean that leaseholders contributions are significant.
- 1.3 The council has a range of payment support options available to support leaseholders with payments for works. The current payment support options are set out in this report. The report notes potential changes that could be made to the current payment support options.
- 1.4 The report also updates on a number of other areas of leasehold management and engagement including our satisfaction survey of leaseholders, the introduction of additional consultation with tenants and leaseholders ahead of major works and how the council will be working with residents to review quality of works and address any issues as part of the end of each project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That committee notes the proposal to develop and consult with residents on any changes to the leaseholder payment options.
- 2.2 That committee notes the progress in other areas of leasehold management as detailed in section 5 of this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council owns around 2,900 leasehold flats across the city. Under the terms of their leases, leaseholders are responsible for paying the service charge which is a proportion of the costs incurred by the council for the works and services at their building. This includes but is not limited to:

- Repairs to the exterior, structure or common parts
- Major works and improvements, e.g. lift replacement, window replacement, refurbishment or insulation
- Services to their building such as cleaning or grounds maintenance
- Management charges

3.2 The term 'major works' normally refers to works that cost individual leaseholders more than £250. Where this applies the council is legally required to undertake a formal consultation process – section 20 consultation under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. These are typically capital works undertaken to the block.

4. Extending the Payment Options

4.1 The current payment options were put in place to assist resident leaseholders who could not afford the major works charges and who may be put in a position of having to sell their property to meet these costs. The options were designed to particularly assist those who had sufficient equity in their properties but had low or fixed incomes to enable them to stay in their homes.

4.2 The scheme was not intended to provide the same options to all leaseholders as it was likely that those who sub-let and received market rate rents for the properties could fund major works through other sources. It is also important to balance the interests of leaseholders with those of tenants in considering how to plan and pay for major works.

4.3 In recent years there have been enquiries from a small number of non-resident leaseholders regarding the possibility of extending the payments options to them as their circumstances were such that while non-resident they may be in financial hardship. An extension of the policy in these cases would be of benefit to those leaseholders. It is estimated this would be of benefit to a very small number of leaseholders, at most possibly 3-5 a year. The council has checked with other local authority landlords to see if they operate a payment support option for non-resident leaseholders in this way but have not been able to identify any similar schemes.

4.4 This report sets out how the current payment options scheme could be extended to any non-resident leaseholders for whom this is the only property they own where all other options to meet the cost of the works have failed, with evidence provided of refusal of a loan from at least two specialist mortgage lenders. Each case would need to be subject to an individual financial assessment at the time of the application. There is additional complexity in operating a scheme in this way as it would need to deal appropriately with considerations around how

leaseholders hold a property, leaseholders with mixed portfolios of properties and a range of ownership and transfer risks. The intention of the policy is to support leaseholders where they are in genuine cases of hardship.

- 4.5 In addition it is proposed that the council considers working with leaseholders to offer a mix of extended payments options if this better suits the leaseholder's circumstances. For example, the leaseholder might opt for spreading some of the outstanding sum over a five years interest period while taking an equity loan for the remainder. If a leaseholder faced a bill for, say, £18,000 then they could repay £8,000 over a 4 years interest free payment at £222 approximately per calendar month. They could then secure the remaining £10,000 on an equity loan. The difference being that if the part sum was secured the share the council would reduce from 7.2% to 4%.
- 4.6 The payment options available to both resident and non-resident leaseholders and potential changes to this are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Payment options for leaseholders

No.	Payment Option	Available to Resident Leaseholders	Available to Non-Resident Leaseholder	Potential change for non-resident leaseholders owning one property
1	A mortgage lender (if any) may add the amount to an existing mortgage	√	√	√
2	A loan from a private lending institution such as a bank or building society	√	√	√
3	Leaseholders over 60 may be entitled to help from the Pension Centre	√	√	√
4	Leaseholders of working age may be entitled to help from Income Support	√	√	√
5	An interest-bearing council loan to spread the cost for up to ten years for any major works bill over £1,000 or five years for over £500	√	√	√
6	An interest-only loan from the council for those of pension age, even this option may be impossible for some leaseholders on a low fixed income	√	√	√
7	A formal agreement can be made to spread the payment over a maximum of 12 months	√	√	√
8	Equity Loans The loan will be secured on the property to which the service charge relates and charged at the Land Registry. The charge on the property is expressed as a percentage of the value of the	√	X	√

