



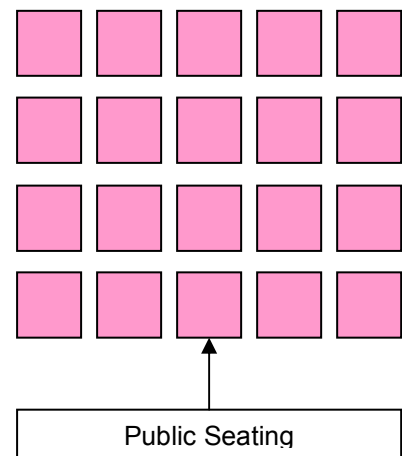
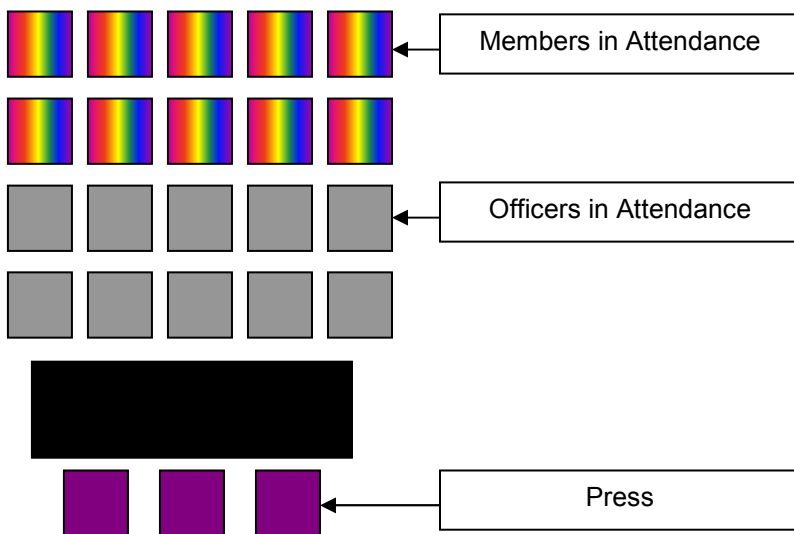
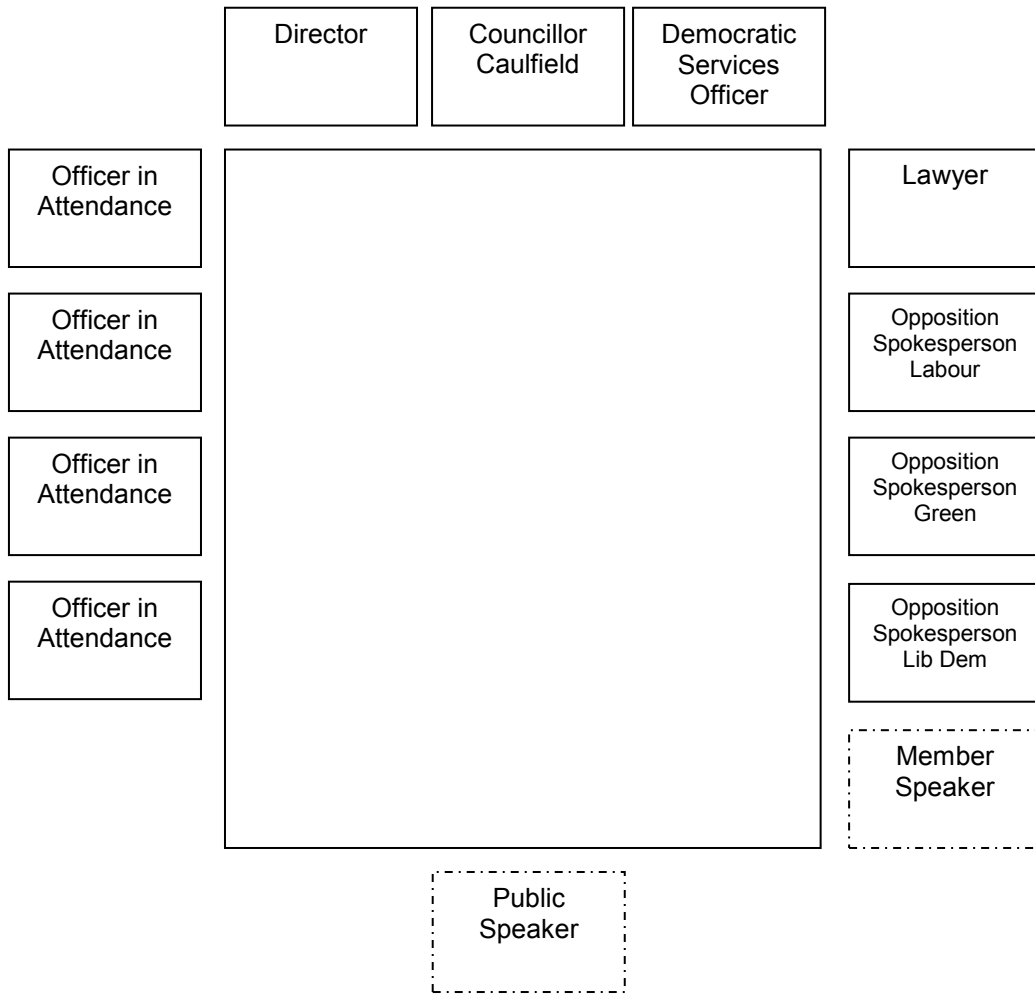
Brighton & Hove
City Council

Cabinet Member Meeting

Title:	Housing Cabinet Member Meeting
Date:	8 September 2010
Time:	4.00pm
Venue	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillor: Caulfield (Cabinet Member) Simpson
Contact:	Caroline De Marco Democratic Services Officer 01273 291063 caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



AGENDA

31. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

- (a) Declarations of Interest by all Members present of any personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
- (b) Exclusion of Press and Public - To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part 2 of the Agenda states in its heading either that it is confidential or the category under which the information disclosed in the report is exempt from disclosure and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the categories of exempt information is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1 - 8

Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 July 2010 (copy attached).

33. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

34. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- (a) Items reserved by the Cabinet Member
- (b) Items reserved by the Opposition Spokespersons
- (c) Items reserved by Members, with the agreement of the Cabinet Member.

NOTE: Public Questions, Written Questions from Councillors, Petitions, Deputations, Letters from Councillors and Notices of Motion will be reserved automatically.

35. PETITIONS

No petitions received by date of publication.

36. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(The closing date for receipt of public questions is 12 noon on 1 September 2010)

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

No public questions received by date of publication.

37. DEPUTATIONS

(The closing date for receipt of deputations is 12 noon on 1 September 2010)

No deputations received by date of publication.

38. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

No letters have been received.

39. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No written questions have been received.

40. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

No Notices of Motion have been referred.

41. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 9 - 14

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2010 (copy attached for information).

42. ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS 2010 15 - 98

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Carol Jenkins *Tel:* 29-3832

Ward Affected: All Wards;

43. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2009-2010 99 - 108

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Sylvia Peckham *Tel:* 293318

Ward Affected: All Wards;

44. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2008-2013 ANNUAL UPDATE 109 - 120

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Steve Bulbeck *Tel:* 29-3120

Ward Affected: All Wards;

45. SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL (SWEP) 10/11 UPDATE 121 - 142

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Richard Denyer-Bewick *Tel:* 01273292960
Ward Affected: All Wards;

46. LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN FOR HOUSING **143 - 146**

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Martin Reid *Tel:* 29-3321
Ward Affected: All Wards;

47. CONTRACT FOR COMMUNAL DIGITAL TV SYSTEM FOR COUNCIL HOUSING **147 - 152**

Report of Director of Housing, Culture and Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Mark Dennison *Tel:* 01273 293190
Ward Affected: All Wards;

The City Council actively welcomes members of the public and the press to attend its meetings and holds as many of its meetings as possible in public. Provision is also made on the agendas for public questions to committees and details of how questions can be raised can be found on the website and/or on agendas for the meetings.

The closing date for receipt of public questions and deputations for the next meeting is 12 noon on the fifth working day before the meeting.

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Meeting papers can be provided, on request, in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or on disc, or translated into any other language as requested.

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Caroline De Marco, (01273 291063, email caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Date of Publication - Tuesday, 31 August 2010

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 7 JULY 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Kennedy (Opposition Spokesperson – Green) and Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson – Labour).

PART ONE

14. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

14(a) Declarations of Interests

14.1 Councillor Simpson declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV she is a Board Member of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

14 (b) Exclusion of Press and Public

14.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

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

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

15.1 *Bevendean Community Garden Proposal* – The Cabinet Member reported that she would be meeting with the Bevendean Community Garden Project Group on 8 July to look at potential sites.

15.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 26 May 2010 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

16. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS**Private Rented Sector Letting Agents**

- 16.1 The Cabinet Member reported that she had met with the cross party working group members, Councillors Marsh, Randall and Watkins. They had requested a scrutiny panel on this issue as it had city wide implications. The recommendations would come back to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting or the Strategic Housing Partnership.

Council House Building

- 16.2 The Cabinet Member mentioned that at the last Housing Management Consultative Committee she had reported that the council were planning to build more council properties. A Working Group with tenant members had been set up to discuss the project. Martin Reid confirmed that a provisional date of 21 July had been scheduled for the Working Group to meet. The outcome of this meeting and further meetings would be reported back to the Housing Management Consultative Committee.

Pat Miles

- 16.3 The Cabinet Member reported the sad news that Pat Miles had passed away at the weekend. Pat had been ill for some time but had still been attending meetings such as the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, the Housing Management Consultative Group and the Hove and Portslade Area Housing Panel. A letter of condolence would be sent to her family.

17. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 17.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion.

18. PETITIONS

- 18.1 There were none.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 19.1 There were none.

20. DEPUTATIONS

- 20.1 There were none.

21. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 21.1 There were none.

22. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 22.1 There were none.

23. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

23.1 There were none.

24. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

24.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 10 May & 14 June 2010.

24.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

25. SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2009-10

25.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which was the second annual update of the 3-year Supporting People Strategy (2008-2011) that outlined key achievements and progress in implementing year 2 of the strategy, 2009-10. Appendix one detailed progress made against all objectives and strategic actions of the strategy.

25.2 Councillor Simpson stated that she hoped future cuts in this budget would be modest. The relative impact of the cuts would be huge. This would be a false economy as it would have an impact on other budgets such as health. Councillor Simpson congratulated people working in the Supporting People Team.

25.3 Councillor Kennedy agreed with Councillor Simpson. She also congratulated the team. She hoped that the cuts would not be severe. She would welcome a decision to lobby the government about this issue.

25.4 The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy reported that the last two years had been challenging. A move towards a commissioning process would share the budget across the council, health and the PCT.

25.5 The Cabinet Member congratulated the staff in the team. She reported that earlier in the year she had been asked by the Health Minister and St Mungo's to do work relating to the Homelessness Task Force. Some London authorities were envious of how money in the Supporting People Team was used. Brighton & Hove City Council and the work done in the Supporting People Team had been recognised.

25.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That progress made on delivering strategic actions of the Supporting People Strategy during year 2 of the strategy, 2009-10 be noted.

26. REPORT ON THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2007 -2010 AND INTERIM ACTION PLAN FOR 2010-2011

- 26.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which covered the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010, detailing key achievements of the strategy action plan for that period. It also covered the interim action plan for 2010-2011.
- 26.2 Councillor Kennedy was pleased to hear of the work being carried out in difficult times. She expressed concern about the cuts to housing benefit and the impact of those cuts on the Youth Homelessness Strategy.
- 26.3 The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy reported that officers were waiting for more details about cuts to benefits, particularly changes to transitional relief.
- 26.4 Councillor Simpson congratulated officers who had worked on the strategy. She considered that one of the most successful aspects of strategy was the work to prevent young people becoming homeless and helping them to stay at home. Councillor Simpson was impressed to see that officers were planning to work with younger teenagers. She suggested that this would push the achievements even higher.
- 26.5 The Cabinet Member congratulated the team. She made the point that the real benefits of the strategy would not be seen for years to come. Many people became homeless at a very young age, and there was a need to break that cycle.
- 26.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the report be noted and the interim action plan for 2010-2011 be approved.

27. REFRESH & UPDATE EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY UPDATE

- 27.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out an update to the Empty Property Strategy which ran from 2006-2009, bringing it up to date and aligning the dates with the Housing Strategy (2009-2014). The refreshed Strategy linked into the Housing Strategy 2009-2014 and contributed to the 20:20 Community Strategy under Improving Housing and Affordability where private vacant dwellings brought back into use was a key target.
- 27.2 Councillor Kennedy referred to a recent compulsory purchase order in Preston Park Ward. She was pleased to see such a pro-active approach. Councillor Kennedy said that she understood the need to look at the grant funding process. She asked if it was possible for resources to be diverted to the Council's empty properties.
- 27.3 The Empty Property Officer explained that the council were looking at a wider range of funds available. The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy explained that 1% of the council housing stock was empty. There had been a continuous improvement. Officers were ensuring that properties were brought back into use as soon as possible. The Local Delivery Vehicle would be used to bring back properties into use.

27.4 The Cabinet Member asked about the impact of the move from grants to loans. The Empty Property Officer explained that loans would still be subsidised. It would therefore be preferable to use loans rather than approaching the banks. The council would still be giving grants but on a smaller scale.

27.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That it be agreed that the Strategy be refreshed in line with the Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014.
- (2) That it be agreed that the revised Strategy should go out for consultation to key stakeholders
- (3) That the Assistant Director be given delegated powers to agree any proposed changes to the Strategy post-consultation and in agreement with the Cabinet Member.

28. PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL & HOUSING ADAPTATIONS

28.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which reported that Brighton & Hove City Council was the lead authority for the delivery of the 2008-2011 Private Housing Renewal Programme for Brighton and Hove and East Sussex (The BEST consortium). The consortium received funding from the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board (RHHB) and received the largest allocation of funding across the South East for 2010/11, and the sixth highest allocation in the country, (£8,579,190).

28.2 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was individual government grants towards capital spending on providing disabled adaptations to housing. The DFG grant covered 60% of the DFG expenditure and Brighton & Hove City Council used the RRHB grant to match fund this grant. The council received £660K DFG grant settlement in 2010-11, and this would be match funded by £440K BEST funding.

28.3 The Cabinet Member made the point that private sector housing affected the majority of people in the city. Adaptations and insulation made a huge impact. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development reported that 10,000 homes in the city needed to be made decent. There were high levels of houses in multiple occupation in the city.

28.4 Councillor Simpson congratulated officers on the past years performance. She hoped that there would be sufficient funding in future for private housing work. She stressed that the disabled facilities grant was an enormous benefit to people living in their own homes. Councillor Simpson referred to the shift from grants to loans and asked for further details. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development explained that the council used interest only loans. Targeting older people was important and loans were seen as the way forward as the council received the money back.

28.5 Councillor Kennedy congratulated officers on the excellent work carried out.

28.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That it is noted that that the council has been awarded £8,579,190 Private Housing Renewal Grant from the Regional Housing & Regeneration Board for 2010/11. This has been allocated across the BEST consortium according to the agreed split below.

B&HCC	£4,514,369
Hastings BC	£1,871,979
Eastbourne BC	£1,319,479
Rother DC	£277,107
Wealden DC	£290,834
Lewes DC	£305,419
	£8,579,190

- (2) That it is noted that the council's share of the 2009/10 £1m mini-bid, £566,200, has been carried forward to 2010/11.
- (3) That is noted that the council has been awarded £660,000 by the government for expenditure in 2010-11 on Disabled Facilities Grant.
- (4) That the progress made by the BEST partnership in year 2 of the RHB private sector renewal programme 2009/10 be noted.

29. TENANT HANDBOOK REVIEW

- 29.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing Culture & Enterprise which presented a proposed draft of the new tenant handbook. The report also presented the results of the tenant led Working Group review of the tenant handbook for tenants living in council housing. Minor changes had been made reflecting the feedback from the Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- 29.2 The Cabinet Member mentioned that the report had been generally welcomed at the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 14 June 2010.
- 29.3 Councillor Simpson considered the document to be clear and comprehensive. She referred to the section on unauthorised alterations or DIY. Two of her constituents were an elderly couple who had been asked to put right alterations made to their property after a 37 year tenancy. Councillor Simpson stressed that it was important to ensure that inspections of properties were carried out by qualified people and that the age and vulnerability of tenants should be considered. Councillor Simpson was pleased that an apology had been made to the couple in question and that they had received a visit from the Assistant Director, Housing Management.
- 29.4 Councillor Simpson referred to the useful contacts list in the handbook and asked for the local Age UK details to be included.
- 29.5 The Cabinet Member reported that the section on fire safety had been amended since the HMCC meeting in order to make it clearer. She thanked the working group and considered the handbook to be an excellent piece of work.

29.6 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the conclusions of the working group outlined in the report be noted.
- (2) That the implementation of the new tenant handbook attached at appendix 1 be agreed.
- (3) That it be agreed that minor changes may be required and made to the tenant handbook between the Housing Cabinet Meeting and printing to ensure it reflects the latest local context, with significant changes requiring approval from the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise.

30. **CESP - COMMUNITY ENERGY SAVING PROGRAMME**

30.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which outlined the background to the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), the discussions and project work currently underway with an energy company to access the potential benefits of this programme to residents of the City and the likely timescale for seeking a decision on whether to progress any offer of additional funding arising from the current negotiations.

30.2 The paper also noted the importance of continuing to work with potential partners such as energy companies to explore means of maximising investment to meet the council's strategic housing goals of improving the quality of housing in the city, reducing fuel poverty and minimising CO2 emissions.

30.3 The Cabinet Member agreed that the report should be referred to the next Sustainability Cabinet Committee for information.

30.4 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the current project work and negotiation being undertaken with an energy provider to assess and maximise the potential investment opportunity arising from Community Energy Savings Programme as a means of meeting strategic housing goals of improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty, be noted.
- (2) That it is noted that any final decision on any funding offer from the energy provider is likely to be subject to further Cabinet Member approval given the potential nature and scope of the programme.

The meeting concluded at 5.02pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 24 JUNE 2010

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Meadows (Chairman); Wrighton (Deputy Chairman), Allen, Janio, Kemble, Barnett and Harmer-Strange

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A Declaration of Substitutes

- 1.1 Councillor Dawn Barnett announced that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Averil Older.

Councillor Steve Harmer-Strange announced that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Brian Pidgeon.

Councillor Alex Phillips sent her apologies; she was unable to attend due to a clash with another committee.

1B Declarations of Interest

- 1.2 Councillor Harmer-Strange declared a non-prejudicial interest in item 7 – Training Session; Rents as a member of the Board of Seaside Homes.

1C Declarations of Party Whip

- 1.3 There were none

1D Exclusion of Press and Public

- 1.4 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded

from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

1.5 **RESOLVED** – that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** - that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2010 be approved as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 There were none.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

4.1 There were none

5. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

5.1 There were none.

6. NOTICES OF MOTIONS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

6.1 There were none.

7. TRAINING SESSION: RENTS

7.1 Sue Chapman, Head of Financial Services, presented a training session on rent setting for local authority and registered social landlord (RSL) properties and responded to members' questions.

7.2 In response to a query regarding whether the property value in the calculation was updated periodically, members heard that this was not the case as the formula had been designed to use the original 1999 valuation. The only exception to this was in the case of local authorities who had had properties in poor condition in 1999, and who had failed the Decent Homes Standard. If the local authority had renovated its properties, they had been able to apply for a revaluation.

7.3 In relation to a question about the discrepancy between RSL rents and local authority property rents, the committee heard that it was generally the case that RSL rents were higher than local authority rents. Currently RSL rents for one bedroomed properties were approximately 13% higher than local authority rents whilst RSL rents for two

bedroomed properties were approximately 20% higher. The Government's system was designed so that the differing rents would converge at a future point; this was being managed in stepped rent increases each year.

- 7.4 Members asked whether it would be possible for the council to negotiate with RSLs about their rent levels. They heard that this was not possible and that it was the case that local authority rents were moving up towards the level of RSL rents, rather than RSL rents decreasing towards local authority rent levels.
- 7.5 Members also heard that both local authorities and RSLs had the option to charge new tenants rent at the highest available level. However if local authorities did so, this would negatively impact the level of subsidy received so there was a disincentive to do so. For RSLs, this was not the case, and they were able to keep any rent charged. Brighton and Hove City Council had chosen not to charge new tenants a higher rent level at this time.
- 7.6 Members expressed concern about how Housing Benefit levels might be affected by announcements in the new budget. They requested a training session be scheduled on Housing Benefits and how this affected affordability of properties in the city.
- 7.7 Members thanked Ms Chapman for her informative presentation.