	property. The loan will be paid back either when the property is sold or earlier if the leaseholder wishes to. The amount paid back is dependent upon the valuation at the time of sale of the property.			
9	<p>Maturity Loans</p> <p>This is where a loan is agreed to fund the value of the works and a charge is placed on the property. The loan will attract interest. When the property is sold the value of the loan plus interest is repaid to the Council. There is no maturity date for the loan so it can carry on indefinitely. It will be paid either when the property is sold or earlier if agreed.</p>	√	X	√
10	<p>Long-term interest-bearing loans up to 25 years</p> <p>These are interest bearing loans over 25 years offered by the council and work in the same way as any other commercial mortgage.</p>	√	X	√
11	<p>Extending the interest-free repayment option from 12 months to a maximum of 5 years, depending on the loan amount. This is where the Council makes a formal agreement with the leaseholder to repay in monthly instalments over a specified period without adding interest. Further information shown in table 2 below.</p>	√	X	√

Payment option 8 – equity loans

- 4.7 In order to process applications for extended payment options, particularly Equity Loans, a current market valuation of the property needs to be obtained, this is currently undertaken by the council’s contracted valuers.
- 4.8 Valuations are normally carried out at the point of application which can be some months after both completion of the works and in some cases the invoices being sent to leaseholders.
- 4.9 A formal valuation is required to calculate the amount of equity the council will be taking in the property as this needs to be registered as a legal charge against the property to secure repayment of the “loan”.
- 4.10 There has been confusion regarding equity loans, with these being confused with Equity Release schemes operated by the financial institutions. An explanation of the scheme the council operates is set out below.

4.11 To give an example:

Loan requested £	£26,248.83
Costs £	£330
Total Loan amount £	£26,578.83
Property Valuation	£165,000
Loan to property value (%)	16.11%
Agreed Equity loan share (%)	0-5 years: 17.11% 5-10 years: 16.61% 10 + years: 16.11% (To be capped at BHCC average borrowing rate + 0.25%)

4.12 The amount of the outstanding Invoice, in this case £26,248.83 and the legal and valuation costs are wrapped into the total sum and this is calculated as a percentage of the flat value. 16.11%. If the flat is sold after 10 years, the council will recover 16.11% of new sale price. So, if it is sold for £200,000 the council will receive £32,220. The difference would be checked to see if that total is more than the council average borrowing rate over the period plus 0.25%, if it was then the repayment would be capped at the lower figure.

4.13 The formula allows 1% to be added to the interest if the property was sold in the first five years, and 0.5 % in years 5 to 10. This protects the council against possible short-term losses if the housing market dips. However, any gain by the council at the point of sale is capped so that the maximum sum gained is equal to the interest on the loan at the council average borrowing rate plus 0.25%.

4.14 The current value of the Equity Loans held by the council is £554,081 and a further £82,279 is covered by Maturity Loans/Voluntary Charges.

4.15 Payment Options 9 and 10 relate to interest bearing loans. In compliance with the 1985 Housing Act, the council must charge the higher of the Council's average borrowing rate or 'Local Average Rate' (LAR), and the Standard National Rate (SNR). Historically, the LAR has been higher than the SNR (currently 3.13%) so it is generally the case that this is the rate used for leaseholder loans. This rate is updated every six months. The rate for the 6 months from 1 April 2021 is 4.06%.

4.16 Payment Option 11 - Interest-free repayment

4.17 Table 2 below shows the interest free repayment periods available for loan amounts.

Table 2 – Interest free repayment period

Loan Amount	Interest-free repayment period
Up to £2,000	12 months
£2,000 - £5,000	24 months
£5000 - £10,000	36 months

£10,000 - £15,000	48 months
£15,000 +	60 months

4.18 The payment support options have been in place since 2012 and there have been 98 applications for payment options. The table below sets out the take up of the various payment support options.

Table 3 – Take up of payment options since introduction in 2012 as at March 2021

Support option	Number of leaseholders
Paid by the Pension Service	3
Current Equity Loans	25
Current Maturity Loans/Charges	5
Interest bearing loans	56
Currently in progress	3
Loans redeemed/Paid/Property Sold	2
Payment Options not pursued	4

4.19 Discretionary Reduction of Service Charges

4.20 The Social Landlords Discretionary Reduction of Service Charges (England) Directions 2014 gives the council the discretion to reduce major works charges. This is for cases of extreme hardship. The government has issued guidance on how to comply with these directions.

4.21 If a leaseholder makes an application under this discretion, the case needs to be considered on its merits, taking into account whether the dwelling is the leaseholder's only home, their financial resources, their ability to pay over a longer period of time, the impact on the value of their home and other matters.

4.22 The landlord would be likely to be considered reasonable by the courts if it also took into account how any reduction of charges fits with the legislation or other rules under which it operates and, in particular, the balance between exercising its discretion to reduce service charges and its general fiduciary duty to local taxpayers and others, including its tenants.

4.23 Since the introduction of the Directions the council have received 4 applications for discretionary reduction in service charges from 3 leaseholders, with one being the same case which was considered twice.

4.24 None of the applications have been approved due to the availability of the extended payment options available to resident leaseholders.

4.25 Major Works Charges

4.26 The table below shows a summary of major works charges included in the 2019-2020 Certificates of Expenditure sent to leaseholders in September.

Table 4 – Major works charges (2019/20)

Total Major Works Charges	£2,779,289
Number of Major Works Charges	657
Average Major Works Charge	£4,230
Total Major Works Charges £10,000 - £20,000	£707,639
Number of Major Works Charges above £10,000 - £20,000	55
Average Major Works Charge £10,000 to £20,000	£12,866.17
Total Major Works Charges over £20,000	£1,121,435
Number of Major Works Charges above £10,000 - £20,000	39
Average Major Works Charge above £20,000	£28,754.76
Highest major works charge	£44,649.21

5. Further updates on leaseholder engagement

- 5.1 As we mobilise our new Planned and Major Works Contracts we will review how we are meeting our continued commitment to the practical measures to improve engagement with leaseholders agreed at Housing & New Homes Committee in June 2018 following an earlier leaseholder engagement review. Practical measures to improve engagement with leaseholders supported by Committee are outlined in Appendix 1.

Leaseholder satisfaction Survey

- 5.2 The council regularly surveys leaseholders around their satisfaction with the services offered to leaseholders. The last survey was undertaken in 2013.
- 5.3 The council have worked with ARP Research to design and undertake a new survey. The survey is in line with the STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) survey model undertaken in the regular survey of tenants with additional specific questions for leaseholders.
- 5.4 The leaseholder satisfaction survey was posted out to leaseholders on Friday 5th March. The second postal run went out on 26 March, and the final deadline for responses was the week commencing 19 April. The report will be finalised shortly.
- 5.5 The council will produce a summary of results and share this with the Leaseholder Action Group.

Communication with residents on Major Works

- 5.6 The council has been developing programmes for planned and major works and will be publishing these on the council website later this year. The programmes will then be updated each quarter to reflect any changes to delivery. The

programmes will also be shared with residents through the Home Service Improvement Group and the Leaseholder Action Group.

- 5.7 Details of the practical measures to improve engagement with leaseholders agreed at Housing & New Homes Committee in June 2018 following an earlier leaseholder engagement review are outlined in Appendix 1. We will keep our continued commitment to these measures under regular review. We have now introduced a procedure detailing how we will keep residents informed and engaged around major works. This includes a robust method of informing residents of proposed works and includes meetings with all residents, suitable and adequate consultation and improved methods of communication carried out to improve the engagement experience for all residents. Key commitments are set out from 5.9 below.
- 5.8 Under the new framework for major projects residents will be invited to be involved at the mini-competition stage to look at the quality aspect of the contractors' bids and to meet with the Major Works Team in the evaluation of tenders on the project for their property.