8. TRANSFERS OF CARE FROM HOSPITAL

- 8.1 This item was introduced by Denise D'Souza, Acting Director, Adult Social Care and Health, and Jane Simmons, Head of Commissioning, and Partnerships. PCT colleagues had been unable to attend this committee meeting but would be willing to come to a future session to discuss the topic if Members wished.
- 8.2 The committee heard that in previous years, there had been a significant problem with delayed transfers of care in the city, with a number of people having to wait over 100 days to be transferred out of hospital. However work had been carried out to address this and delayed transfer time was now reduced to a level of between 13 and 20 days.

There was now a proposal to reduce the numbers of delayed transfers of care even further to fewer than eight people per week. It was unrealistic to assume that there could be a situation with no delays at all but it was important to work to reduce them as far as possible.

Members asked for recent figures for delayed transfers of care from hospital to be circulated; this was agreed.

8.3 Members asked questions on a number of issues including the pressures on the social work teams at the hospital, care packages, assessing care needs, making the decision to discharge someone from hospital, weekend discharge arrangements and coordination with health colleagues.

8.4 In response to a query about pharmacy delays, members heard that this was still an issue and it was not uncommon to have several hours' delay for medicine to be issued. This impacted on the time taken to discharge patients from hospital and meant that the bed may be unavailable for other patients' use. In Brighton and Hove, patients were moved to discharge lounges in such situations, so that drugs could be issued to the patients and the bed freed up for another patient.

8.5 **RESOLVED – to note the report.**

9. HEALTH INEQUALITIES - REFERRAL FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

9.1 This item was introduced by Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Andy Staniford, Housing Strategy Manager.

9.2 Members heard that there was substantial evidence to show that poor quality housing affected peoples' health but that there was little evidence to show that improved quality housing led to improved health. This was a nationally recognised discrepancy and work was being done in various cities to gather data.

A Housing and Health Inequalities Group had been established in Brighton and Hove to look at the topic, involving officers from Housing, Adult Social Care and from Health.

9.3 Members heard about a number of initiatives that had been introduced locally and cost benefits analyses that had been carried out. These included:

- A cost benefit analysis of the Supporting People programme had been carried out; nationally, this showed that for every £1 spent on Supporting People, £2 was saved in other public spending costs. In Brighton and Hove, this saving was increased to £3.24 for every £1 spent.
- National research suggests that in a city the size of Brighton, slips and falls around the home and excess cold are expected to cost the NHS around £8m per annum (in addition to the impact on the quality of life of those affected) with the cost of works to remedy these issues being estimated at around £2m. Additionally, the cost to the NHS is estimated to represent only around 40% of the cost to society from these issues. Further research is being planned to determine if this national model reflects the reality in Brighton & Hove.

- Members heard about a 'repairs on prescription' service that was being piloted, linking the PCT and Private Sector Housing to deal with poor quality housing issues that affected residents' health.
- Age Concern was trialling a scheme researching involvement with health services over an extended period of time, to assess whether investment in home improvements had a positive effect on someone's health service take-up. The council was also looking at a similar toolkit to be used by hostel residents, drug and alcohol clients, and rough sleepers.

9.4 PCT commissioners were very keen to be involved with the health inequality work, recognising that it was important to try and tackle issues before they became problems for the city.

9.5 Members asked questions about the funding for various programmes, recognising that the Supporting People budget was no longer being ring fenced. They heard that various funding strategies were being considered, including a new loan system and the possibility of working with energy companies.

9.6 Members were interested to hear more about the Housing and Health Inequalities Group, and asked for a report to come to the Committee in six months time.

Members also expressed an interest in linking more with LSP groups covering housing and adult social care; it was agreed that representatives would be invited to future Committee meetings.

9.7 **RESOLVED – that members**

(i) noted the contents of the Audit Commission Health Inequalities report, and

(ii) determined what additional action to be taken in monitoring the implementation of the plan.

10. LETTER FROM CHAIRMAN OF HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REGARDING POSSIBLE CO-OPTION OF A BRIGHTON & HOVE LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINK) MEMBER

10.1 Members discussed the possible co-option of a Brighton and Hove LINK member to ASCHOSC as a non-voting co-optee.

10.2 Members heard that the LINK remit had been recently extended to cover Adult Social Care and that they had a legal right to sit on the Committee under the Local Government Involvement in Health Act. It was felt that a LINK representative could provide a valuable link

between agencies and that the Committee would benefit from having the group represented.

10.3 **RESOLVED – that a LINK representative be invited to join the Committee as a non-voting co-optee.**

11. ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING WORK PROGRAMME

11.1 The work programme was noted.

12. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET OR THE RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

12.1 There were none.

13. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO COUNCIL

13.1 There were none.

The meeting concluded at 5.50pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 42

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010		
Date of Meeting:	8 September 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Carol Jenkins	Tel: 29-3832
	E-mail:	Carol.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: 17566	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The council is required under the current regulatory framework for social housing landlords to publish by 1 October 2010 for our council tenants (and share with the Tenant Services Authority) a report for the year ending 31 March 2010.
- 1.2 A full and a summary report have been produced with the involvement and scrutiny of tenants and leaseholders, in line with the plan and timetable agreed with the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 14 June 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010 at Appendix 1 for distribution to the Tenant Services Authority and council tenant and resident associations and to all council tenants and leaseholders who request a copy;
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the summary annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010 at Appendix 2 for distribution to all council tenants and leaseholders.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The regulatory framework for social housing which came into effect on 1 April 2010 requires 'registered providers' (including council landlords) to publish an annual report to their tenants containing a self assessment of their performance against the standards set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The report is to be a key mechanism for landlords to make themselves accountable to their tenants (as part of 'co-regulation') and for the TSA to assess landlords' compliance with the TSA standards.

- 3.2 The TSA's requirements are that the annual report should:
- assess how the council is currently meeting the TSA standards, including how it measures its compliance
 - note any gaps and any associated improvement plans
 - include the council's service offer to tenants against the standards over the current year
 - include reference to how the council has gained assurance on the outcomes reported, including how tenants have been involved in scrutinising performance and, where appropriate, use of external validation, peer review and benchmarking
 - detail how tenants have been involved in producing and scrutinising the report
 - set out the council's plans for developing locally tailored offers.

It expects an honest and robust self assessment that is evidence based. Landlords must meet the commitments they make to tenants in the report.

- 3.3 Following discussion with the residents' Tenant Compact Monitoring Group in April, and presentations to tenants and leaseholders at the City Assembly and Area Housing Management Panels in May and June, our plan and timetable for involving residents in producing and scrutinising the annual report for the year ending 31 March 2010 were agreed by the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 14 June. These aimed to involve as wide a range of residents as possible in the production and scrutiny of the report within the time available.
- 3.4 We followed the agreed plan and the full report details how we involved residents in assessing how we meet the TSA standards and in contributing to and checking the report. The date of the Homing In Tenant Editorial Board meeting was rearranged to 20 August and their comments on the draft summary report have been incorporated into the final draft at Appendix 2.
- 3.5 Tenants and leaseholders are strongly featured in both versions of the report in pictures and their own words, demonstrating the key role they have in co-regulating our housing services. In addition to residents' comments on how we meet the TSA standards, we received around 100 comments specifically on the consultation draft of the report, which was circulated and put on the council's consultation web portal for comment from 2 to 26 July.
- 3.6 In response to residents' comments that the full report which fulfils all the TSA's requirements is too long, we have produced a summary version to send to all tenants and leaseholders with the September edition of Homing In magazine. The full report will be sent to the TSA and tenant and resident associations and be made available to other tenants and leaseholders who want a copy. Both versions will be publicly available on our website.
- 3.7 A special meeting of the Housing Management Consultative Committee is to be held on 1 September 2010 to scrutinise the reports and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Housing on approving the reports.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Council tenants and leaseholders have been extensively involved and consulted on the report. The full annual report details the consultation that has been carried out and responses have shaped the final version of the report.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The cost of producing and distributing the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010 is included in the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2010/11.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen

Date: 19/8/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 By section 193 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2004 the TSA may set standards for registered providers as to the nature, extent and quality of accommodation, facilities or services provided by them in connection with social housing. Section 204 of that Act permits the TSA to require a registered provider to prepare an annual report assessing the provider's performance by reference to the section 193 and 194 standards, and to send a copy to the Authority within a specified period. Failure to comply with a requirement is a criminal offence, punishable with a fine of up to £20,000.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 19/8/10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The annual reports outline how the council as landlord seeks to address equalities and diversity issues.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The annual reports outline how the council as landlord seeks to address sustainability issues.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The annual reports outline how the council as landlord seeks to address anti-social behaviour and community safety issues.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The TSA standards specify that landlords must meet the commitments they make to tenants in the annual report. The TSA states in its regulatory framework that it will take a risk-based and proportionate approach in considering any

further regulatory intervention in respect of landlords' performance on their commitments, as it wants an approach that encourages registered providers to aspire to better service outcomes and avoids perverse incentives from regulation.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Publication of this honest and robust assessment of our performance to council tenants and leaseholders supports the council's priority of open and effective city leadership.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The council is required to publish the annual report as explained in the body of this report.
- 6.2 The report plan and timetable were agreed with Housing Management Consultative Committee on 14 June 2010.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The council is required to publish an annual report for its tenants and share it with the TSA by 1 October 2010 to meet the TSA's requirements under the current regulatory framework. The TSA has indicated it will accept a shorter summary report for general distribution to tenants with the longer version for tenants who want it.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010
2. Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2010 – Summary version

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. *The regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010* Tenant Services Authority, March 2010

http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/upload/pdf/Regulatory_framework_for_social_housing_in_England_from_2010.pdf



Annual report to tenants and leaseholders 2010

Our vision is to provide
excellent housing management
services, with our residents at
the heart of everything we do

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The sections in this annual report set out how we meet the standards set by the Tenant Services Authority for council and housing association landlords, any gaps and our improvement plans. They include feedback from tenants and leaseholders who gave us their views in questionnaires, exercises and one-off focus group meetings to talk about the TSA standards.

Facts and figures

At 31 March 2010 Brighton & Hove City Council owned and managed 12,302 rented homes across Brighton, Hove and Portslade, including 848 flats in 23 sheltered schemes. Another 2,235 flats in our blocks were owned by leaseholders.

The Housing Management division employs 229 members of staff across the city.

Welcome

Maria Caulfield, Cabinet Member for Housing

I'm pleased to report that we achieved some big improvements to our services in 2009/10, working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders

Welcome to this annual report setting out our performance as a landlord in the year ending 31 March 2010 and our commitments to council tenants and leaseholders for this current year.



Residents have a very powerful influence at Brighton & Hove City Council. In this report council tenants and leaseholders show how closely residents are involved in shaping our housing policies and priorities and the ways we provide landlord services, and in checking on our performance.

I'm pleased to report that we achieved some big improvements to our services in 2009/10 and better value for money, working together with tenants and leaseholders. For example, the new repairs partnership we have developed with residents will help us to bring every tenant's home up to the Decent Homes Standard and provide a better service to all of you. And the new ways of working with residents to improve life on estates that we have been trying out in the Turning the Tide pilot in East Brighton have been so successful that we expect to extend them across the city.

We still have room for improvement, however. This report reflects the feedback we've had from tenants and leaseholders on how you think we perform and where we need to improve. It sets out how we intend to work with you to provide excellent housing management services, with our residents at the heart of everything we do.

I would like to thank all our tenant and resident representatives, members of the Housing Management Consultative Committee and staff who have worked very hard in the last year to bring about real improvements in our housing service. By working closely together, we are making steady progress towards achieving excellence in all our housing services and making the improvements we set out in our **Service Improvement Plan 2009-12**.

I would also like to thank the council tenant representatives and other board members of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes, the housing company set up by the council to raise investment for improvements to council tenants' homes. They have been working hard to get our 'Local Delivery Vehicle' project up and running and we hope that will be achieved in this financial year.

Maria Caulfield, Cabinet Member for Housing

How tenants and leaseholders have been involved in producing and checking this annual report

This is your annual report and we have tried to involve as many tenants and leaseholders as we could in reporting how we perform as a landlord and what we need and intend to do to improve. We set out to produce an informative, honest and accurate annual report – a true picture of our strengths and weaknesses and what tenants and leaseholders think of us, in their own words.

We agreed a plan and timetable for involving tenants and leaseholders in producing and checking this annual report with resident representatives on the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, at the City Assembly, the four Area Housing Management Panels and the Housing Management Consultative Committee.

Representatives from our many residents' associations and working groups explain in the report what they have achieved in 2009/10. We also include the views and comments of tenants and leaseholders who helped us assess how we meet the new standards for social housing landlords set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Their feedback indicates we need to make some improvements to fully meet all the TSA standards. We will work with residents to do this. We have outlined in the report how we meet the standards, any gaps and what we plan to do by 31 March 2011 to improve our services to you.

Throughout July we consulted all resident associations and groups on a draft of the full annual report. We also put it on our website for comment, emailed residents on our resident involvement database for their views and made copies available at our housing offices. It also went on our Tenant Forum. We tried to reach tenants who are under-represented in our existing resident groups, such as younger residents, through Facebook. Around 100 comments on the draft report were gratefully received from residents and helped us shape the final report, which was agreed by the Housing Management Consultative Committee including tenant and leaseholder representatives.

“There will always be shortcomings and failings, but I am impressed by determination to improve as shown in draft annual report.”

Resident comment on the consultation draft report

Tenant and leaseholder representatives told us that the annual report should not be too long, so we also produced a short, summary version of this report which has been sent to all tenants and leaseholders with September's Homing In magazine. The Homing In Tenant Editorial Board gave us useful comments on that. We thank them and all tenants and leaseholders who have helped us produce these reports.

This longer report is being sent to resident representatives and the TSA and can be sent to any tenants and leaseholders who ask for it. Both reports are also available on the council's website and at our housing offices.

Nick Hibberd, Assistant Director Housing Management

You can get a copy of any documents in **bold** type in this report from our website or our housing offices. Contact details are on the back cover of this report. You can also contact your housing office if you want more information.

Housing Management Consultative Committee

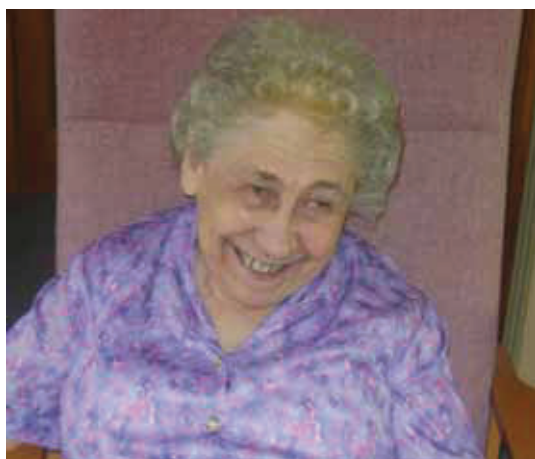
Under the council's constitution, the Cabinet Member for Housing or the Cabinet make key decisions about the council's housing services.

The Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) discusses reports about how the council's homes are managed and advises the Cabinet Member for Housing and Cabinet whether to approve the recommendations. The committee and resident representatives also advise the Cabinet Member for Housing on tenant consultation and make recommendations about the outcome of consultations with tenants and leaseholders.



Tenant and leaseholder representatives at HMCC are involved and empowered in various ways including:

- being consulted on all key decisions about Housing Management before they are taken, including decisions on strategic priorities, changes to housing-related policies and the ways we provide housing services
- presenting to the committee the outcomes and updates on the work of residents' working groups, such as the Tenancy Agreement Chairman's Focus Group
- setting our annual budget and spending priorities, and
- monitoring performance through regular progress reports and performance reports every three months on how well we are doing against a range of performance indicators covering all major aspects of the service.



“The Housing Management Consultative Committee makes the council officers and managers account for their performance”

Beryl Snelling, HMCC tenant representative

You are welcome to attend all Housing Management Consultative Committee and Housing Cabinet Member meetings. Dates are advertised in the Homing In newsletter and you can submit public questions. Call 01273 291058 for more information.

You can also see meeting dates, reports and decisions at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

Resident Involvement & Empowerment

With tenants' and leaseholders' involvement, we will learn from what you tell us and provide excellent customer service that meets your needs. We will agree our aims and targets with residents and report our performance so you can hold us to account and check that we meet our commitments

1. Customer service, choice and complaints

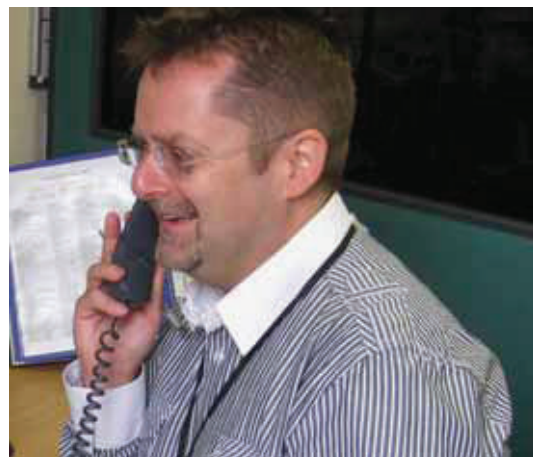
We will improve customer service by making it easier and quicker for you to get things done, in a way that suits your needs

Customer service

We train all Housing Management staff in customer service, communication and equalities and each office has a 'customer service champion'.

There are various ways you can contact us:

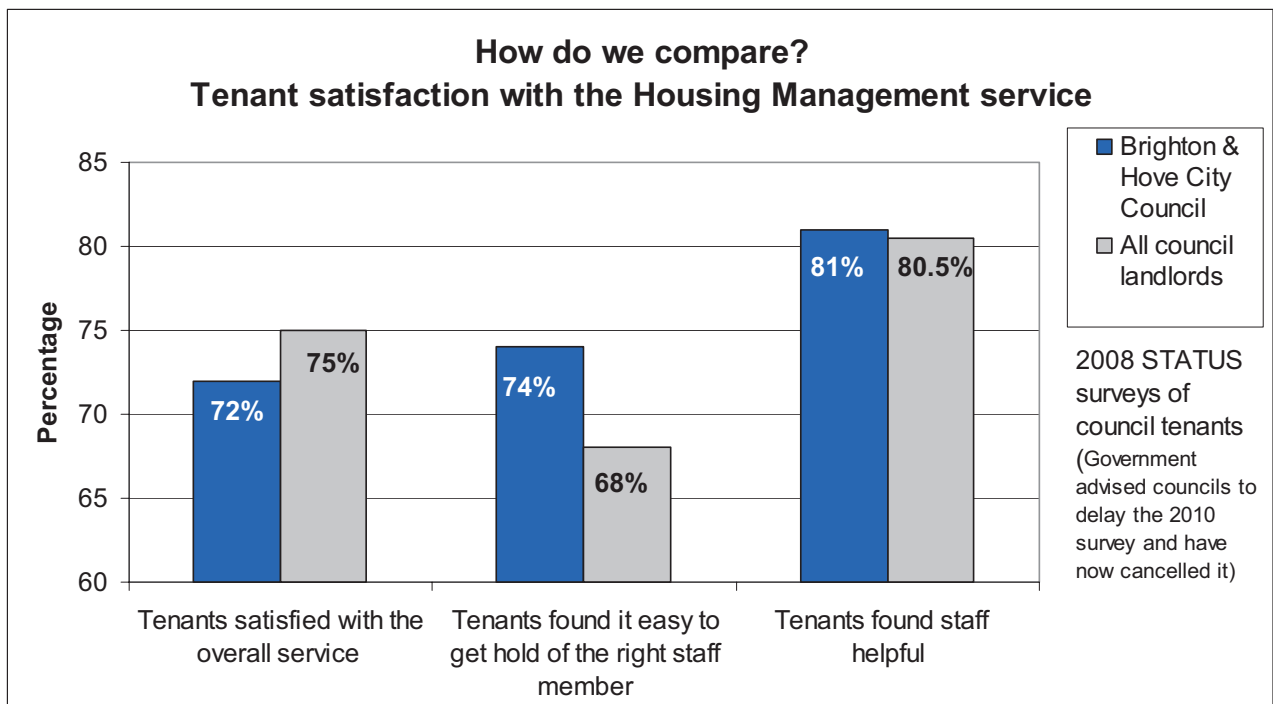
- visiting, phoning or writing to us at one of five local housing offices where there are also free phones to other services, cash desks for rent payments and internet access for interactive services. Most people contact us by phone
- e-mailing individual officer or teams or council.housing@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- reporting repairs and checking progress 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our repairs contact centre
- visiting our website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing which had 26,000 hits in 2009. It has a range of information and you can pay rent on-line. We also use it to get customer feedback from surveys and included a website survey in January 2010.



Housing office contact details and opening times are at the back of this document

Staff also provide home visits to residents who can't come to our offices and regularly attend and support residents meetings outside office hours.

In Whitehawk, a resident-led project set up a local base for Mears, the police and local residents. It was shortlisted for the Customer Service category of the national Housing Excellence Awards this year.



We also regularly ask tenants and leaseholders how satisfied they are with different parts of our service.

Customer satisfaction with sheltered housing

In 2009 we started using customer satisfaction surveys at sheltered schemes, on our sheltered services web pages, with randomly selected tenants and with all new tenants. We updated this survey in February 2010 to ask residents how satisfied they were with our sheltered service overall.

93% of the 39 sheltered tenants who completed a survey in February-March 2010 were very satisfied (57%) or satisfied (36%) with our sheltered service overall. No-one was dissatisfied.

As a result of tenants' feedback we have:

- emphasised customer service satisfaction in our current CareLink Plus contract (out of hours service) and set up a liaison group with residents to deal with any concerns
- worked with tenants to revise the aims and objectives of the service
- worked with the Community Payback Team to revamp scheme gardens.

“I have now been here for three months and can say I am very happy with all aspects of living here.”

New tenant at a sheltered scheme, February 2010



“The payback team were courteous and considerate to tenants, they worked hard and we were pleasantly surprised by what they achieved.”

Charles Penrose, Sloane Court Tenants Association

Leaseholders’ satisfaction with our leasehold management service

72% of leaseholders who answered a survey in 2010 were satisfied with the council as their leasehold manager, compared to 68% in 2007.

We have **customer charters** on different areas of our services, setting out our customer service standards. We will involve residents in reviewing these charters this year in developing ‘local offers’ for services to you.

‘Participants are unclear about what is meant by services and what standards to expect.’

Report of independent focus groups of tenants on meeting the TSA standards, July 2010

Resident volunteers have been trained as ‘mystery shoppers’ to test our customer service at housing offices and the Repairs Desk. They found most staff were friendly, helpful, knowledgeable and polite. The few staff who did not meet the standard were supported and coached to improve their customer service skills.

“Mystery shopping helps ensure the standard of customer service within Housing Management remains constantly high.” Resident mystery shopper

‘Committed staff who demonstrate a professional and caring approach towards customers. Sign up/settling in visit encourages involvement. Informative website - rents payable on line. Effective use made of newsletters. Information about rents is comprehensive - easy to understand. Helpful advice leaflets. Home visits and office interviews provided with five days of request.’

Audit Commission advice & assistance visit March 2009

We provide our tenants with a wide range of information about the services they receive, including a welcome pack for new tenants, a **Tenant Handbook**, quarterly rent statements, **information leaflets** and the **customer charters**. All of our information can be provided in different formats – large type, audio tapes or CDs, Braille, electronically - or translated into other languages where needed.

71% of tenants surveyed in 2008 thought Brighton & Hove City Council was good at keeping them informed about things that might affect them as a tenant, compared to 74% of council tenants nationally. STATUS survey 2008

Our quarterly resident newsletter **Homing In**, which has a tenant editorial board, informs and consults all tenants and leaseholders about our services and proposed changes.



“I’m very glad to work on Homing In as it provides a valuable source of information for all residents.”

Su Hansen, Homing In Tenant Editorial Board

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views felt the council fully or partly provides information which meets tenants’ needs and communicates with residents appropriately.

“Email/internet access is a godsend for those, like me, who have hearing problems.”

“Information also available (on request) in other languages.”

One person suggested that the council should: **“Ask tenants to feed back on every communication”**

“Homing In does help you and gives you information.”

But tenants in the TSA standards focus groups wanted a more honest view of what’s going on: **“Homing In only tells you the good things that are happening.”**

Many would like to receive updated information on the website or by email.

To improve our customer service to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Work with resident groups to consider more effective ways for you to contact us or access the services you need. We aim to make it easier and quicker for you to get things done in a way, and at a time, that suits you
- Carry out a service improvement programme for sheltered housing agreed with residents and deliver a revised out of hours service for the sheltered service
- Work with residents to review all customer charters and replace them with ‘local offers’ by 1 April 2011 (see below)
- Continue to improve customer service skills of front line staff through training and coaching
- Increase the ways that we ask you to tell us what you think of our services, for example by telephone, events and regular mystery shopping exercises. We will report the results back to you and how we use them to make improvements to our services
- Improve our communication with you by involving residents in developing our publications, letters and forms, putting more useful information on our website and looking at other ways to communicate with you.

Choice

We will continue to look for ways to give you more choice

Residents control an annual £540,000 Estate Development Budget (EDB) for improvements to communal areas around their homes and suggest and vote on improvements to be carried out each year. Our new repairs partner, Mears, has committed to make the budget go even further by providing extra free labour.



“The EDB money spent on fencing and bin sheds has really improved the appearance of estates.”

Mick Tompkins, Whitehawk South Central Residents Association

We have tried to increase the amount of choice tenants have within our services. For example, residents have a choice of appointment time for repairs and gas servicing to be carried out, now including evenings and Saturday mornings.

Tenants have a choice of finishes, colours and design when their kitchen is replaced. We also provide a choice of styles and colours for replacement doors and windows and for communal decorations.

Tenants and leaseholders are involved at all stages of choosing new contractors, such as for the new repairs partnership, laundry contract and car clamping contract in 2009/10.



“The Car Parks and Garages Working Group selected the best clamping contract, giving residents what we wanted. We also developed the standards and interview questions for evaluating the tenders.”

Muriel Briault, Car Parks & Garages Working Group

Tenants have a wide choice of ways to pay rent. You can pay at paypoint outlets, post offices and housing offices using an account payment card, by direct debit or standing order, or over the internet or by phone with a debit card.

The council operates a choice based lettings system for allocating council homes to new tenants and existing tenants seeking a transfer. This is currently under review by a focus group of tenants. If tenants wish to move home we can advise about alternative housing options to give greater choice and opportunity to move.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views said the council partly provides choices which meet tenants' needs. However, a few weren't convinced:

“They like to appear to give you choice and affect decisions. I'm not sure if they really do.”

We are increasing the range of ways residents can choose to have a say in how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed in developing a new **tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy** with residents.

To improve the choices available to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Complete all programmed EDB works agreed for this year
- Work with residents to develop a menu of options for residents to choose together the grounds maintenance services they want for their estate and would pay for in their service charges, through the Grounds Maintenance review
- Find out about the sort of choices residents would like as part of our work to develop 'local offers' with you (see below)
- Develop a new Home Ownership Strategy to support tenants wishing to take on full or part home ownership and bring about improvements in leasehold management.

Complaints

We know we need to listen and learn from your complaints and will work with residents to make improvements

The council's **complaints procedure** is advertised in a leaflet, our **tenant handbook** and on our website. You can complain in a variety of ways including in person, on the telephone, by e-mail, on line through our website or by letter. We accept complaints made by people on your behalf as long as you give permission.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Residents who gave us their views were divided on how clear and easy it is to make a complaint about our housing services, and whether we resolve complaints promptly, politely and fairly.

“Making a complaint is relatively easy - the action taken to resolve problems is relatively non-existent”

“I have had cause to make a complaint once and found the response quick and efficient and the problem was eventually solved, although it took a complaint to solve it, rather than a simple request for a repair.”

“Complaints is brilliant, they are really happy when they talk to you. You can't really get annoyed by them. They are too nice! It's done pretty quick.”

One person suggested that the council needs: **“an internal and proactive trouble-**

shooter.”

Tenants in the TSA focus groups agreed it is clear and easy to make a complaint. However, they felt that due to the overwork of housing officers and cumbersome procedures, complaints are not resolved quickly.

Our performance in dealing with complaints in 2009/10			
Complaints about	Number of complaints we received	Average time we took to reply to complaints, against our target of 10 working days	Percentage of replies we completed within our target of 10 working days
Housing management	140	8 ½ days	73%
Repairs and maintenance	178	11 days	63%
Total	318	10 days Overall we met our target of replying within an average of 10 working days	68% Overall we just missed our target of replying to 70% of complaints within 10 working days

In 2009/10 five cases were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman - the independent organisation you can approach if you have been through our formal complaints process but are not satisfied. The results were:

- in two cases the Ombudsman found there was no maladministration by the council
- one case was withdrawn by the person who made the complaint
- in two cases the Ombudsman was satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 of the council's complaints procedure.

We aim to improve our complaints performance in 2010/11. Our targets for 2010/11 are to respond to 80% of complaints within 10 working days and to have an average complaint reply time of nine working days.

How we've acted and learnt from your complaints:

- We reviewed bereavement procedures and trained staff to provide a more sensitive approach after a tenant has died.
- We had many complaints that it was not clear who could succeed to a tenancy. We produced a clear leaflet and ensured all front line staff are fully trained in this complex area.
- We reviewed and updated our tenancy agreement with a residents' focus group to make it easier to understand.
- We reviewed and re-launched our recharge process and trained staff to ensure it is applied fairly and consistently.
- We introduced uniforms for Community Wardens so you easily spot them.

In 2009/10 we dealt with 59 Stage 1 leaseholder disputes, 15 at Stage 2 and four went to Stage 3. The council's record on resolving complaints over the last five years is 82% resolved at Stage 1 and 65% at Stage 2, with 94% resolved at either Stage 1 or 2.

We monitor customer complaints, suggestions and compliments and are committed to learning from what residents tell us and putting things right where changes are needed.

To improve the way we deal with complaints, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Set up and work with a group of residents to review and simplify our procedures on complaints to make sure we manage and resolve complaints promptly, politely and fairly
- Agree suitable remedies with residents where we have got something wrong
- Report complaints performance and compliments to Housing Management Consultative Committee
- Report our complaints performance and the outcome of complaints annually to all tenants and leaseholders.

2. Involvement and empowerment

We are building on our strong resident involvement structure to offer a wider range of opportunities for all tenants and leaseholders to have a say in how their home and neighbourhood are managed, in ways that suit them

Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved

There are some 70 tenant and resident associations, which are open to any resident living in the area or block. They aim to represent the views of the residents and can also raise issues affecting you and your neighbourhood on your behalf. Tenant and resident associations elect representatives to Area Housing Management Panels and can bid for improvement works to their estate or block through the Estate Development Budget.

Residents' associations meet together and debate issues of interest to council tenants and leaseholders across the city twice a year at the City Assembly. Individual tenants and leaseholders are also welcome to attend.



“It’s important that representatives from residents’ groups city wide meet together and discuss the important issues”

Chris Kift, Chair of City Assembly

54% of Brighton & Hove City Council tenants surveyed in 2008 were satisfied their landlord took tenants' views into account, compared to 56% of council tenants nationally
STATUS surveys of tenants 2008

‘Resident involvement is well resourced and supported. Relationships between tenants and councillors are mature and productive. Residents consulted on wide range of issues. Short term tenants’ focus groups are a useful way of engaging on policy issues. Tenants are an integral part of planning processes. Residents play an active role in performance monitoring. Annual feedback provided on resident involvement impact.’

Audit Commission advice & assistance visit March 2009

Residents’ Area Panels in each of the four Housing Management neighbourhoods discuss housing management performance in their area, are consulted about new policies and projects, run their annual Estate Development Budget for environmental improvements and can require reports from staff. They met four times in 2009/10.

Area Panels elect tenant representatives to the Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC), Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group, Housing Income Management Monitoring Group, Car Parks & Garages Monitoring Group, Estates Service Monitoring Group, Homing In Tenants' Editorial Board and Tenant Disability Network.

There are also citywide special interest groups of residents - the Sheltered Housing Action Group, High Rise Action Group and Leaseholders Action Group; a residents' Asset Management Panel; and resident led Chairman's focus groups, for example on the new **tenancy agreement** and **tenant handbook**, and a laundry facilities working group. These focus groups are time limited and finish when their task is completed. Details of what the resident groups do are set out in the draft **tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy**.

The Sheltered Housing Action Group successfully campaigned to change back to the traditional model of on-site scheme managers. Tenants were trained and involved in recruiting new staff.



“We congratulate the council on their agreement to retain scheme managers of sheltered housing onsite at their scheme in response to SHAG’s tenant petition. This is now being carefully developed.”

Tom Whiting, Sheltered Housing Action Group

We have well established partnership working with tenants and leaseholders, through this strong structure of residents' associations and groups. They have a key role in influencing our strategic priorities, developing policy and shaping the way we provide our services. They also scrutinise our performance and set performance targets for us to meet. Resident representatives at the HMCC scrutinise a **quarterly report on our performance** and how we compare to similar and the best performing social landlords in 'benchmarking' groups.

We have started working with tenant associations that are interested in becoming a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO), taking on responsibility for some of the services that the council currently provides, such as cleaning and grounds maintenance.

“We are working to achieve our aims of becoming a Tenant Management Organisation.” Maggie King, St James' House Community Alliance

2,400 tenants responded to our consultation on the new tenancy agreement. We used this feedback to make changes before the final agreement was approved.

The **Tenant Compact**, agreed with residents, sets out how residents are involved in strategic and local housing decisions, the standards that have been agreed for involvement of tenants and leaseholders, meetings, information and resident groups. This is now being reviewed with the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group of residents elected by their Area Panel.

“Participation creaks, but it works!” John Melson, High Rise Action Group

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views thought that the council definitely or partly offers a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. Resident representatives made some positive comments: **“Too many opportunities, not enough hours in the day!”**

But some views were mixed: **“The council focus groups have really worked well and are making ground. Generally though the council listens but doesn't always act.”**

“Some things you do feel involved in, like the tenancy agreement. They did take on-board suggestions. In other things, when they know they don't have much choice or funds, they don't.”

Some tenants in the TSA standards focus groups pointed to a need for more opportunities to get involved outside of the structure of residents' associations:

“Only on tenants associations and all of us don't want to be on one and certain people are on everything.”

“Residents' associations do have their place but bring in more residents so it's less exclusive.”

We have been working with the residents' Tenant Compact Monitoring Group to increase and strengthen resident involvement by increasing the range of opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to get involved. Over 2,000 residents returned the **Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire** sent with our Homing In newsletter in December 2009. Although nine out of 10 were not active members of a tenant and resident association, two thirds said they want to be more involved in decisions that affect them as tenants or leaseholders. Also, three quarters want to be more involved in decisions that affect their local area.

We now have a database of over 1,800 tenants and leaseholders who are interested in getting more involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods in a variety of ways, such as phone surveys. Involving a wider pool of people will help us arrange our services to reflect residents' needs and wishes. As an example, we used this database to invite interested tenants to the focus groups to discuss how we meet TSA standards.

“Most participants agreed that these focus groups which have involved a wider selection of tenants are a good idea. They would like more of them: “You should have more of these, not with the tenants associations. More of these focus groups.”

Report of independent focus groups of tenants on meeting the TSA standards, July 2010

If you would like to be more involved and did not complete our tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire, please contact your housing office.

With the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group we have produced and consulted on a draft **Tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy**. This explains our resident involvement structure and sets out a clear menu of different ways for tenants and leaseholders to engage with the council in having a say in how their home and neighbourhood is managed, including informal ways.

The residents' Tenant Compact Monitoring Group told us excellent communication, more information and training were their top priorities to improve resident involvement. So we highlighted those things in the draft **Tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy**.

Resident involvement workshop February 2010



“The Tenant Compact Monitoring Group want more residents to be involved and are waiting for your views ”

Stewart Gover, Tenant Compact Monitoring Group

To increase the range of opportunities for you to be involved, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Develop ways for all tenants and leaseholders to have the chance to be involved in decisions about their home and services and our plans for the future
- Use the tenant and leaseholder involvement database to involve residents on the issues they are interested in and in a way that suits them
- Using feedback from the consultation, finalise the **Tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy** working with a wide range of residents
- With the residents' Tenant Compact Monitoring Group review the **Tenant Compact** and consult you on the outcome
- Report back to you at regular intervals so you can check how effective our resident involvement policies are
- Promote resident involvement as an important part of Housing Management officers' work
- Monitor the profile of involved residents and develop ways to encourage residents from under-represented groups to get involved.

Consulting tenants and acting reasonably in providing opportunities to agree 'local offers' for service delivery

As well as meeting the TSA's own standards, the TSA requires landlords to agree local standards with tenants which reflect their local priorities. It calls these 'local offers'. We already have some locally agreed service offers and standards, for example:

- local residents set the services and performance standards provided at the 'Our neighbourhood' local base in Whitehawk. This resident led partnership of local residents, the police and our repairs partner Mears provides a more customer focused and responsive service. Repairs are done quickly, crime and anti-social behaviour are tackled, the estates are managed more effectively and more residents are involved

- a new Housing and Estates Forum in Moulsecoomb, set up under the 'Turning the Tide' pilot to tackle social exclusion and anti-social behaviour, aims to increase resident involvement, meet residents' local priorities and improve services to what they want. Residents can set local standards and be involved in monitoring performance against them and give feedback to the council and other partners.



“The Housing and Estates Forum will transform the way communities are inspected. Residents, councillors and housing officers all inspect areas together and work in unison to make cleaner, safer neighbourhoods.”

Dave Murtagh, East Moulsecoomb
Tenant and Resident Association

We agreed a plan and timetable for involving tenants and leaseholders in developing 'local offers with tenant and leaseholder representatives on the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, at the City Assembly, the four Area Housing Management Panels and the Housing Management Consultative Committee in June 2010. The draft **Tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy** also aims to develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities for our residents.

To agree 'local offers' with you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Consult as many tenants and leaseholders as we can to find out your priorities for our services. We will use our resident involvement database, community events and a variety of ways to get the views of all sections of the community
- Use the results of that consultation to develop service pledges for all aspects of our landlord service with our resident working groups. These will set out the standards of housing services that residents can expect. They will include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by residents and what we will do if we fail to meet those pledges
- Consult again with residents on the draft service pledges, then put them to the Housing Management Consultative Committee for scrutiny and comment before they go to the Cabinet Member for Housing for approval
- Agree arrangements with residents for reviewing the local offers from time to time.

Service pledges will cover repairs and maintenance, tenancy management, estates service, resident involvement, anti-social behaviour, car parks and garages, leasehold management, income management, lettings and sheltered housing.

Providing a range of opportunities to influence how we meet all the TSA's standards, scrutinise performance against the standards and in the development of the annual report

We told residents about the TSA's proposed and final standards through *Homing In* newsletters, our website, reports to HMCC and presentations at Area Panels. We also sent all associations a copy of the TSA's guide to the standards and made copies available at our housing offices.

You can get a copy of the TSA's guide 'What does the regulatory framework mean for you? A guide to social housing standards' from the TSA's website at www.tenantservicesauthority.org or call the TSA on 0845 230 7000, contact us on 01273 290591 or pick one up at your housing office.

We invited all residents to send us their comments on how we meet the standards in *Homing In*. We asked resident representatives how they thought we meet some of the TSA standards at the City Assembly and Area Panels in May and in questionnaires sent to all residents' associations and groups. Other tenants and leaseholders gave us their views through a questionnaire available at our offices and on the consultation web portal on our website. We emailed a link to the questionnaire to all tenants and leaseholders on our resident involvement database who provided an email address. We received up to 36 responses for each of the 17 questions we asked in total.

We also gave an opportunity for tenants not currently actively involved in our formal resident involvement structure to discuss in detail how we meet the TSA standards in focus group meetings with an independent facilitator. They had all told us in the tenant and leaseholder involvement survey in December that they would like to get more involved. Sixteen tenants attended from across the city, with a range of ages and interests and having lived in our homes from three to twenty six years. A quarter of them were from Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, who are under-represented amongst our tenant and leaseholder representatives.

To provide a range of opportunities for you to influence how we meet all the TSA's standards, scrutinise our performance against the standards and develop the next annual report, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Continue to involve residents and resident groups in assessing how we perform against the TSA standards and proposing any changes to how we meet them
- Tell you the results of consultations about how we meet the TSA's standards
- Have regular 'You said, we did' feedback in **Homing In** magazine, letting you know how we take your views into account and highlighting examples where this has influenced the service
- Develop a new performance report with residents to ensure we are reporting on the issues that are most important to you and that the information is presented in a clear and easily understandable way. We will aim to include, where possible, residents' assessment of quality
- Publicise performance information in housing offices as well as in **Homing In** and on our website
- Agree with residents a plan for involving you in producing and checking the next annual report.

Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved

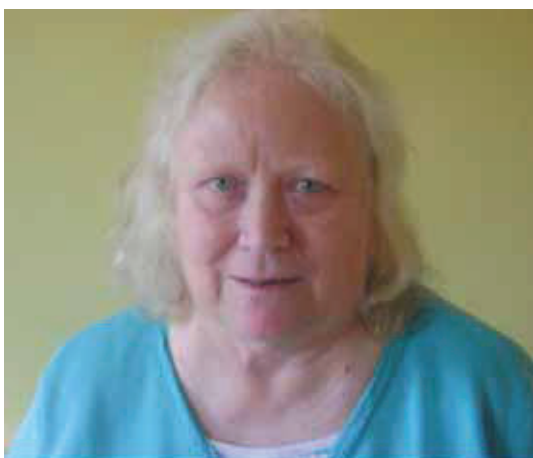
Four Community Participation Officers, a Community Participation Assistant and a manager provide support to the tenant and resident associations and other resident groups, together with other Housing Management staff.