Managing major works

- 5.9 As detailed above and in Appendix 1 the council will be communicating with residents before proposed major works and introducing a procedure to keep residents informed about progress throughout.
- 5.10 We have reviewed how we engage with residents before, during and after projects. We will ensure that meetings are held, that there is suitable consultation carried out and newsletters provided to improve engagement with residents. Residents will be invited to get involved at the mini-competition stage to look at the quality of the contractors' bids. Residents of the property that is the subject of the works will be invited to join the Major Works Team in the evaluation of tenders on the project for their property.
- 5.11 The council will work with Resident Inspectors on the programme to examine the quality of work throughout projects and specific council contact points will be shared with residents so any issues can be raised during projects.
- 5.12 Following completion of any major work, we will be inviting residents to carry out a post completion 'walk around' of the project. This will show the work completed and allow for the recording of any observations and will be led by council quality assurance staff.
- 5.13 Surveys will also be undertaken where all residents will have a say in identifying any issues following works to their property.
- 5.14 The council will track all issues. We will keep these under review through Key Performance Indicators which we will continue to develop in consultation with residents and regularly report as appropriate either on a scheme by scheme basis or via our more formal Performance Reports to Area Panels, Leaseholder Action Group and Housing Committee. This will include an escalation process to ensure that contractors take ownership and manage any issues through to a satisfactory conclusion, keeping residents apprised throughout the process.

- 5.15 Comprehensive reporting for planned and major works will be produced for residents through the Home Service Improvement Group which is focused around the Home and repairs, maintenance and planned works delivered by the Housing service. In addition, performance indicators will report through Area Panels and Housing Committee as part of the quarterly Housing Performance Report.

Lease Extensions and Home Purchase Policy

- 5.16 Leaseholders have asked whether charges for lease extensions could be waived if there was a commitment to sell the property back to the council at some point under the Home Purchase Policy.
- 5.17 Lease extensions are governed by statute, namely the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, Section 42. This allows for a leaseholder to obtain a statutory 90-year extension of their existing lease. Landlords can informally agree to extend leases by the 90-year period, however, as a local authority our Legal Team only operate through the formal statutory process.
- 5.18 Lease Extensions and the Council's Home Purchase Policy are two independent processes, neither relies on the other. Of the 131 lease extensions applications received since October 2014, only two properties have ever been offered back under the policy.
- 5.19 Lease extension values are calculated in line with legislative requirements.
- 5.20 It is not viable to operate a scheme whereby lease extension fees were refunded if a property is subsequently purchased by the council under the Home Purchase Policy. In this case the valuation for the offer price under the policy would reflect the extended lease and therefore be valued accordingly. It would not then be appropriate to refund the cost of the lease extension.
- 5.21 Other South East housing providers were contacted, and 9 responses were received, all apart from one, who had not yet completed a lease extension, the others all charge not only the premium, but legal and surveying fees on top.
- 5.22 The Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 permits the council to charge fees for lease extensions and the council is simply reclaiming expenditure it has incurred, and it is due. The charge is £1,000 per application but on occasion may reduce the fees to £800 if the same person has more than one property or where a solicitor is acting for several leaseholders at the same time.
- 5.23 The surveyor's fees which are on average about £600 are paid in addition to legal costs, if this amount is not charged then the Housing budget would need to fund this aspect.
- 5.24 Leaseholders on average have to pay a premium of around £3,000/£3,500 to extend their lease, for the financial year 2019/2020 approximately 41 lease extensions applications were made so this would potentially be a loss to the housing budget of £133,250 taking an average premium of £3,250. Extending the

length of the lease is likely to increase the value of the property to the leaseholder should they wish to sell.

Home Purchase Policy

5.25 The council's Home Purchase Policy has proved an effective way of increasing the supply of affordable housing in support of the council's target to achieve 800 additional council owned homes by March 2023. Since the scheme began in 2017, 97 homes have been purchased with 24 additional homes purchased in support of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme which houses former rough sleepers (as at 31 March 2021). Any former council homes brought under the Right to Buy is subject to the Right of First Refusal for 10 years. This means that if the property is due to be sold it must be offered back to the council first, who will consider whether it wishes to exercise the right. The council also encourages any other owners of former council owned homes where this right doesn't apply to approach the council if they are thinking of selling their property. The council pay market prices, subject to valuation and approaching the council direct saves on agency fees. Further information on the scheme and its criteria is available on the council's website.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 The extension of the current policy has been the subject of discussions with the Leaseholders Action Group who have made the following suggestions for consideration.