“We offer support and advice, and encourage all residents to get involved.”

Peter Mustow, Community Participation Officer

The council grant funds the Resource Centre, which provides a range of training and support to residents and tenant and resident associations, such as in setting up accounts, running a group, working in a committee and producing a newsletter. Resident representatives also attend Chartered Institute of Housing conferences and other relevant events to build their knowledge and skills.



“The Resource Centre is a really helpful organisation for tenant reps. We’d be lost without them.”

Jean Davis, Leach Court Tenants Association

‘There are many examples of the council, residents and partners working to build community capital and cohesion. Effective use is made of the independent resource centre - builds capacity.’

Audit Commission advice & assistance visit March 2009

We also support residents to get involved by providing hearing loops, interpreters etc. and covering child care and travel costs. All resident meeting rooms comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and are accessible.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

The largest group of residents who gave us their views agreed that the council provides support to help residents be effectively involved:

“Have been doing it through home visits, workshops/ training courses.”

“Very happy with involvement of housing office, estate warden and community development team in helping local community association.”

To offer you more support to build your capacity to be more effectively involved, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Improve the training and development programme for residents who want to become involved by continuing to use the Resource Centre and providing coaching and support by the Community Participation Officers
- Develop training for residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance
- Offer more ‘Rate your Estate’ training for tenants and leaseholders who want to be resident assessors as this is introduced in other areas of the city
- Provide training in energy efficiency advice to interested residents
- Offer training in being a company director and charity trustee to any tenants appointed by Area Panels in February 2011 to be new tenant board members of the Local Delivery Vehicle, Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes.

3. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

We are committed to equal opportunities and valuing diversity. We will continue to build up a better understanding of our residents' needs and tailor our services to meet them.

We do all we can to make sure our services are open, welcoming and easy to use for people of every age, religion or faith, gender including transgender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, and people with disabilities or care and support needs. We achieve this by having, for example:

- an equalities and inclusion policy and staff training that helps officers respond well to a variety of individual needs, and treat people fairly and with respect
- accessible offices that meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and offering home visits
- hearing loops in interview rooms, reception and cashiers counters, and big button phones, textphone and a computer for public use on request
- accessibility and translation features on our website
- information about residents that help us tailor service – eg when we consulted with all residents on our **tenancy agreement** last year, we were able to send information in the formats we already knew individual tenants preferred
- an ongoing programme of equality impact assessments for all our services, with actions to make sure our services do not negatively impact on groups of people or individuals
- a Tenancy Sustainment Team that works with tenants with specific care and support needs, and refers them to other council or city services as appropriate
- work on a variety of service issues with resident groups – for example with the Tenant Disability Network on improvement works to make sure all our resident meeting rooms are fully accessible.



“The Tenant Disability Network works on behalf of all residents with disability to advocate and help purchase appropriate equipment.”

Barry Kent, Tenant Disability Network

A tenant with a blind daughter complained her garden was not safe place for her. So we found council and charity funding for a garden make over. Now her daughter can play outside safely.

We also:

- remove racist or hate graffiti within 24 hours
- arrange support for victims of hate crime and domestic violence
- give priority and reduce parking charges to blue disability badge holders for a garage or car parking space
- are achieving and working towards excellence in the national Equality Framework for Local Government
- comply with the CRE (now Commission for Equality and Human Rights) code of practice for racial equality in housing
- are working to carry out relevant actions in the council's Housing Strategies for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender, Black and Minority Ethnic and Older People.

The council was the top local authority in Stonewall's annual workplace equality index for its employment practices and general policies ensuring fair treatment of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Residents of sheltered housing have a personalised support plan and we are the only sheltered provider in the city to use the Single Assessment Process when assessing their needs. This makes it easier to share care and support information with other professionals. We checked a sample of our support plans through Supporting People and it showed that on average 90% of the identified needs were met. 85% of sheltered tenants who completed our survey in February – March 2010 told us they were very satisfied or satisfied with how we planned support to meet their needs.

In October 2009 all sheltered scheme managers signed up as 'Dignity Champions' to support the Dignity in Care campaign to improve the respect and care for older people.

Resident meeting rooms are used to support wider community activities, for example the Asian Women's Group is based in one and the Gay Elderly Men's Society held their 2009 Christmas party in a sheltered scheme.

76% of tenants from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups have indicated they are satisfied with arrangements for resident participation. However, a survey of resident representatives in 2009 showed that BME and younger residents are under-represented. We have made particular efforts to encourage young tenants to get involved in the Whitehawk local base and through community events, and have actions in our **Tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy** to increase involvement generally, and of groups that are currently under-represented.

The Tenancy Sustainment Team works with tenants with complex support needs, co-ordinating services from professionals such as social workers and health specialists. It works as part of the council's 'Turning the Tide' strategy for tackling inequality and social exclusion in social housing, and also works with the police to reduce anti-social behaviour.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Residents who gave us their views generally agreed that the council treats all residents with fairness and respect: **"As part of a minority group myself, I have always been**

treated respectfully, but this should be expected.”

Most felt that we fully or partly demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our tenants: **“It always seems to”**.

But one commented that the council: **“Should listen more”**.

Generally, tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council tries to be fair. Some felt it tried too hard and could be tougher on certain tenants. Others felt that it only listened to the loudest.

To improve how we understand and respond to residents’ diverse needs, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Continue to add to the information we hold on our residents and their needs and to check it is up to date. We will use it to continuously improve how we communicate with and provide services to people or groups with specific needs
- Use a variety of methods to try to involve harder to reach groups of residents in all aspects of our service
- Update the procedure for dealing with racist and religiously motivated hate crime in line with the arrangements across Sussex
- Review our procedures for dealing with domestic violence.

To help us provide services that meet your needs, make sure we know about them. For example, let your local housing office know if you have health problems or need us to contact you or send you information in a different way.

Home

1. Quality of accommodation

The value for money, new repairs partnership with Mears will help us bring all tenants' homes up to Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013

Following tenants' vote against transfer of their homes to a new housing association in 2007, the council was millions of pounds short of the money needed to bring all homes up to the government's Decent Homes Standard by the end of December 2010. The TSA may agree an extension to the 31 December 2010 deadline where this is reasonable.



Bringing all tenants' homes up to standard has been our main priority. In 2009/10 we increased investment in Decent Homes improvements by making savings in other areas of work. By 31 March 2010, 60.5% of tenants' homes met the Decent Homes Standard.

We installed 581 new kitchens, 525 new bathrooms, 2,300 new doors and 1,051 new boilers in 2009/10.

In 2009/10 we also started a programme of works to sheltered schemes with shared bathroom facilities, to provide tenants with self contained homes with their own shower.

Since 2008, when resident representatives supported our new procurement strategy, we have worked with them and the residents' Asset Management Panel to put in place the new 10 year Repairs & Improvement Partnership. The panel was set up to reflect the profile of our residents, after inviting every tenant and leaseholder to put themselves forward to take part. Residents from the panel were fully involved in selecting the contractor and setting up the partnership with Mears which started on 1 April 2010.



“The Asset Management Panel was set a task of finding the best repairs contractor, and after much work and deliberation we agreed that Mears was the best.”

Ted Harman, residents' Asset Management Panel

Our new Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears will give big cost savings that will help us bring all tenants' homes up to the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013.

A review of our new repairs contract in June 2010 by the government's watchdog, the Audit Commission, indicated that the council is now doing everything possible to bridge the funding gap and bring all tenants' homes up to Decent Homes Standard. Two internal audits also approved the procurement and mobilisation of the contract.

'There is a clear commitment to, and focus on, robust management and monitoring of the new repairs and maintenance contract to achieve the DHS target by 2013.'

'The consultation carried out on the LDV and new repairs and maintenance contract is good, and residents have been fully involved in procuring and setting up the new repairs and maintenance contract.'

Draft report of the Audit Commission Review of the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Contract,
July 2010

After a series of meetings with residents and on the recommendation of the HMCC, in February 2010 the council agreed a £76 million **three year investment plan** to bring all tenants' homes up to the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013, subject to funding.

You can see what improvements are planned for your area or sheltered housing from 2010-2013 on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hm-investment-programme and at your housing office. More detail will be added as the programme is developed.

Mears have a Customer Care Manager who will promote resident involvement and make sure residents are kept informed of works being undertaken to their homes. This will include meetings and letters before work begins, and visits to residents as appropriate.

Brighton & Hove Standard

The residents' Asset Management Panel also developed the Brighton & Hove Standard, a higher standard than the Decent Homes Standard. For example, it added additional electrical sockets in kitchens where they can be increased without the need for rewiring. The Brighton & Hove Standard will be further developed, consulted upon and agreed with residents as part of the framework for development of local offers.

Energy efficiency

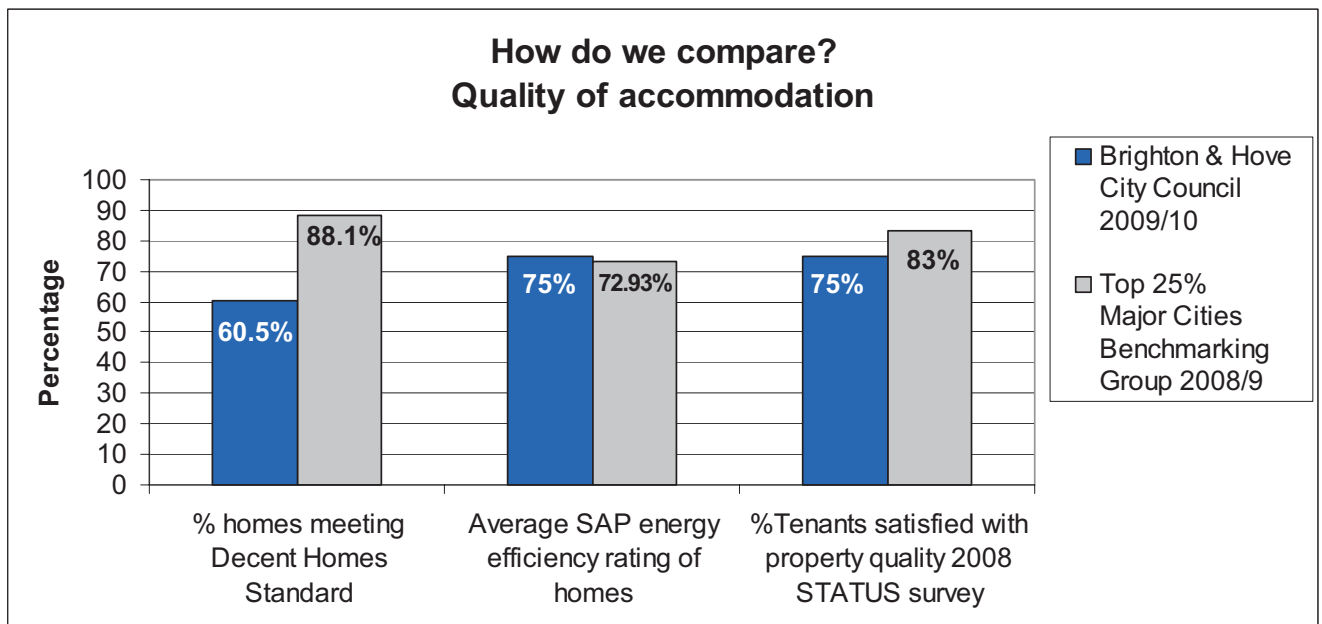
Our investment programme aims to improve the sustainability of our housing wherever possible. During 2009 we provided insulated over cladding on two high rise blocks which will cut tenants' fuel bills and carbon emissions, as well as removing the long-term costs of repairing brickwork. We also installed a communal solar hot water system at a sheltered housing scheme, cutting energy costs. Some of this work was supported through grant funding from energy companies.

The average energy efficiency (SAP) rating of our homes, at 76, is well above the average score for other council landlords, at 64. That saves on residents' fuel bills.

The energy efficiency of our homes is among the best for council landlords.

As part of the Repairs and Improvement Partnership, Mears will produce a Carbon Reduction Plan for the contract. This plan will set out how we will reduce the carbon

impact of the work we do, for example ensuring partnership offices are energy efficient, vans are fuel efficient and that we complete repairs in one visit wherever possible.



“The four tenant board members of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes are working hard to raise money for improvements to council tenants’ homes.”

Trish Barnard, Tenant Board Member

To improve the quality of tenants’ homes, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Bring 74% of tenants’ homes up to Decent Homes Standard, with a £24 million programme of improvements in 2010/11
- Consult with residents on detailed plans for Year 2 of the **three year investment plan**
- Start a review of shared facilities at those sheltered schemes that still have them
- Consult with residents to agree the Brighton & Hove Standard for homes as part of our ‘local offers’
- Investigate ways of improving the energy efficiency of homes, reducing electricity and gas costs for residents and improving the sustainability of the stock.

2. Repairs & maintenance

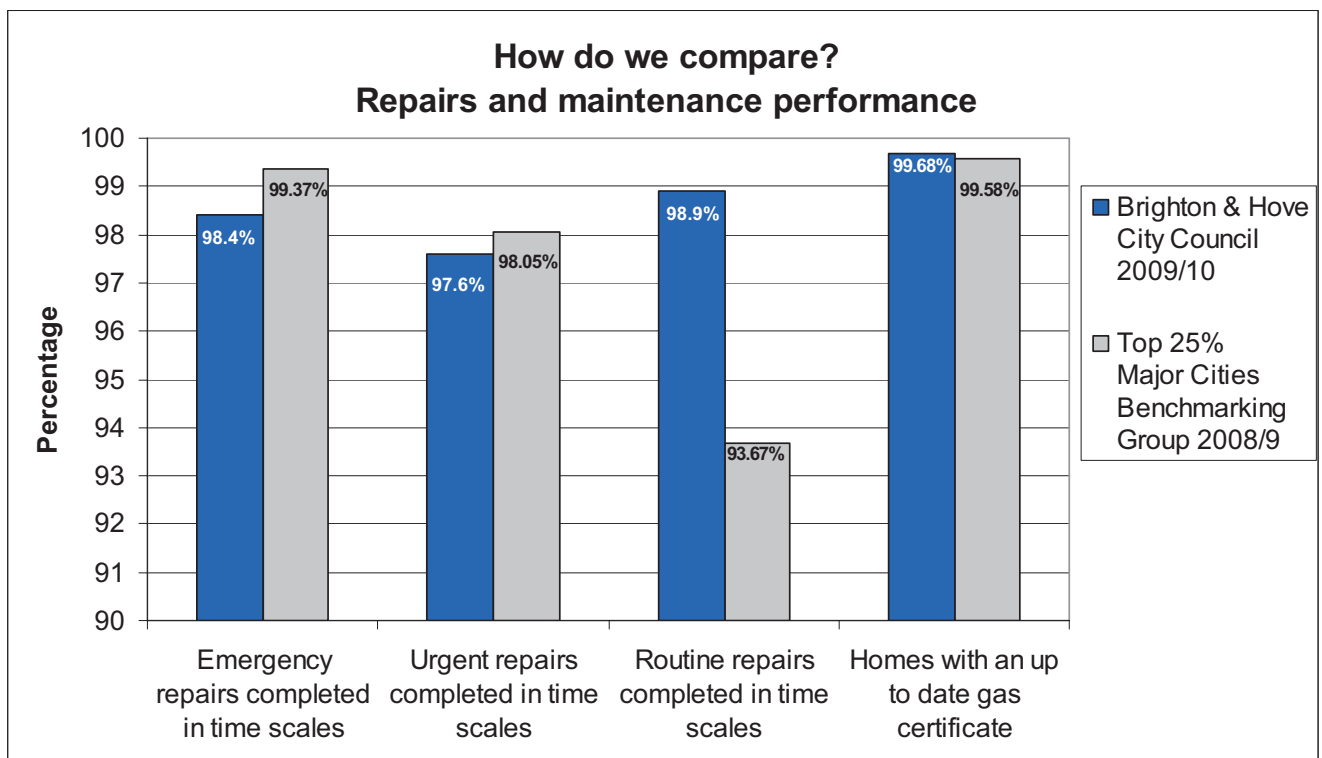
Residents are involved in managing and monitoring the new Repairs and Improvement Partnership which provides improved quality, better customer service and value for money



We made big improvements to repairs and maintenance costs, customer service and performance in 2009/10. The average time to complete routine repairs was cut from 15 days in 2008/9 to 12 days in 2009/10. The number of urgent repairs we had to do has reduced from 29 per cent of repairs in 2007/08 to 14 per cent in 2009/10. We had to do 2,337 fewer emergency repairs in 2009/10 than the year before. In the last two years we have improved our repairs performance from being in the bottom 25% of landlords we compare ourselves against to being in the top 25% in 2009/10.

Repairs performance in 2009/10

- 29,706 repairs completed
- 98.9% Routine repairs completed within our target of 20 working days
- 97.6% Urgent repairs completed within our target of three working days
- 98.4% Emergency repairs completed within our target of 24 hours
- 93% of tenants who completed our satisfaction cards were satisfied with the service
- 98% of those replying to Mears or Kier were satisfied with the repair they had received



'The housing management service has made good progress over the last 18 months. It is working effectively with a clear commitment from all partners to deliver improvement in the repairs and maintenance service for council residents.'

Draft report of the Audit Commission Review of the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Contract
July 2010

As well as cost savings, the new Repairs and Improvement Partnership which started on 1 April 2010 aims to give excellent customer service, get repairs 'right first time' and give high levels of customer satisfaction.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Tenants in the TSA focus groups saw repairs as a priority: **"Repairs is the main issue."** Some were happy with repairs and the quality of work: **"I'm very happy with them. My block is clean and well maintained."**

Most with a complaint about repairs wanted the council to monitor contractors' work and check that it had been done satisfactorily.

The council now has four Clerks of Works to check the quality of works. Mears also check 10% of responsive repairs are completed to the right standard.

'The council has people with the right skills supported by robust structures to deliver and manage the contract. It has created a contract compliance team to monitor the works and ensure repairs are carried out to the specified standards set out in the contract. This team includes a clerk of works whose role is to ensure quality standards.'

Draft report of the Audit Commission Review of the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Contract,
July 2010

You can now report repairs 24 hours a day by phone, text, email or on-line. Appointments can also be made straight away with the Repairs Desk at a time that suits you, including evenings and Saturday mornings.

Residents told us the 0800 repairs number which is free from a land line was expensive from a mobile phone. So we now have a local rate 01273 294409 number as well.

We will report the performance of the Repairs Desk regularly to residents and continue 'mystery shopping' exercises by trained resident volunteers to test whether performance is of an excellent standard. Mears also carry out satisfaction surveys with residents after works are completed.

Resident mystery shoppers told us it took too long to get through to the old Repairs Desk in 2009. So the new partnership has made improvements to answer your calls more quickly. The average time taken to answer a call is now less than a minute.

'The council recognises the need to improve feedback arrangements from customer surveys and mystery shopping exercises.'

Draft report of the Audit Commission Review of the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Contract,
July 2010

All Property & Investment staff from both Mears and the council will be based in a new housing centre on Moulsecomb Way so they can work closely together and improve customer service. The centre will also bring wider community benefits such as employment and training opportunities.

Responding to residents' needs

Mears operatives work to a strict Code of Conduct to ensure they provide an excellent level of service. They all have Customer Care and equality and diversity training, for example in disability and mental health awareness. Mears have also developed a range of customer care aids for residents with extra support needs, such as, a Type Talk or Braille guide, a Decent Homes DVD in sign language and subtitles and easy read picture guides. Operatives have Braille identification cards so blind or partially sighted residents can check their identification. Front line staff and operatives can also use Language Line for translation services.

Service standards and local offer

We will work with residents to develop service standards during 2010/11 as we work to agree the repairs and maintenance 'local offer'. The current Tenant Guide to Repairs will be replaced with a new Guide to Repairs developed with residents. The Empty Homes Lettable Standard is also being reviewed this year and will link with the Brighton & Hove Standard for Decent Homes.

The Whitehawk local repairs base, where residents can report repairs directly to Mears operatives has been very successful. Mears are committed to working in partnership with residents in other areas of the city, to tailor services to meet their local priorities.



“The Mears Whitehawk base has improved the estate, we can access repairs more quickly and residents now know who their operatives are.”

Chris El-Shabba, Our neighbourhood local base

The council and Mears have agreed targets to do more planned maintenance, aiming to carry out 60% of works on a planned basis by September 2011. This will reduce the need for emergency and day to day repairs, save money by working in a more efficient way and give a better service to residents.

Resident involvement in monitoring performance

Residents on the Asset Management Panel helped develop performance indicators to measure performance of the new contract. Residents on the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group are involved in setting and monitoring performance targets for repairs & maintenance and scrutinising the performance of the new partnership through quarterly reports, which also go to the HMCC. Members of both groups sit on the partnership Core Group which has overall responsibility for monitoring the contract.



“The Asset Management Panel worked with the council and Mears to build a relationship that strengthened the repairs contract - including a 24 hour service for tenants.”

Samantha Griffiths, Asset Management Panel



“The Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group helps make sure major works are completed to the best possible standard.”

Brian Balchin, Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group

Adaptations

The council is committed to providing excellent services to people with additional care and support needs, and has budgeted £750,000 a year for aids and adaptations to enable older residents and those with disabilities to stay in their homes. We are training the Neighbourhood Response Team as ‘Trusted Assessors’, meaning they will be able to advise on the available options and fit some adaptations, such as hand rails, without residents having to wait.

We carried out 525 adaptations for disabled or elderly tenants in 2009/10.

We are now working to bring more council homes up to ‘Lifetime Homes’ and wheelchair accessible standards. When we carry out kitchen and bathroom works and work to empty properties, we assess whether the tenant needs any adaptations and whether the home is suitable for adaptation in the future.

The Chairman’s Adaptations Focus Group of residents helped develop a new preventative and streamlined approach to providing housing adaptations for residents with disabilities, which HMCC recommended for approval in December 2009. This is designed to improve customer satisfaction, speed up the process and give us better value for money.

Health & safety

The council has effective processes, monitoring and controls in place to comply with all health and safety requirements for gas, water, electricity, asbestos, fire risk and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

- 99.68% of homes had up to date gas safety certificates on 31 March 2010
- 34 properties were overdue as tenants would not give us access
- Our target for 2010/11 is 100%

Fire safety works

The council's fire safety and fire risk assessment programme to improve fire safety across our stock involves tailored solutions for the different types of buildings we manage. We have carried out a thorough review of fire safety arrangements in blocks of flats, working closely with the fire service. We have completed all priority work to tower blocks and put improved fire doors in many tower blocks as part of an ongoing city-wide programme. Priority work has also been carried out on other medium-height council blocks.

To improve our repairs and maintenance service to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Agree with residents a 'local offer' service pledge for repairs and maintenance.
- Produce a new Tenant Guide to Repairs with Mears and resident groups.
- Maintain and develop resident involvement at all levels of the repairs partnership.
- Monitor performance and costs to make sure we compare well with other landlords.
- Train the Neighbourhood Response Team to do minor adaptations for tenants with disabilities.

Tenancy

1. Allocations

We allocate housing in a fair, transparent and appropriate way, taking into account the diverse needs of tenants, to contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods and community cohesion

The council and all partner housing associations are part of our 'Homemove' choice based lettings scheme, which has a clear application, decision making and appeals process.



Homemove applications and lettings in 2009/10

Transfer applicants on the housing register	2,241
Other applicants - homeseekers - on the housing register	8,433
Total number of applicants on the housing register	10,674
Transfer applicants joining the housing register in 2009/10	430
Other applicants - homeseekers - joining the register in 2009/10	1,468
Total new applicants joining the housing register in 2009/10	1,898
Lets of council homes to transfer applicants in 2009/10	248
Lets of council homes to other applicants in 2009/10	571
Total lettings of council homes in 2009/10	819

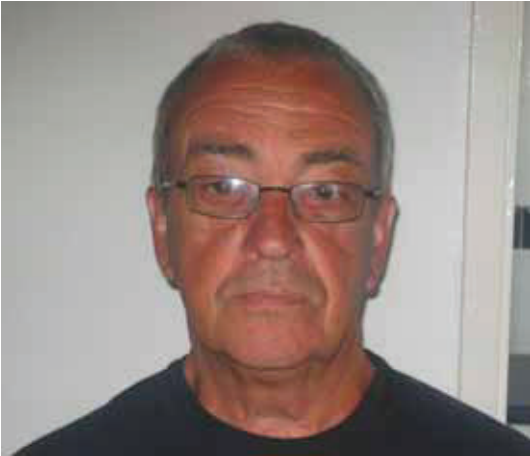
- 30% of council lettings went to transfer applicants in 2009/10
- 21% of people on the housing register were transfer applicants

We offer an 'assisted bid' service to those who need support to manage the system, and provide information to meet the needs of people with a disability, sight or hearing impairment and in other languages. Transfer applicants can receive advice and support to bid for vacancies from any of the five housing offices.

Older people applying for sheltered accommodation now have their support needs assessed by our sheltered co-ordinator, as well as their housing and medical needs. This ensures appropriate housing and support is offered.

We have a register of homes suitable for households with mobility needs, and advertise them accordingly. Applicants are assessed according to their mobility need so we achieve best use of our stock to meet the needs of our applicants.

We brought in local lettings plans to make best use of our stock and to balance communities after wide consultation. For example, giving priority to working families in the most deprived areas of the city, giving priority for sheltered residents to move within and between sheltered schemes and keeping some other blocks just for the over 50s.



“After detailed consultation with Housing Management we were delighted to retain the policy of priority allocation to persons over 50 in our blocks.”

Keith Cohen, Nettleton & Dudeney
Residents Association

How we involve tenants and potential tenants in the way we allocate homes

The tenant-led Review of Choice Based Lettings is currently examining the **Allocations policy** and Choice Based Lettings platform, to recommend changes that will ensure a fair and transparent system to allocate the limited available accommodation to those most in need while trying to promote balanced communities and neighbourhoods of choice. The results of the review will go out to full 12 week consultation at the beginning of autumn 2010 when homeseekers, tenants and interested parties in the city will be consulted about any proposed changes.

Residents’ Area Housing Management Panels were closely involved in the previous review of the **Allocations policy** in summer 2009. In addition, 10% of homeseekers and 10% of transfer applicants were invited to give their views on the draft policy.

The Homemove Questionnaire is sent each year to 10% of homeseekers and 10% of transfer applicants asking questions about experience of services. There have been service improvements as a result, for example, a new telephone system to avoid callers receiving an engaged tone when the line was busy.



“Since the Choice Based Lettings Review started things are a lot more positive – communication has greatly improved now that we meet together with officers and can express the tenants’ views and anxieties. Communication has never been better.”

Heather Hayes, Choice Based Lettings Review Group

Tenants complained about incorrect property adverts in the Homemove magazine. So we involved tenants in the drafting of property adverts following a tenant focus group. Now adverts are more accurate and applicants get better information.

Transfer incentive and mutual exchange schemes

Council tenants in Brighton & Hove can get up to £3,500 for downsizing from a family home or wheelchair adapted property they no longer need, or finding their own home in the private sector. Sixty-nine tenants moved through the scheme in 2009/10, including 21 tenants who moved to the private sector. This released 43 three, four and five bedroom properties to let to families in housing need.

Tenants can also move using our mutual exchange scheme.

- 149 tenants moved by doing a mutual exchange in 2009/10

To find out more about the Transfer Incentive and Mutual Exchange schemes, contact your housing office.

When tenants sign up for a tenancy we make an appointment for our eBenefits service to quickly make a Housing Benefit claim and provide financial advice. Early referrals for tenancy support can be made to our Tenancy Sustainment Team. We continue to improve on the time it takes to carry out works to empty council homes and let them to new tenants. In 2009/10, we cut 2½ days off the previous year's figure and beat our target. This is just outside the top 25% of other landlords we compare ourselves against.

- 25½ days – average time to relet an empty home in 2009/10

New tenants told us they wanted more time to move into their new home.

So we now let new tenants pick up the keys on any day of the week before their tenancy starts, making it easier for them to get organised and settle in.

To improve our allocations and lettings service to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Work towards making Homemove a one-stop shop for all housing options, including the private rented sector, in order to offer a greater range of choice.
- Support vulnerable homeseekers by offering them personalised property lists.
- Improve our feedback to applicants with both personalised and general feedback.
- Review how the Local Lettings Plans are working and report to Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- Complete the tenant-led review of the Choice Based Lettings System, including exploring ways to relieve overcrowding. The review group will report back to the Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- Review our lettings processes and information using customer feedback from new tenants.

If you want to move to another council or a housing association home, we advertise properties fortnightly in our free magazine **homemove** - available from council offices and on www.homemove.org.uk

2. Rents

The rents part of the TSA's Tenancy standard does not apply to councils. Our rents are set according to government rules. Information about our performance in collecting rent and dealing with rent arrears is included in the Tenure and Value for Money sections of this report.

3. Tenure

We will continue to work with tenants and leaseholders to provide an effective housing management service and support to fulfil their rights and responsibilities

All new tenants are signed up on Introductory Tenancies.

In 2009/10, we worked with resident representatives to produce a new, clearer **Tenancy Agreement** and a **Tenant Handbook**. We had 2400 responses to the consultation on the draft agreement which included valuable feedback on our services and service improvements. We also produced an easy to read, illustrated tenancy guide to go with the agreement in May 2010.



“Tenants worked closely with council officers to produce a tenancy agreement that clearly sets out the rights and obligations of both parties.”

Barry Hughes, Tenancy Agreement Focus Group

In response to the findings in the mystery shopping exercise in December 2009 we are developing our resource pack to enable all front line staff to provide consistent, accurate information about other council and local services.

‘Staff are aware of the importance of preventative work to reduce evictions – focus on financial inclusion. Evictions have reduced significantly. Good, quick access to money advice. Liaison between the Income Team and Housing Benefit is strong. The introduction of eBenefits has enabled faster Housing Benefit processing. Effective use is being made of discretionary housing payments to reduce any Housing Benefit shortfall for vulnerable tenants.’

Audit Commission advice & assistance visit March 2009

The Housing Income Management Team work with tenants to help them avoid getting into debt and to repay arrears if they get into difficulties. They now do a financial health check with new tenants to help maximise income and prioritise bills and use eBenefits to claim Housing Benefit quickly.

We are consulting residents on a draft **financial inclusion strategy**, developed with residents and other stakeholders, which aims to support residents by making sure they have access to appropriate financial products and services. We work to support tenants to keep their tenancy and prevent homelessness.

The Tenancy Sustainment Team works with tenants with complex support needs, co-ordinating services from other services to reduce anti-social behaviour and resolve issues without the need for court action or eviction. The team offers all our tenants support to achieve their potential, whether it is a single intervention or a longer term package of support measures. We concentrate on those most at risk, and help tenants gain skills and employment to help them improve their circumstances.

In 2009/10 we met our targets for helping tenants maintain their tenancy:

- 14 households were evicted for rent arrears, putting us in the best 25% of landlords
- We served 753 Notices of Seeking Possession compared to 917 the year before
- Three tenants were evicted for anti-social behaviour

We carry out a series of home visits to new tenants during the first year of their tenancy to check all is well. We also carry out tenancy visits to around half our tenants each year to check on their needs, pick up any problems with the property or that tenants may have and direct them to support where they need it.

We revised our tenancy checklist in 2009 to place greater emphasis on prevention and detection of tenancy fraud - to make sure our homes continue to be occupied by the tenants we let them to. The visits completed during 2009 showed a low level of sub-letting within our stock – only two led to legal action - but we are participating in an Anti Tenancy Fraud Project to make sure that our homes continue to be occupied by the tenants we let them to.

Turning the Tide

The draft Social Exclusion Strategy "**Turning the Tide**" outlines our response as a landlord to the findings of the **Reducing Inequalities Review** carried out in 2007, which highlighted the levels of multiple deprivation and inequality experienced by residents in social housing in Brighton & Hove. We are currently trying out new approaches and actions to deal with these issues, including an enhanced tenancy check, which will be evaluated and then developed citywide. This will feed into a final draft of the Turning the Tide strategy which will go for consultation in spring 2011.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council makes it clear what is expected with the tenancy. They know how to get support for family and financial problems and where to go for support and guidance:

"From personal experience they will take it seriously."

"They would listen. Good to know there is support."

But some said housing officers can be hard to get hold of.

To improve our tenancy management services to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Issue the new **tenant handbook** to all tenants.
- Set up a tenant panel to consult about our tenancy management policies and procedures and publish clear and accessible policies outlining our approach to managing tenancies.
- After consulting with residents, put the finalised financial inclusion strategy into practice.
- Review our processes for new tenants to make sure we know about any support needs before they move in and that all new tenants have a full understanding of their rights and responsibilities.
- Continue our work on identifying and dealing with people fraudulently living in council housing.

If you think someone is unlawfully subletting their council home, please contact your housing office.

Neighbourhood & Community

1. Neighbourhood management

We aim to make all estates and blocks cleaner, greener and safer places to live to improve the quality of life for all residents

74% of tenants surveyed in 2008 were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, compared to an average of 75.2% of council tenants nationally.

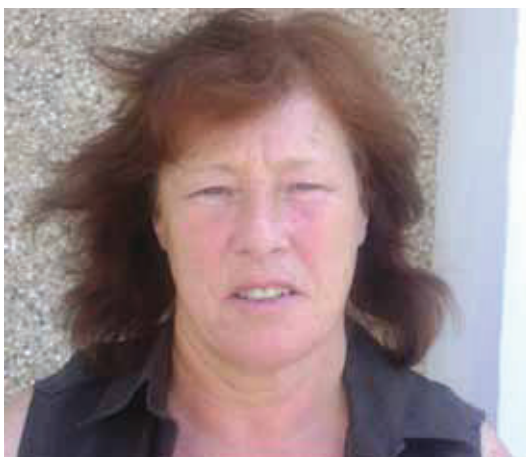
STATUS survey 2008



The residents' Estates Service Monitoring Group reviewed our Estates Service and worked closely with staff in 2009/10 to improve our cleaning and estates services.

Cleaning

Since April 2009 dedicated cleaners have been based at all high rise buildings, with a small number of mobile cleaning teams travelling to flats in the outer parts of the city. We reviewed service charges when the changes were introduced so the cleaning service now covers its costs. Most cleaners and all Cleaning Managers have qualifications in cleaning (NVQ Level 2 and the British Institute of Cleaning Science Proficiency Certificate). Resident satisfaction with the cleaning of common ways has generally improved.



“The cleaning in our block has really improved after the Estates Service Review.”

Linda King, Estates Service Monitoring Group

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views agreed that the council keeps their block/ estate and communal areas clean and safe or that it partly does so. Comments on cleaning ranged from **“Poor state of cleanliness”** to **“Cleaning has greatly improved since we had our ‘dedicated’ cleaner.”**

Tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council is working well trying to keep communal areas clean: **“The council do their best.”**

Neighbourhood Response team

In 2009 the Neighbourhood Response team was re-organised as part of the Estates Service review. This team assess and carry out repairs to common parts and provide a rapid response for vulnerable residents who are locked out or who need small repairs. They also take part in estate inspections, carrying out small landlord repairs such as tightening up common way door closers at the time of the inspection, which is popular with residents.

The Estates Service responded exceptionally well to the snowy weather before and after Christmas, gritting areas, helping vulnerable residents and working with the sheltered service to get groceries for residents.

- Emergency bulk refuse removal – 98.6% removed within our target of 24 hours
- Emergency graffiti removal – 84.3% removed within our target of 24 hours in 2009/10

We work closely with the council’s refuse, recycling and park services in the management of our neighbourhoods and invite them to Area Panel meetings to discuss local issues of concern to residents.

Community Wardens

Community Wardens act as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the council, visiting new and vulnerable residents, dealing with low level nuisance and being a visible presence on estates. Since the Community Wardens became part of the local housing teams at the end of 2008 the service has developed considerably, with individual wardens working closely with local residents’ associations and bringing together relevant services to address environmental and low level community safety problems in the neighbourhoods they work in.



Grounds maintenance

The Estates Service Monitoring Group also have a key role in reviewing and monitoring grounds maintenance. Residents have indicated that grounds maintenance is an area of concern in terms of the quality of service provided and value for money so we have launched a project with resident involvement to present a range of options for an improved service. This project includes:

- seeking the views from residents on the service they would like to receive and providing a menu of costed options so they have a real choice.
- reviewing the value for money of the current service, streamlining processes and avoiding duplication.

- supporting more local initiatives to maintain areas of communal space, from looking after flower beds to community allotment schemes.



“The Estates Service Monitoring Group has worked with Housing Management to begin pilot projects that will improve green spaces in Brighton & Hove.”

Rita King, Estates Service Monitoring Group



“After a two hour inspection of our grounds, managers provided an honest and forthright report which will help the grounds maintenance review.”

Valerie Paynter, Clarendon & Ellen Residents Association

We are also improving our estates by taking action against people whose gardens are not of an acceptable standard and recharging tenants the cost of work to put this right.

Estate inspections and ‘Rate your Estate’

Estates are inspected quarterly by local residents, councillors and staff who can pick up any outstanding or unreported works that are needed.

In 2009/10 staff, residents and councillors carried out 420 estate inspections

Join us on our local estate inspections four times a year. You can talk to staff, contractors, tenant representatives and councillors about issues and priorities for your estate or block.



Estate inspection, Wiltshire House

Contact your housing office or see your community notice board to find out when your next estate inspection is due and the results of the last one.

Our Turning the Tide project in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean is piloting enhanced estate inspections with a 'Rate Your Estate' initiative where residents are trained to assess and photograph areas of their communities that need improvement.



“I’m very excited about Rate Your Estate - I think it’s a fantastic idea which could transform areas! I hope a lot more residents will get trained and join us!”

Michelle Guyatt, Bevendean Tenants Association

Housing and Estates Forum

A pilot Housing and Estates Forum is being tried out in the Moulsecoomb area of the city to ensure that residents' local priorities are being met and to improve the quality of involved in monitoring performance against them. They receive performance indicator information, provide feedback to the council and the partners we work with, and look to increase the level of resident participation in the delivery of housing services. This group has started to go with housing staff on communal inspections highlighting repair priorities and estate improvements.

Fire Safety

East Sussex Fire & Rescue are working closely with us to improve fire safety across all the council's housing stock and fire officers came to all Area Panels to advise on arrangements to keep residents safe. As a result, we have introduced a clean, clear and safe approach to items left in common ways which could pose a risk to residents and fire fighters if there were a fire.

We are making sure residents know what to do in the event of a fire with more signs and publicity on fire safety for all residents. And personal emergency evacuation plans are being put in place for the most vulnerable residents.

Fire safety in sheltered schemes

In 2009 we made sure all sheltered schemes had a publicly displayed 'delayed evacuation plan' and put up fire assembly points so schemes could be evacuated smoothly. All tenants who use oxygen cylinders have received a sticker for their front door so the fire brigade are aware in an emergency.

All sheltered residents have an annual fire safety talk, attended by East Sussex Fire & Rescue where possible, and an annual written reminder on fire safety practices. All scheme managers have received fire safety training and in July 2010 all sheltered tenant representatives have been invited to a fire briefing in preparation for the introduction of fire drills in the service.

We also reviewed our procedures for supporting our most vulnerable residents in the event of emergencies such as lift breakdown. We now have a record of which residents to contact as a priority in an emergency.

We are developing a mobility scooter strategy as we have many older or less agile residents and need to find safe ways to store these scooters.

The Estates Service is a member of Housemark's Estates Service Club and is joining in their new benchmarking exercise to compare our performance and costs in cleaning and grounds maintenance with other landlords. In May we carried out a peer review with Crawley Borough Council to check out each other's service.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views agreed that the council works in partnership with residents and other organisations to maintain and improve their neighbourhood or that it partly does so. Comments ranged from: **“Only when it suits the council”** to **“Excellent assistance offered.”**

To improve our neighbourhood management services to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Develop a policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with residents' homes, working with the Estates Service Monitoring Group. This will include how we will work with residents to deal for example, with vandalism and graffiti.
- Develop and agree with residents service pledges on the estates service and tenancy management, including grounds maintenance, as part of 'local offers'.
- Carry out resident satisfaction surveys for key estates identified by Estate Services Monitoring Group and test customer satisfaction with our cleaning and other estate services and their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- Encourage more residents to get involved in estate inspections, particularly those who said they were interested in them in the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire.
- Evaluate the Rate your Estate and Housing and Estates Forum initiatives in the 'Turning the Tide' pilot in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean and, if residents agree they are successful, introduce them across the other areas of the city.
- Develop comprehensive emergency response procedures for in and out of office hours – response to gas leaks, electricity supply failure, lift breakdown, severe weather, etc.
- Continue to implement improvements to fire safety and introduce fire drills in sheltered schemes.
- Work with the Estates Service Monitoring Group and local residents in one area of the city to work towards achieving the Keep Britain Tidy Kitemark.
- Complete the review of mobility scooter policy and storage.

2. Local Area Co-operation

We will work together with residents and other organisations to help make your neighbourhood a better place to live

The role we play in making safe and empowering communities of opportunity is set out in our **Housing Strategy 2009-2014: Healthy Homes, Healthy Lives, Healthy City**. Tenants were very involved through consultation on this strategy in setting the direction of the whole city's housing services. So, too, were community and voluntary sector groups and housing association representatives.