- Extended payment options be available to non-resident leaseholders.
- An opportunity to mix options together.
- Interest rates: can we review the rate and set out how it's calculated as it seems high.
- Appropriate timing of valuations relating to equity loans – related to major works. Protections that are in place as well.
- Some leaseholders fed back that they felt support should not be available to some cases of non-resident leaseholders operating as businesses.
- Update on hardship policy and the use of this.

6.2 These issues have been considered and covered in this report.

6.3 A further update will be provided to the Leaseholder Action Group following this report to Housing Committee. Officers are continuing to work with the Leaseholders Action Group, Area Panels and the Home Service Improvement group on the items covered in this report.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

7.1 Extending the payment options to non-resident leaseholders who own no other properties will allow a small number of leaseholders (possibly 3-5) to access further payment options from the council. The option with the largest cost to the

council is the interest free loans for up to 60 months. Based on 5 leaseholders with loans of £20,000 each, the council is foregoing interest payments of approximately £21,000 if they were to access this interest free option rather than an interest bearing loan over 5 years. For those wishing to access the equity loan scheme, the council takes a risk for each loan of this type offered. If house prices reduce between the point of loan and sale of the property, the equity share the council receives may not cover the loan amount with a nominal interest. However, if house prices increase, the council will make a small margin on the equity loan.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks, Principal Accountant

Date: 14/06/2021

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 As is clear from the report, there is an unconsolidated statutory framework regulating the type of assistance local authorities may make available to leaseholders. It is essential that the council operates within that framework. Any changes to leaseholder payment options proposed following the consultation with leaseholders will be reviewed from a legal perspective.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 14/06/2021

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Individual circumstances of leaseholders are carefully considered as part of the payment options process.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There are none.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 There are none.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 This report considers potential revisions to the payment support options for leaseholders. As set out in 4.4 the intention of the policy is to support leaseholders where they are in genuine cases of hardship. Changes to the payment support options would need to ensure that intention was maintained and that any scheme dealt with the additional complexity. It would need to deal appropriately with considerations around how leaseholders hold a property, leaseholders with mixed portfolios of properties and a range of ownership and transfer risks.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 There are none.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

7.8 There are none.

8. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

8.1 Payment options could remain as they are, however, this would mean that non-resident leaseholders in financial hardship could not access the payment options.

9. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 This report has been formed in consideration of potential changes to payment options that require further consultation and consideration. It also updates on leaseholder services more generally.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

None

Appendix 1

Practical measure to improve engagement with leaseholders – Details from Housing & New Homes Committee report (18 June 2018)

Following a councillor working group on leaseholders a Leaseholder Engagement report was considered at Housing & New Homes Committee on 18 June 2018.

Committee agreed the following practical measures to improve engagement with leaseholders and supported their implementation.

- An agreed project plan for high cost works that includes engaging with tenants and leaseholders impacted by the works comprehensively from an earlier stage and which involves engagement at key stages such as project initiation, condition survey, options, consultation, pre-commencement, snagging and sign-off.
- Move to individual letters to tenants and leaseholders (both resident and non-resident) giving regular works updates and covering critical stages of projects such as condition survey, condition report, initial specification and cost, delays, commencement, alerts on scaffolding, progress, completion, snagging and the service charge.
- A named council officer for each project with the status and autonomy to resolve issues as they arise.
- The opportunity for leaseholders and tenants of blocks where high cost major works are undertaken to participate in commissioning structural surveying services, joining inspections and overseeing snagging of completed works.
- Create a new position of Leaseholder Liaison Officer to meet and spend time with leaseholders when problems arise and to improve communications. We will consult the LAG committee on the Job Description for recruitment to the post.

- Consult with LAG committee and the councillor working group on a new council leaseholders handbook.
- Consult with the LAG committee and the councillor working group on the next full leaseholders' satisfaction survey (proposed to be carried out in tandem with the next tenants' STAR survey).
- Ensure consideration of more accessible repairs information for leaseholders through the new IT system for Housing.
- Involvement of tenants and leaseholders in consideration of options for the delivery of repairs and maintenance services after 2020.
- Undertake workshops with officers, leaseholders and councillors to monitor progress. Improve the communication of the planned maintenance and investment programme that is published on the council's website to allow continuous updating and information to individual buildings.
- Include a customer service improvement element to the leasehold management training sessions that are rolled out across council staff and contractors.