We work closely with partners to ensure we provide an excellent tenancy management service including:

- working with residents and the Community Payback Team to develop a programme to benefit residents citywide
- acting as lead partners in community clear up days.
- working with residents and partners to set up neighbourhood agreements, such as the Bristol Estate Neighbourhood Action Plan and Community Safety Project.

“The organic allotment has brought the community together and let them learn and have fun at the same time.”

Maggie Smeeth, Twineham Close Garden Project (see photo on front cover)



“Working with the payback team has greatly improved the appearance of the Bristol Estate. Serendipity community development organisation have also helped create a better atmosphere on the estate and brought people together.”

Ray Freeman, Bristol Estate Community Association

An elected tenant representative sits on the city's Community Safety Forum that we work with in dealing with anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where our residents live.



“The Community Safety Forum allows residents to raise their concerns about vital safety issues, including hate crime.”

John Stevens, Community Safety Forum

Our sheltered services work in close partnership with a wide range of supportive organisations to provide care, support and social activities for our older residents, such as:

- health and social care, who run stop smoking clinics and a falls prevention surgery at our sheltered schemes
- Age Concern, who run a range of social activities in eleven schemes, including nintendo wii sessions. Nearly 100 residents have joined in.
- Creating Timelines has run a programme of reminiscence events in schemes.
- Grey Matters runs an older people's radio's service from one of the council's sheltered schemes.
- in 2010 in partnership with Leach Court tenants, the council was awarded £4,000 from the Get Digital campaign for a media and activity centre in the scheme.

Around £48,000 of voluntary staff hours are thought to have been invested in the council's sheltered schemes over the last two years.

Sheltered services work closely with residents and local community groups to ensure that, where possible, schemes benefit older people living nearby. The Warm-welcome Club in Whitehawk, the Forget-me-not Club in Hangleton and a tenant run lunch club in Sanders House all help tackle social isolation in the community.



“We’re working together with officers to cut down energy use and carbon emissions – this will save residents money and improve their health.”

Beverley Weaver,
Energy Efficiency Working Group

The Cabinet Member for Housing's Energy Efficiency Working Group of residents, staff and councillors was set up in 2009 after concerns and meetings about increased fuel bills – particularly for tenants living in high-rise blocks of flats. It is now looking at how to reduce all residents' fuel bills and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by reducing energy use in council owned homes and at cutting water bills. It is getting training from the Energy Saving Trust for tenant 'energy champions', to give energy advice on simple actions around the home that everyone can make to reduce fuel bills.

The group is also looking to support sustainable communities by encouraging residents to grow food and other activities with their neighbours on local housing land. It is also looking at possible funding for 'retro-fitting' our homes to make them more energy efficient and therefore cheaper to run and keep warm.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who responded thought the council could do more to co-operate with other organisations to promote social, environmental and economic well-being, though some were not clear what this standard really meant. One representative suggested we:

“Inform [resident or tenant associations] who the other organisations [are] within the community to help support and also so local volunteers are able to work and communicate with these organisations.”

To improve our services to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Let you know how we co-operate and work with relevant partners to help provide social, environmental and economic well being in your area
- Ensure we work effectively and co-operatively with other agencies.

3. Anti-social behaviour

Acts of nuisance, tenancy breach and anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated – they will be challenged and actions taken

We use a full range of tools to combat anti-social behaviour (ASB) – including Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, mediation, injunctions, Noise Abatement Notices, demoted tenancies and possession action - and our housing management standards reflect the government's Respect Standard. We have close effective working arrangements with police and other agencies and are active partners in Local Action Teams, Joint Action Groups, drugs intelligence partnerships and local crime prevention initiatives.

In addition:

- Our new **tenancy agreement** and **handbook** set clear behaviour standards. The residents' focus group made sure it included clauses on nuisance issues that tenants are concerned about, including noisy laminate flooring and pets.
- Our approach is robust and assertive actions to address ASB.
- Our approach is early intervention and staff emphasise what is expected of tenants at new tenancy visits.
- We have links to specialist hate crime support caseworkers including for racial and homophobic harassment.
- We are piloting an innovative new approach, linking social and financial inclusion, support and enforcement in a holistic prevention and response to ASB.
- We use an independent mediation service which has proved very effective.
- We use diversionary activities to provide young people with activities on estates, such as Kickz (football) and Green Fingers gardening club in Whitehawk.
- We tell residents about ASB news through our resident newsletter, Homing In. This highlights our efforts to tackle ASB and informs residents about how to report ASB and how they can help us.

Complaints of ASB are firstly made to housing offices, who deal with most cases. The Antisocial Behaviour Team deals with the most serious cases of ASB. In 2009/10 the team successfully obtained a 'premises closure order', working with Sussex Police to use new legal powers to shut a property down in an extreme case of all-night parties, verbal abuse and intimidation.

We also took injunctions against two people who were causing severe problems. When the injunctions were broken they were sent to prison.

In four very serious cases, the team got possession orders - one tenant stopped the ASB and the other three were evicted.

Anti-social behaviour case study

A tenant in a block of flats was causing tremendous nuisance by playing loud music at all times including during the night and early morning.

Neighbours suffered great disturbance and couldn't get away from the noise in their own homes. They were often not able to sleep and were woken up during the night.

We worked very closely with Environmental Health and the police. The tenant had his

noise making equipment seized and the council obtained an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) to stop him from making more noise.

However, he continued to cause nuisance and breached the ASBO. He was therefore arrested in early January, convicted and sentenced to 16 months in prison. In the meantime we got full possession of his flat and evicted him.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Residents who gave us their views generally agreed that it is easy to report anti-social behaviour (ASB) to the council. We had some positive feedback:

“Yes I am pleased with the way that we can report anti social behaviour and the way officers can support tenant”

“The help and support that I am receiving from my Anti Social Behaviour Housing Officer is improving my life.”

But several residents felt the council could do more to make tenants aware of their responsibilities and rights on ASB and to offer support to victims of ASB and witnesses.

Suggestions included:

“Listen and act. Do not just collect a paper trail.”

“Needs follow up once anti-social behaviour has initially been dealt with.”

Tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council does not have a strong emphasis on preventative measures for ASB and it isn't always given the immediate attention it deserves. They felt the council is expecting tenants affected by ASB to police it themselves by having to fill in a diary. Many don't bother to complain. The perception is that the council takes a long time to sort out ASB. Many realised that this is often down to legal procedures of collecting evidence and not always the council's fault, but still it is frustrating: **“It's a long drawn out process if you are living in fear and despair.”**

Since October 2009 the Antisocial Behaviour Team has been operating city wide under the Turning the Tide project. This is to ensure that all of the city's tenants can benefit from the refocused approach to ASB.

The Turning the Tide project has

- Increased the focus on robust management of anti-social behaviour and earlier interventions.
- Improved the way we manage cases.
- Extended and embedded joint working with partner agencies.
- Expanded the ASB recording system to allow for more detailing reporting.

We measure our performance on ASB against service standards. We record all ASB complaints and responses and analyse them to identify patterns which are used for service planning. We also record customer satisfaction with ASB case handling and outcomes.

In January to March 2010, 69.5% of tenants affected by ASB dealt with by the Antisocial Behaviour Team were satisfied or very satisfied (48.5%) with how the team handled the problem and the final outcome.



“The Leaseholders Action Group made dealing with neighbourhood nuisance, which can also be caused by tenants of leaseholders, a priority and worked with the council to produce new information keeping everyone better informed.”

Linda Shaw, Leaseholders Action Group

To improve our services to you on anti-social behaviour, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Work with the new residents' Anti-social Behaviour Focus Group to improve the way we deal with anti-social behaviour.
- Implement the national standards for dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- Introduce improved service standards for victims and witnesses of ASB as part of a 'local offer' service pledge for anti-social behaviour to be agreed with residents and in place by 1 April 2011. These will ensure that we will provide a more intensive level of service for residents who are most vulnerable and at risk.

Contact your housing office if you have any concerns about anti-social behaviour.

Value for Money

We will continue to involve residents in working to ensure that the services we provide meet your priorities, are high quality and at the right cost

Making better use of public money is one of the council's priorities and we aim to reduce our costs while also improving our services to you. We have already made significant progress to help bring down our costs, while continuing to improve our performance and services to residents. We have been redirecting resources to meet residents' priorities, particularly improvements to tenants' homes and our estates.

In the 2008 Status survey, tenants told us that value for money for your rent is one of the three most important issues for you. So we are taking action to provide you with better services and homes while trimming our costs.

Some of the ways we have improved value for money include:

- making efficiency savings across all our budgets
- £2 million savings from the two year entrance door programme
- reducing current tenant arrears significantly in the last five years
- increasing income by reducing the time it takes to repair and re-let empty properties
- offering cheaper contents insurance to tenants and leaseholders
- recharging more tenants for deliberate damage or neglect and improving collection rates on these debts
- freeing up Housing Officers to spend more time out visiting tenants and properties.

Residents told us we should be more flexible with outgoing tenants who often had to throw away good carpets and fittings new tenants might want.

So now when we visit the outgoing tenant we agree with them what they can leave behind – meaning less waste and better value for money.

Costs of managing your home

We reduced the cost of managing tenants' homes from £18.58 per property per week in 2005/6 to £17.11 in 2008/9 and £17.03 in 2009/10. We aim to further reduce our costs so that we compare better with the best landlords.

'The council is improving value for money. Housing management costs have reduced to average when compared to other councils.'

Draft report of the Audit Commission Review of the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Contract,
July 2010

Costs of repairs and improvements

Improving the way the council buys repairs and maintenance services helped to reduce maintenance costs for tenants' homes from £18.82 per property per week in 2006/7 to £18.50 in 2008/9. In 2009/10 we carried out more works to tenants' homes and spent £20.02 per rented property per week. These are our costs on responsive (day-to-day) repairs, empty properties, gas servicing and other service contracts, such as for lift maintenance.

The new partnership with Mears will provide even greater savings as well as improving the quality of works and bringing wider community benefits such as apprenticeships. These savings, along with some borrowing plus funding from the Local Delivery Vehicle, will enable all tenants' homes to be brought up to Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views said the council partly meets the standard of providing cost effective, efficient, quality services and homes to meet tenants' needs. Comments included:

“Cost effective – yes; efficient – yes; quality services – no.”

“The rent is value for money. Limited services are offered.”

“They should not just tell us about things they have done but also what they are going to do. Let us know how much things are going to cost.”

Involving you in ensuring value for money

We will continue to keep residents informed of our work to reduce costs and improve services through Homing In and regular updates to HMCC and other resident meetings.

Residents have been consulted on our 30 year business plan and budget strategy and are involved in setting the revenue and capital budgets. For example:

- residents decide how to spend the Estate Development Budget each year, to meet their local priorities
- the annual budget is discussed with resident representatives at HMCC
- residents helped to develop the £76 million three year capital programme.

Benchmarking

We compare our performance against other landlords through a 'benchmarking' organisation for landlords called Housemark and using information published by central government and government agencies.

We compare ourselves against similar landlords and the best performing ones to provide us with a robust comparison and the opportunity to explore where improvements can be made. We produce benchmarking reports on tenant satisfaction, our performance and now on costs, as recommended by the Audit Commission.

Resident representatives at HMCC see our performance reports every three months, which include comparisons with the top performing landlords.

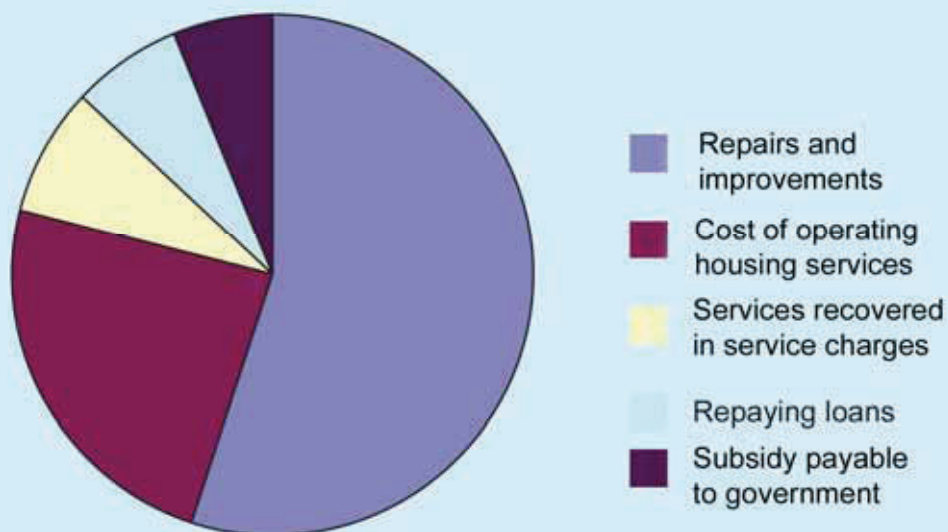
'The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan reflects the principles of effective service planning and the full range of housing management challenges faced by the council. Understanding of costs and use of benchmarking is an area for development.'

Audit Commission advice & assistance visit March 2009

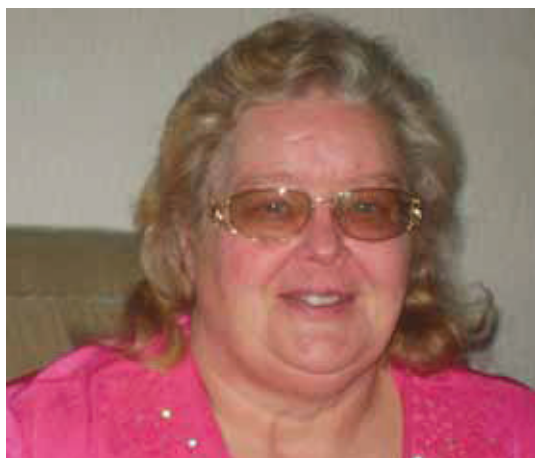
Rents

In 2009/10 the average rent was £65.72 per week and the pie chart below shows how we spent it.

How we spent tenants' rents and service charges in 2009/10



We have reduced the time taken to set up rent accounts and process Housing Benefit applications leading to improved satisfaction with the service. In 2009/10 we collected 98.29% of rent due from tenants and improved performance on collecting former tenancy arrears.



“Rent collection is still going up so there’s more to spend on services.”

Tina Urquhart, Housing Income Management Monitoring Group

‘Staff are provided with clear procedures and policies in relation to rent collection and recovery. A broad range of initiatives are used to promote a rent payment culture (e.g. signs on vans). The introduction of eBenefits has enabled faster Housing Benefit processing. Service charges are disaggregated and are shown clearly on rent increase letters. Former tenants’ arrears are being actively managed - use made of prompt tracing.’

Audit Commission advice & assistance visit March 2009

In 2009 we consulted with the Leaseholders Action Group Committee on a new major works leaflet with comprehensive payment advice and information for leaseholders when consulted or billed for works of £250 or more. This was agreed and is now being used to inform leaseholders of all aspects of major works, the costs and the help with payment that may be available.

In 2009/10 we achieved our highest ever collection rate of leaseholder service charges.

Service charges

Residents have helped us to increase value for money, improve services and reduce service charges. Some examples include:

- resident led reviews of the Estates Service
- cheaper alarms
- achieving £100,000 annual savings from a new electricity contract which will be passed onto residents in reduced service charges
- saving £25,000 a year through the resident-led new laundry contract.



“The brand new laundry contract will definitely save money and we will no longer have to subsidise the service.”

Faith Matyszak MBE, Laundry Facilities Group

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Residents who gave us their views were divided on whether the council provides value for money for their rent and service charge. All tenants in the TSA focus groups were happy with the rent they pay but none felt involved in the spending on services. Some thought this would be a huge task to try to involve tenants. When they were asked whether they would be willing to pay extra for better quality services there was a strong reaction against the idea.



“The LDV aims to give the council best value for money for properties in need of refurbishment.”

Roy Crowhurst, Tenant Board Member,
Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes

Making best use of our housing and land assets

We are looking at opportunities for building new council homes on housing land that we own to make best use of our assets and meet the high demand for more homes.

Residents from the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel will be working with us on this project.

To improve the value for money of our services to you, by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Introduce more efficient and effective ways of running services.
- Get better value for money in repairs and works to empty homes.
- Develop our benchmarking and provide more benchmarking information to residents so you can compare our performance and costs to other landlords.
- Review with residents the format for reports and include costs of our services so residents can:
 - develop a detailed understanding of the costs of our services
 - challenge how our costs compare to other landlords
 - see how we have prioritised expenditure
 - see how we have secured and tested value for money
- Through the published three year programme of capital works, give leaseholders access to more current and accurate information on planned works to buildings, some of which may give rise to leaseholder service charges.

Our housing offices

Open Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm (reception closes at 4.30pm on a Friday)

- **Lavender Street Housing Office** 01273 293260
email: LavenderStreetOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Manor Place Housing Office** 01273 293200
email: ManorPlaceOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Oxford Street Housing Office** 01273 293230
email: OxfordStreetOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Selsfield Drive Housing Office** 01273 293171
email: SelsfieldDriveOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Victoria Road Housing Office** 01273 293377
email: VictoriaRoadOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office.	
ترجمة؟ ضع علامة في المربع وخذها إلى مكتب البلدية.	Arabic <input type="checkbox"/>
অনুবাদ? বক্সে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান।	Bengali <input type="checkbox"/>
需要翻譯? 請在這方格內加剔, 並送回任何市議會的辦事處。	Cantonese <input type="checkbox"/>
ترجمه؟ لطفا این مربع را علامتگذاری نموده و آن را به هر یک از دفاتر شهرداری ارائه نمایید.	Farsi <input type="checkbox"/>
Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council.	French <input type="checkbox"/>
需要翻譯? 請在這方格內划勾, 并送回任何市议会的办事处。	Mandarin <input type="checkbox"/>
Tłumaczenie? Zaznacz to okienko i zwróć do któregoś z biura samorządu lokalnego (council office).	Polish <input type="checkbox"/>
Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office).	Portuguese <input type="checkbox"/>
Tercümesi için kareyi işaretleyiniz ve bir semt belediye burosuna veriniz	Turkish <input type="checkbox"/>
	other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>
This can also be made available in large print, Braille, or on CD or audio tape	

Housing Management
Brighton & Hove City Council
Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2SR

If you would like any more information or documents mentioned in this report please look on our website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing or contact your housing office or council.housing@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Please let us know what you think of this annual report and what you would like in a future year's report. Send your comments to Carol Jenkins, Housing Stock Review Manager, Room 235, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2SR, or email carol.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk





Summary annual report to tenants and leaseholders 2010

Our vision is to provide excellent
housing management services,
with our residents at the heart of
everything we do



Brighton & Hove
City Council



I'm pleased to report that we achieved some big improvements to our services in 2009/10, working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders

Maria Caulfield,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Welcome to this summary annual report setting out our performance as a landlord in the year ending 31 March 2010 and our commitments to council tenants and leaseholders for this current year.

Residents have a very powerful influence at Brighton & Hove City Council. In this report council tenants and leaseholders show how closely residents are involved in shaping our housing policies and priorities and the ways we provide landlord services, and in checking on our performance.

I'm pleased to report that we achieved some big improvements to our services in 2009/10 and better value for money, working together with tenants and leaseholders. For example, the new repairs partnership we have developed with residents will help us to bring every tenant's home up to the Decent Homes Standard and provide a better service to all of you. And the new ways of working with residents to improve life on estates that we have been trying out in the Turning the Tide pilot in East Brighton have been so successful that we expect to extend them across the city.

We still have room for improvement, however. This report reflects the feedback we've had from tenants and leaseholders on how

you think we perform and where we need to improve. It sets out how we intend to work with you to provide excellent housing management services, with our residents at the heart of everything we do.

I would like to thank all our tenant and resident representatives, members of the Housing Management Consultative Committee and staff who have worked very hard in the last year to bring about real improvements in our housing service. By working closely together, we are making steady progress towards achieving excellence in all our housing services and making the improvements we set out in our Service Improvement Plan 2009-12.

I would also like to thank the council tenant representatives and other board members of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes, the housing company set up by the council to raise investment for improvements to council tenants' homes. They have been working hard to get our 'Local Delivery Vehicle' project up and running and we hope that will be achieved in this financial year.

Maria Caulfield,
Cabinet Member for Housing

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The sections in this annual report set out how we meet the standards set by the Tenant Services Authority for council and housing association landlords, any gaps and our improvement plans. They include feedback from tenants and leaseholders who gave us their views in questionnaires, exercises and one-off focus group meetings to talk about the TSA standards.

At 31 March 2010 Brighton & Hove City Council owned and managed 12,302 rented homes across Brighton, Hove and Portslade, including 848 flats in 23 sheltered schemes. Another 2,235 flats in our blocks were owned by leaseholders.

Introduction

How tenants and leaseholders have been involved in producing and checking this annual report

This is your annual report and we have tried to involve as many tenants and leaseholders as we could in reporting how we perform as a landlord and what we need and intend to do to improve. We set out to produce an informative, honest and accurate annual report – a true picture of our strengths and weaknesses and what tenants and leaseholders think of us, in their own words.

Representatives from our many residents' associations and working groups explain what they have achieved in 2009/10. We also include the views and comments of tenants and leaseholders who helped us assess how we meet the new standards for social housing landlords set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Their feedback indicates we need to make some improvements to fully meet all the TSA standards. We will work with residents to do this. We have outlined in the report how we meet the standards, any gaps and what we plan to do by 31 March 2011 to improve our services to you.

Throughout July we consulted all resident associations and groups on a draft of the full annual report. We also put it on our website for comment, emailed residents on our resident

involvement database for their views and made copies available at our housing offices. It also went on our Tenant Forum. Over 100 comments were gratefully received from residents and the Homing In Tenant Editorial Board, which helped us shape the final report. It was agreed by the Housing Management Consultative Committee including tenant and leaseholder representatives.

"There will always be shortcomings and failings, but I am impressed by determination to improve as shown in draft annual report." Resident comment on the consultation draft report

This summary of the full annual report has been sent to all tenants and leaseholders with September's Homing In magazine. If you want to know more about our performance and plans, you can get a more detailed report from your housing office, our website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing, by email council.housing@brighton-hove.gov.uk or phone 01273 290591. Please contact your housing office if you have any other queries.

Nick Hibberd,
Assistant Director Housing Management

HMCC meeting scrutinising draft annual report 1 September 2010

Tenant and leaseholder representatives at the Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) are consulted before all key decisions are made about Housing Management, including our priorities, policies and the ways we provide housing services. They are involved in setting our budget and monitor our performance.



"Housing Management Consultative Committee makes the council officers and managers account for their performance."

Beryl Snelling, HMCC
tenant representative



Section 1

Resident involvement and empowerment

With tenants' and leaseholders' involvement, we will learn from what you tell us and provide excellent customer service that meets your needs. We will agree our aims and targets with residents and report our performance so you can hold us to account and check that we meet our commitments.

Customer service, choice and complaints

Customer service

How are we doing?

Resident volunteers have been trained as 'mystery shoppers' to test our customer service at housing offices and the Repairs Desk. They found most staff were friendly, helpful, knowledgeable and polite. The few staff who did not meet the standard were supported and coached to improve their customer service skills.

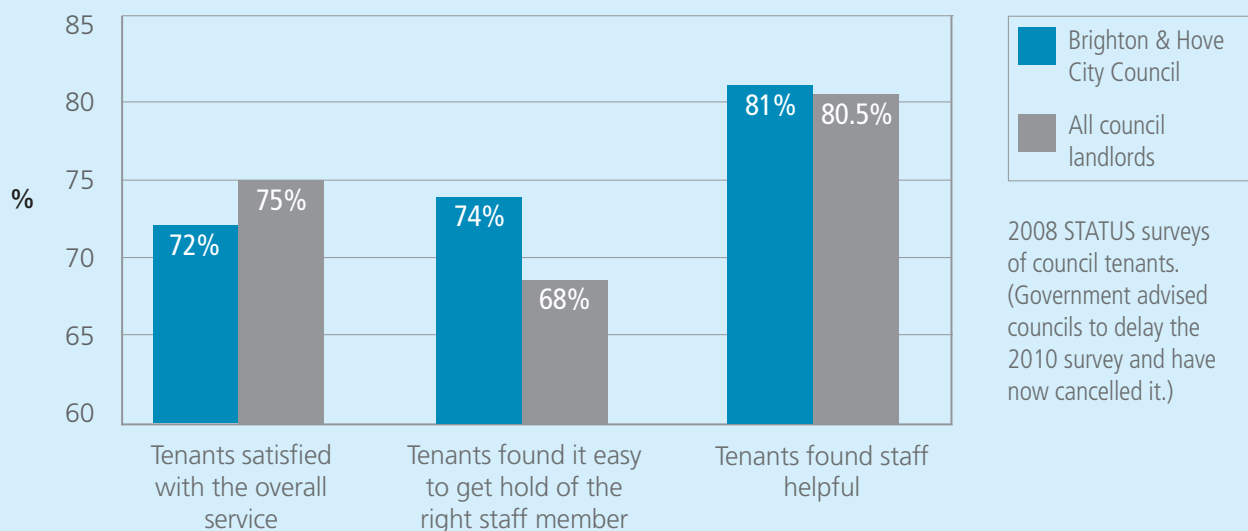
"Mystery shopping helps ensure the standard of customer service within Housing Management remains constantly high." Tenant mystery shopper

We regularly ask tenants and leaseholders how satisfied they are with different parts of our service. For example, 93% of the 39 sheltered tenants who completed a survey in February-March 2010 were very satisfied (57%) or satisfied (36%) with our sheltered service overall. No-one was dissatisfied.

"I have now been here for three months and can say I am very happy with all aspects of living here." New tenant at a sheltered scheme, February 2010

We use residents' feedback to make improvements. For example, we're working to improve customer satisfaction with our out of hours sheltered service and worked with the Community Payback Team to revamp sheltered scheme gardens.

How do we compare? Tenant satisfaction with the Housing Management service





"The payback team were courteous and considerate to tenants, they worked hard and we were pleasantly surprised by what they achieved."

Charles Penrose, Sloane Court Tenants Association

72% of leaseholders who answered a survey in early 2010 were satisfied with the council as their leasehold manager, compared to 68% in 2007.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views felt the council fully or partly provides information which meets tenants' needs and communicates with residents appropriately.

"Email/internet access is a godsend for those, like me, who have hearing problems."

"Information also available (on request) in other languages." One person suggested that the council should: **"Ask tenants to feed back on every communication."**

"Homing In does help you and gives you information."

But tenants in the TSA standards focus groups wanted a more honest view of what's going on: **"Homing In only tells you the good things that are happening."** Many would like to receive updated information on the website or by email.



"I'm very glad to work on Homing In as it provides a valuable source of information for all residents."

Su Hansen, Homing In Tenant Editorial Board

How will we improve?

We will improve customer service by making it easier and quicker for you to get things done, in a way that suits you.

We will carry out a service improvement programme for sheltered housing agreed with residents and deliver a revised out of hours service for the sheltered service.

We will increase the ways that we ask you to tell us what you think of our services, for example by telephone, events and regular mystery shopping exercises. We will report the results back to you and how we use them to make improvements to our services.

We will improve our communication with you by involving residents in developing our publications, letters and forms, putting more useful information on our website and looking at other ways to communicate with you.

Choice

How are we doing?

Residents control a yearly £540,000 Estate Development Budget (EDB) for improvements to communal areas around their homes and suggest and vote on improvements to be carried out each year at Area Housing Management Panels.

The EDB money spent on fencing and bin sheds has really improved the appearance of estates."

Mick Tompkins, Whitehawk South Central Residents Association





“The Car Parks and Garages Working Group selected the best clamping contract, giving residents what we wanted. We also developed the standards and interview questions for evaluating the tenders.”

Muriel Briault, Car Parks & Garages Working Group

We have tried to increase the amount of choice tenants have within our services. For example, the choice of appointment time for repairs and gas servicing now includes evenings and Saturday mornings.

Tenants and leaseholders are involved at all stages of choosing new contractors, such as for the new repairs partnership, laundry contract and car clamping contract in 2009/10.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views said the council partly provides choices which meet tenants’ needs. However, a few weren’t convinced: **“They like to appear to give you choice and affect decisions. I’m not sure if they really do.”**

How will we improve?

We will continue to look for ways to give you more choice, including working with residents to develop a choice of grounds maintenance and cleaning services.

We will find out what sort of choices residents would like.

Complaints

How are we doing?

In 2009/10 we received 318 formal complaints about our housing management services, 178 of them about repairs and maintenance. Overall we met our target of replying within an average of 10 working days. We replied to 68% of complaints within 10 working days, just missing our target of 70%.

Some examples of how we’ve acted and learnt from your complaints:

- We reviewed our procedures and trained staff to provide a more sensitive approach after a tenant has died
- We reviewed and re-launched our process for recharging repairs and trained staff to make sure it is applied fairly and consistently
- We introduced uniforms for Community Wardens so you can spot them easily.

In 2009/10 we dealt with 59 Stage 1 leaseholder disputes, 15 at Stage 2 and four at Stage 3. The council’s record on resolving leaseholders’ complaints over the last five years is 82% resolved at Stage 1 and 65% at Stage 2 .

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

“Making a complaint is relatively easy - the action taken to resolve problems is relatively non existent.”

“I have had cause to make a complaint once and found the response quick and efficient and the problem was eventually solved, although it took a complaint to solve it.”

“Complaints is brilliant, they are really happy when they talk to you. You can’t really get annoyed by them. They are too nice! It’s done pretty quick.”

Tenants in the TSA focus groups agreed it is clear and easy to make a complaint. But they felt that, due to the overwork of housing officers and cumbersome procedures, complaints are not resolved quickly.

How will we improve?

We know we need to listen and learn from your complaints. We will work with residents to make improvements to make sure we manage and resolve complaints promptly, politely and fairly.

We will report our complaints performance and the outcome of complaints to all tenants and leaseholders each year so you can see how we’re doing.



"It's important that representatives from residents' groups city wide meet together and discuss the important issues."

Chris Kift, Chair of City Assembly

Involvement and empowerment

Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved

How are we doing?

Around 70 tenant and resident associations, four Area Housing Management Panels and nearly 20 other resident groups have a key role in influencing our priorities, developing policy and shaping the way we provide our services. Residents' groups also monitor our performance and set performance targets for us to meet.

Residents' associations meet and debate issues of interest to council tenants and leaseholders across the city twice a year at the City Assembly. You are welcome to attend.



"We congratulate the council on their agreement to retain scheme managers of sheltered housing onsite at their scheme in response to SHAG's tenant petition. This is now being carefully developed."

Tom Whiting, Sheltered Housing Action Group

We have been working with the residents' Tenant Compact Monitoring Group to increase the range of ways tenants and leaseholders can get involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhood. Over 2,000 residents returned the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire sent with Homing In in December 2009. We now have a database of over 1,800 tenants and leaseholders who

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most who gave us their views thought that the council definitely or partly offers a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. Resident representatives made some positive comments: **"Too many opportunities, not enough hours in the day!"**

But some views were mixed: **"The council focus groups have really worked well and are making ground. Generally though the council listens but doesn't always act."**

"Some things you do feel involved in, like the tenancy agreement. They did take on-board suggestions. In other things, when they know they don't have much choice or funds, they don't."

Some tenants in the TSA standards focus groups pointed to a need for more opportunities to get involved outside of the structure of residents' associations: **"Only on tenants' associations and all of us don't want to be on one and certain people are on everything."**

"Residents' associations do have their place but bring in more residents so it's less exclusive."

are interested in getting more involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhood in a variety of ways, such as phone surveys.

With the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group we have produced and consulted on a draft Tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy. This explains our resident involvement structure and sets out a choice of ways for tenants and leaseholders to have a say in how their home and neighbourhood is managed, including informal ways. Involving a wider pool of people will help us arrange our services to reflect residents' needs and wishes.



"TCMG want more residents to be involved and are waiting for your views."

Stewart Gover, Tenant Compact Monitoring Group

How will we improve?

We are building on our strong resident involvement structure to offer a wider range of opportunities for all tenants and leaseholders to have a say in how their home and neighbourhood are managed, in ways that suit them.

We will use the resident involvement database to involve residents on the issues they are interested in, and encourage residents from under-represented groups to get involved.

Agreeing 'local offers' for service delivery

As well as meeting the TSA's own standards, social landlords must agree local standards with tenants which reflect their local priorities. The TSA calls these 'local offers' and they must be in place by 1 April 2011.

How are we doing?

We already have some locally agreed service offers and standards. For example, a new Housing and Estates Forum in Moulsecoomb, set up under the 'Turning the Tide' pilot to tackle social exclusion and anti-social behaviour, aims to increase resident involvement, meet residents' local priorities and improve services to what they want. Residents can set local standards and be involved in monitoring performance against them and give feedback to the council and other partners.

"The Housing and Estates Forum will transform the way communities are inspected. Residents, councillors and housing officers all inspect areas together and work in unison to make cleaner, safer neighbourhoods."

Dave Murtagh, East Moulsecoomb Tenant and Resident Association



How will we develop and agree 'local offers' with you?

We will:

- Consult as many tenants and leaseholders as we can to find out your priorities for our services. We will use our resident involvement database, community events and a variety of ways to get the views of all sections of the community.
- Use the results of that consultation to develop service pledges for all aspects of our landlord service with our resident working groups. These will set out the standards of housing services that residents can expect and replace our current customer charters. They will include how performance will be monitored, reported to and checked by residents and what we will do if we fail to meet those pledges.
- Consult again with residents on the draft service pledges, then put them to the Housing Management Consultative Committee for scrutiny and comment before they go to the Cabinet Member for Housing for approval.
- Agree arrangements with residents for reviewing the local offers from time to time.

The service pledges will come into effect by 1 April 2011.

Meeting the TSA's standards

How are we doing?

We told residents about the TSA's standards through Homing In, our website, reports to Housing Management Consultative

Committee and presentations at the City Assembly and Area Panels. We also sent all associations a copy of the TSA's guide to the standards and made copies available at our housing offices. We have involved resident associations and groups and residents on our resident involvement database in assessing how we meet the TSA standards and in producing this report.

How will we improve?

We will provide a range of opportunities for you to influence how we meet all the TSA's standards, scrutinise our performance against the standards and develop the next annual report.

We will work with residents to make sure we are reporting on the issues that are most important to you and presenting information in a clear and easily understandable way. We will aim to include, where possible, residents' assessment of the quality of services. We will make information about our performance widely available and let you know how we take residents' views into account.

"Participation creaks, but it works!"

John Melson, High Rise Action Group

Providing support so tenants can be more effectively involved

The Community Participation team and other Housing Management staff support resident associations and groups. We grant fund the Resource Centre, which provides a range of training and support to residents and associations, such as in setting up accounts, working in a committee and producing a newsletter. Resident representatives also attend conferences etc. to build their knowledge and skills.

How will we improve?

We will improve the training and development programme for residents who want to become involved, including developing training in monitoring our performance, becoming a resident assessor and energy efficiency advice.

"We offer support and advice, and encourage all residents to get involved."

Peter Mustow, Community Participation Officer



"The Resource Centre is a really helpful organisation for tenant reps. We'd be lost without them."

Jean Davis, Leach Court Tenants Association.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

The largest group of residents who gave us their views agreed that the council provides support to help residents be effectively involved: **"Have been doing it through home visits, workshops/ training courses."**

"Very happy with involvement of housing office, estate warden and community development team in helping local community association."

Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

How are we doing?

We do all we can to make sure our services are open, welcoming and easy to use for people of every age, religion or faith, gender including transgender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, and people with disabilities or care and support needs. For example, when we consulted with all residents on the new tenancy agreement last year, we sent information in large type or other formats where we knew tenants needed them.

85% of sheltered tenants who completed our survey in February- March 2010 told us they were very satisfied or satisfied with

how we planned support to meet their needs. Supporting People checks of sheltered residents' support plans showed that on average 90% of their needs were met.



"The Tenant Disability Network works on behalf of all residents with disability to advocate and help purchase appropriate equipment."

Barry Kent, Tenant Disability Network

We are achieving and working towards excellence in the national Equality Framework for Local Government.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Residents who gave us their views generally agreed that the council treats all residents with fairness and respect: **"As part of a minority group myself, I have always been treated respectfully, but this should be expected."**

Most felt that the council fully or partly demonstrates that we understand the different needs of our tenants: **"It always seems to."** But one commented that we: **"Should listen more."**

Generally, tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council tries to be fair. Some felt it tried too hard and could be tougher on certain tenants. Others felt that it only listened to the loudest.

How will we improve?

We are committed to equal opportunities and valuing diversity. We will continue to build up a better understanding of our residents' needs and tailor our services to meet them.

We will update how we deal with racist and religiously motivated hate crime in line with the arrangements across Sussex and review how we deal with domestic violence.

Section 2

Home

Quality of accommodation

How are we doing?

Following tenants' vote against transfer of their homes to a new housing association in 2007, the council was millions of pounds short of the money needed to bring all homes up to the government's Decent Homes Standard by the end of December 2010. Last year bringing all tenants' homes up to standard was our main priority. By 31 March 2010, 60.5% of tenants' homes met the Decent Homes Standard.

We installed 581 new kitchens, 525 new bathrooms, 2300 new doors and 1051 new boilers in 2009/10. We also started a programme of works to sheltered schemes with shared bathroom facilities to provide tenants with self-contained homes with their own shower.

Our new Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears will give big cost savings that will help us bring all tenants' homes up to the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013. Residents from the Asset Management Panel were fully involved in selecting the contractor and setting up the partnership with Mears which started on 1 April 2010.

"The Asset Management Panel was set a task of finding the best repairs contractor, and after much work and deliberation we agreed that Mears was the best."

Ted Harman, residents' Asset Management Panel



After a series of meetings with residents, in February 2010 the council agreed a £76 million three year investment plan to bring all tenants' homes up to the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013, subject to funding.

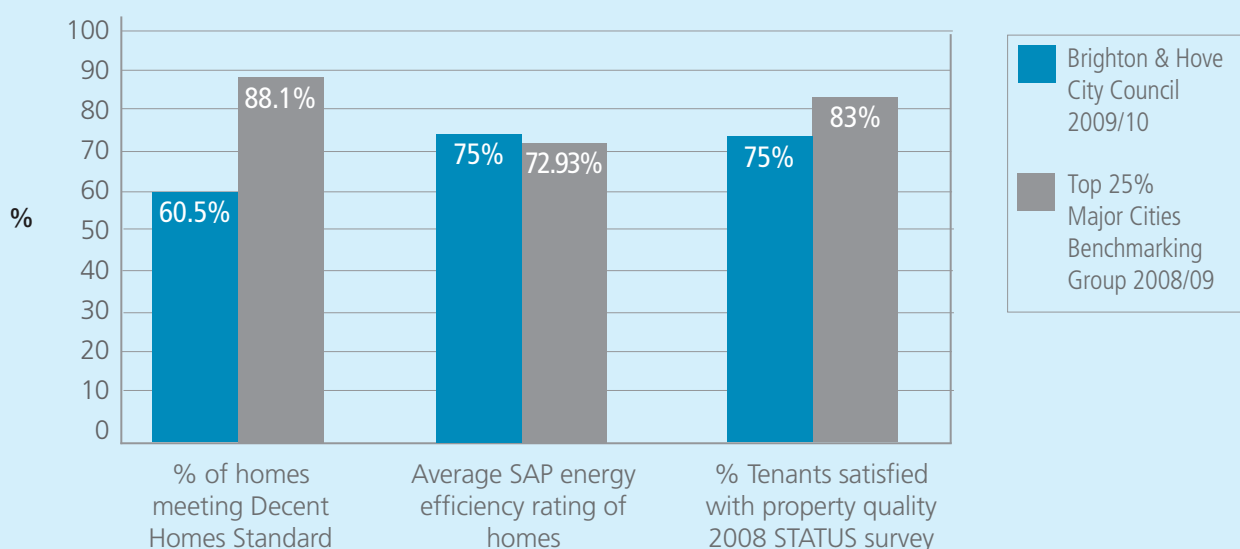
In 2009 we put insulated cladding on two high rise blocks which will cut tenants' fuel bills and carbon emissions. We also installed a communal solar hot water system at a sheltered housing scheme, cutting energy costs. Some of this work was supported through grant funding from energy companies. The average energy efficiency rating of our homes is amongst the best for council landlords, saving on residents' fuel bills.

"The four tenant board members of Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes are working hard to raise money for improvements to council tenants' homes."

Trish Barnard, Tenant Board Member



How do we compare? Quality of accommodation



How will we improve?

We will bring 74% of tenants' homes up to Decent Homes Standard by 31 March 2011, with a £24 million programme of improvements in 2010/11.

We will start a review of shared facilities at those sheltered schemes that still have them.

We will consult with residents to agree the Brighton & Hove Standard, a higher standard for homes developed by the residents' Asset Management Panel, as part of our 'local offers.'

We will investigate ways of improving the energy efficiency of homes, reducing electricity and gas costs for residents and improving the sustainability of the stock.

Repairs & maintenance

How are we doing?

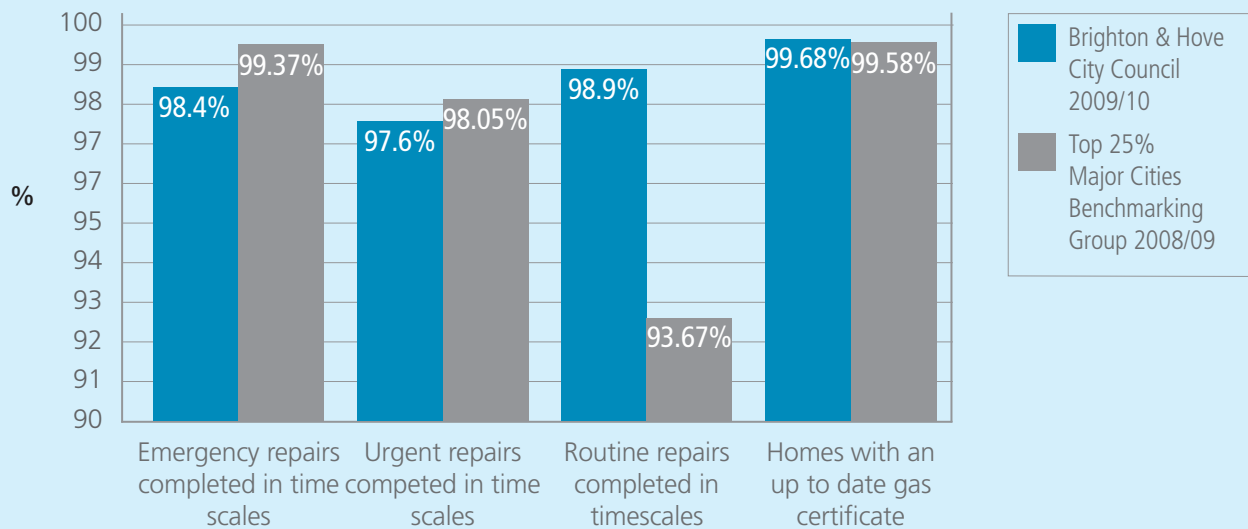
We made big improvements to repairs and maintenance costs, customer service and

performance in 2009/10. The average time to complete routine repairs was cut from 15 days in 2008/9 to 12 days in 2009/10. We had to do 2,337 fewer emergency repairs in 2009/10 than the year before. In the last two years we have improved our repairs performance from being in the bottom 25% of landlords we compare ourselves against to the top 25% in 2009/10.

Repairs performance in 2009/10

- 29,706 repairs completed
- 98.9% Routine repairs completed within our target of 20 working days
- 97.6% Urgent repairs completed within our target of three working days
- 98.4% Emergency repairs completed within our target of 24 hours
- 93% of tenants who completed our satisfaction cards were satisfied with the service

How do we compare? Repairs and maintenance performance



- 98% of those replying to Mears or Kier were satisfied with their repair.

The resident-led local base for Mears, the police and local residents in Whitehawk was shortlisted for best customer service for the national Housing Excellence Awards this year. Mears are committed to working in partnership with residents in other areas of the city, to tailor services to meet their local priorities.



"The Mears Whitehawk base has improved the estate. We can access repairs more quickly and residents now know who their operatives are."

Chris El-Shabba, Our neighbourhood local base

New Repairs and Improvement Partnership

As well as cost savings, the new repairs and improvement partnership which started on 1 April 2010 aims to give excellent customer service, get repairs 'right first time' and give high levels of customer satisfaction. You can now report repairs 24 hours a day by phone, text, email or on-line. Appointments can also

be made straight away with the Repairs Desk at a time that suits you, including evenings and Saturday mornings.

We will report the performance of the Repairs Desk regularly to residents and continue 'mystery shopping' exercises by trained resident volunteers to test whether performance is of an excellent standard. Mears also carry out satisfaction surveys with residents after works are completed and inspect 10% of responsive repairs to check them. In addition, the council also now has four Clerks of Works to check the quality of works.

The Government watchdog the Audit Commission reviewed our new repairs and maintenance contract in May 2010 and reported: "The housing management service has made good progress over the last 18 months. It is working effectively with a clear commitment from all partners to deliver improvement in the repairs and maintenance service for council residents."

Residents helped develop and are involved in managing and monitoring the new repairs and improvement partnership. Members of both the Asset Management Panel and Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group sit on the partnership Core Group which has overall responsibility for monitoring the contract.



“The Asset Management Panel worked with the council and Mears to build a relationship that strengthened the repairs contract - including a 24 hour service for tenants.”

Samantha Griffiths, Asset Management Panel



“The Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group helps make sure major works are completed to the best possible standard.”

Brian Balchin, Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group

Adaptations

We made 525 adaptations for disabled or elderly tenants to help them stay in their homes in 2009/10 and have a budget of £750,000 a year. The Chairman’s Adaptations Focus Group of residents helped develop a new approach designed to improve customer satisfaction, speed up the process and give us better value for money.

When we carry out kitchen and bathroom works and work to empty properties, we now assess whether the tenant needs any adaptations and whether the home is suitable for adaptation in the future.

Health & safety

We have effective processes, monitoring and controls in place to comply with all health and safety requirements for gas, water, electricity, asbestos, fire risk and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. At 31 March 2010, 99.68% of homes had up to date gas safety certificates. 34 properties were overdue as tenants would not give us access. Our target for 2010/11 is 100%.

Fire safety works

The council’s fire safety and fire risk assessment programme to improve fire safety across our stock involves tailored solutions for the different types of buildings we manage. We have carried out a thorough review of fire safety arrangements in blocks of flats, working closely with the fire service. We have completed all priority work to tower blocks and put improved fire doors in many tower blocks as part of an ongoing city-wide programme. Priority work has also been carried out on other medium-height council blocks.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Tenants in the TSA focus groups saw repairs as a priority: **“Repairs is the main issue.”** Some were happy with repairs and the quality of work: **“I’m very happy with them. My block is clean and well maintained.”** Most with a complaint about repairs wanted the council to monitor contractors’ work and check that it had been done satisfactorily.

How will we improve?

We will work with residents to develop and agree the repairs and maintenance ‘local offer’ service pledge.

We will produce a new Tenant Guide to Repairs with Mears and resident groups.

We will maintain and develop resident involvement at all levels of the repairs partnership.

We will train the Neighbourhood Response Team to do minor adaptations for tenants with disabilities, such as hand rails, to speed up the process.

Section 3

Tenancy

Allocations

How are we doing?

We let 819 council homes in 2009/10, 30% of them to existing tenants transferring. At 31 March 2010, 21% of the 10,674 applicants on the Homemove joint housing register for council and housing association homes in the city were transfer applicants.

We brought in local lettings plans to make best use of our stock and to balance communities after wide consultation. For example, giving priority to working families in the most deprived areas of the city, for sheltered residents to move within and between sheltered schemes and keeping some other blocks just for the over 50s.

“After detailed consultation with Housing Management we were delighted to retain the policy of priority allocation to persons over 50 in our blocks.”

Keith Cohen, Nettleton & Dudeney Residents Association



Older people applying for sheltered accommodation now have their support needs assessed by our sheltered co-ordinator, as well as their housing and medical needs, to make sure they are offered appropriate housing and support.

Sixty-nine tenants moved through the tenant incentive scheme in 2009/10, getting up to £3,500 for downsizing from a family home or wheelchair adapted property they no longer needed or finding their own home in the private sector. This released 43 large homes for families in housing need. 149 council tenants moved by doing a mutual exchange.

In 2009/10, we cut two and a half days off the time it takes to carry out work to empty council homes and let them to new tenants. We are now near the top 25% of landlords we compare to, at 25½ days.

How will we improve?

A tenant led group is reviewing the choice based lettings system and allocations policy, including exploring ways to relieve overcrowding. We will consult tenants and homeseekers in the city about any proposed changes.

“Since the Choice Based Lettings Review started things are a lot more positive – communication has greatly improved now that we meet together with officers and can express the tenants’ views and anxieties. Communication has never been better.”

Heather Hayes, Choice Based Lettings Review Group



Tenure

How are we doing?

In 2009/10, we worked with residents to produce a new, clearer tenancy agreement and a tenant handbook. We had 2400 responses to the consultation on the draft agreement which included valuable feedback on our services and service improvements and shaped the final agreement. We also produced an easy to read, illustrated tenancy guide to go with it.

“Tenants worked closely with council officers to produce a tenancy agreement that clearly sets out the rights and obligations of both parties.”

Barry Hughes, Tenancy Agreement Focus Group

In response to the findings in the mystery shopping exercise in December 2009, we are making sure all front



line staff can provide consistent, accurate information about other council and local services.

In 2009/10 we met our targets for helping tenants maintain their tenancy. 14 households were evicted for rent arrears, putting us in the best 25% of landlords. We served 753 Notices of Seeking Possession compared to 917 the year before. Three tenants were evicted for anti-social behaviour.

We visit new tenants and around half our tenants each year to check on their needs, pick up any problems with the property or that tenants may have and direct them to support where they need it. We found a low level of sub-letting and took legal action in two cases.

Turning the Tide

The draft Social Exclusion Strategy “Turning the Tide” outlines our response as a landlord to a Reducing Inequalities Review in 2007, which highlighted the levels of multiple deprivation and inequality experienced by residents in social housing in Brighton & Hove. We are currently trying out new approaches and actions to deal with these issues, including an enhanced tenancy check, which will be evaluated and then developed citywide. This will feed into a final draft of the Turning the Tide strategy which will go for consultation in spring 2011.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council makes it clear what is expected with the tenancy. They know where to go for support and guidance: **“From personal experience they will take it seriously”, “They would listen. Good to know there is support.”** But some said housing officers can be hard to get hold of.

How will we improve?

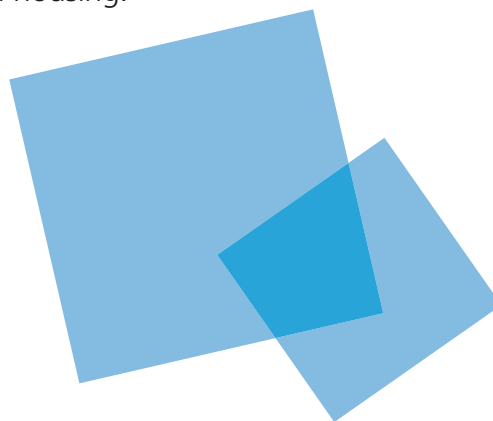
We will continue to work with tenants and leaseholders to provide an effective housing management service and support to fulfil their rights and responsibilities.

We will set up a tenant panel to consult about our tenancy management policies and procedures and publish clear policies outlining our approach to managing tenancies.

After consulting with residents, we will put a new financial inclusion strategy into practice. This was developed with residents and aims to make sure they have access to appropriate financial products and services.

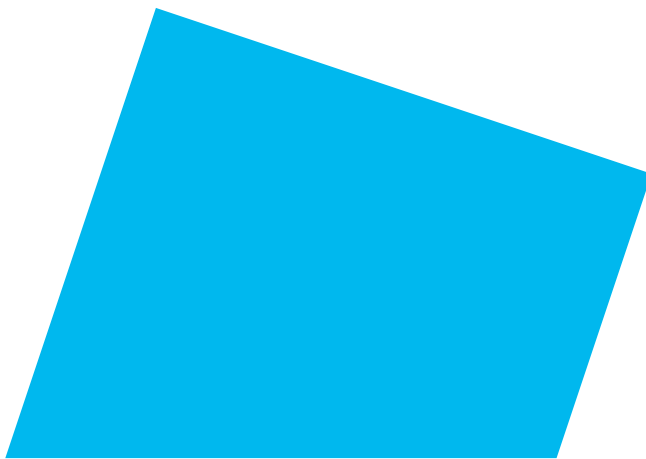
We will review our processes for new tenants to make sure we know about any support needs before they move in and that all new tenants have a full understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

We will continue our work on identifying and dealing with people fraudulently living in council housing.



“We are working to achieve our aims of becoming a Tenant Management Organisation.”

Maggie King, St James' House
Community Alliance



Section 4

Neighbourhood & Community

Neighbourhood management

How are we doing?

The residents' Estates Service Monitoring Group reviewed our Estates Service and worked closely with staff in 2009/10 to improve our cleaning and estates services. Since April 2009 dedicated cleaners have been based at all high rise buildings. We reviewed service charges when the changes were introduced so the cleaning service now covers its costs.

"The cleaning in our block has really improved after the Estates Service Review."

Linda King, Estates Service Monitoring Group



In 2009 the Neighbourhood Response team was re-organised as part of the Estates Service review. They do small landlord repairs and help vulnerable residents who are locked out or who need small repairs. Community Wardens now work closely with local residents' associations and local services to keep areas clean and safe.

We work closely with the council's refuse, recycling and park services in the management of our neighbourhoods and invited them to Area Panel meetings to discuss local issues of concern to residents. In 2009/10, 98.6% of bulk refuse and 84.3% of graffiti we treat as emergency works were removed within our target of 24 hours.

Residents have told us they have concerns about how communal areas outside our blocks are maintained so we have launched a project with the residents' Estates Service Monitoring Group

to review grounds maintenance and present a range of options to improve the service.

"The Estates Service Monitoring Group has worked with Housing Management to begin pilot projects that will improve green spaces in Brighton & Hove."

Rita King, Estates Service Monitoring Group



"After a two hour inspection of our grounds, managers provided an honest and forthright report which will help the grounds maintenance review."

Valerie Paynter, Clarendon & Ellen Residents Association



We are also improving our estates by taking action against people whose gardens are not of an acceptable standard and recharging tenants the cost of work to put this right.

In 2009/10 local residents, councillors and staff carried out 420 estate inspections to pick up any outstanding or unreported works that are needed. Our Turning the Tide project in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean is piloting new estate inspections with 'Rate Your Estate'. Residents are trained to assess and take photos of areas that need improvement.



▲ Estate inspection, Wiltshire House

The Housing and Estates Forum being tried out in Moulsecoomb receives performance information, provides feedback to the council and the partners we work with and aims to increase the level of resident participation.



“I’m very excited about Rate Your Estate - I think it’s a fantastic idea which could transform areas! I hope a lot more residents will get trained and join us!”

Michelle Guyatt,
Bevendean Tenants
Association

Fire Safety

East Sussex Fire & Rescue are working closely with us to improve fire safety across all the council’s housing stock and fire officers came to all Area Panels to advise on arrangements to keep residents safe. As a result, we have introduced a clean, clear and safe approach to items left in common ways which could be a risk to residents and fire fighters if there were a fire.

We are making sure residents know what to do in the event of a fire with more signs and publicity on fire safety for all residents. And personal emergency evacuation plans are being put in place for the most vulnerable residents. We also reviewed our procedures for supporting our most vulnerable residents in the event of emergencies such as lift breakdown. We now have a record of which residents to contact as a priority in an emergency.

Fire safety in sheltered schemes

In 2009 we made sure all sheltered schemes had a publicly displayed ‘delayed evacuation plan’ and put up fire assembly points so schemes could be evacuated smoothly. All tenants who use oxygen cylinders have received a sticker for their front door so the fire brigade are aware in an emergency.

All sheltered residents have an annual fire safety talk, attended by East Sussex Fire & Rescue where possible, and an annual written reminder on fire safety practices. All scheme

managers had fire safety training and tenant representatives were offered a fire briefing.

We are developing a mobility scooter strategy as we have many older or less agile residents and need to find safe ways to store these scooters.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views agreed that the council keeps their block/ estate and communal areas clean and safe or that it partly does so. Comments on cleaning ranged from **“Poor state of cleanliness.”** to **“Cleaning has greatly improved since we had our ‘dedicated’ cleaner”**. Tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council is working well trying to keep communal areas clean: **“The council do their best.”**

Most residents who gave us their views agreed that the council works in partnership with residents and other organisations to maintain and improve their neighbourhood or that it partly does so. Comments ranged from **“Only when it suits the council”** to **“Excellent assistance offered.”**

How will we improve?

We aim to make all estates and blocks cleaner, greener and safer places to live to improve the quality of life for all residents. For example, we will:

- Develop and agree with residents service pledges on the estates service and tenancy management, including grounds maintenance, as part of ‘local offers’
- Carry out more resident satisfaction surveys for our cleaning and other estate services and their neighbourhood as a place to live
- Encourage more residents to get involved in estate inspections, particularly those who said they were interested in them in

the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire

- Evaluate the Rate your Estate and Housing and Estates Forum initiatives in the 'Turning the Tide' pilot in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean and, if residents agree they are successful, introduce them across the other areas of the city
- Develop comprehensive emergency response procedures for in and out of office hours – response to gas leaks, electricity supply failure, lift breakdown, severe weather etc.
- Continue to make improvements to fire safety and introduce fire drills in sheltered schemes.

Local Area Co-operation

How are we doing?

We work closely with residents and partners to improve neighbourhoods, including:

- Working with residents and the Community Payback Team to develop a programme to benefit residents citywide
- Acting as lead partners in community clear up days
- Working with residents and partners to set up neighbourhood agreements, such as the Bristol Estate Neighbourhood Action Plan and Community Safety Project.



"Working with the payback team has greatly improved the appearance of the Bristol Estate. Serendipity community development organisation have also helped create a better atmosphere on the estate and brought people together."

Ray Freeman, Bristol Estate Community Association



"The Community Safety Forum allows residents to raise their concerns about vital safety issues, including hate crime."

John Stevens, Community Safety Forum

The Energy Efficiency Working Group of residents, staff and councillors set up in 2009 is getting training for tenants from the Energy Saving Trust, encouraging residents to grow food with their neighbours on local housing land and looking at possible funding for 'retro-fitting' our homes to make them more energy efficient and therefore cheaper to run and keep warm.

"We're working together with officers to cut down energy use and carbon emissions – this will save residents money and improve their health."

Beverley Weaver, Energy Efficiency Working Group



What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who responded thought the council could do more to co-operate with other organisations to promote social, environmental and economic well-being, though some were not clear what this standard really meant. One representative suggested we:

"Inform [resident or tenant association] who the other organisations [are] within the community to help support and also so local volunteers are able to work and communicate with these organisations."

How will we improve?

We will work together with residents and other organisations to help make your neighbourhood a better place to live and let you know how we do that.

Anti-social behaviour

How are we doing?

Our new tenancy agreement and handbook set clear behaviour standards. The residents' group made sure it included clauses on nuisance issues that tenants are concerned about,

including noisy laminate flooring and pets.

In 2009/10 the Anti-social Behaviour Team, which deals with the most serious cases of anti-social behaviour, got a 'premises closure order', working with Sussex Police to use new legal powers to shut a property down in an extreme case of all-night parties, verbal abuse and intimidation. We took injunctions against two people who were causing severe problems. When the injunctions were broken they were sent to prison. In four very serious cases the team got possession orders; one tenant stopped the anti-social behaviour and the other three were evicted.

Since October 2009, the Anti-social Behaviour Team operates city wide under the Turning the Tide project. We are managing anti-social behaviour more robustly, intervening earlier and working more closely with the police and other agencies. In January to March 2010, 69.5% of tenants affected by anti-social behaviour dealt with by the team were satisfied or very satisfied (48.5%) with how they handled the problem and the outcome.



"The Leaseholders Action Group made dealing with neighbourhood nuisance, which can also be caused by tenants of leaseholders, a priority and worked with the council to produce new information – keeping everyone better informed."

Linda Shaw,
Leaseholders Action Group

How will we improve?

Acts of nuisance, tenancy breach and anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated – they will be challenged and actions taken.

We will work with a new residents' Anti-social Behaviour Focus Group to improve the way we deal with anti-social behaviour.

We will implement the national standards for dealing with anti-social behaviour.

What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Residents who gave us their views generally agreed that it is easy to report anti-social behaviour (ASB) to the council. We had some positive feedback: **"Yes I am pleased with the way that we can report anti-social behaviour and the way officers can support tenant", "The help and support that I am receiving from my Anti Social Behaviour Housing Officer is improving my life."**

But several residents felt the council could do more to make tenants aware of their responsibilities and rights on ASB and to offer support to victims of ASB and witnesses.

Suggestions included: **"Listen and act. Do not just collect a paper trail", "Needs follow up once anti-social behaviour has initially been dealt with."**

Tenants in the TSA focus groups thought the council does not have a strong emphasis on preventative measures for ASB and it isn't always given the immediate attention it deserves. They felt the council are expecting tenants affected by ASB to police it themselves by having to fill in a diary, and many don't bother to complain. The perception is that the council takes a long time to sort out ASB. Many realised that this is often down to legal procedures of collecting evidence and not always the council's fault, but still it is frustrating: **"It's a long drawn out process if you are living in fear and despair."**

We will introduce improved service standards for victims and witnesses of anti-social behaviour as part of a 'local offer' service pledge for anti-social behaviour to be agreed with residents and in place by 1 April 2011. These will ensure that we will provide a more intensive level of service for residents who are most vulnerable and at risk.

Section 5

Value For Money

How are we doing?

We have made a lot of progress to help bring down our costs, while continuing to improve our performance and services to residents.

We have been redirecting resources to meet residents' priorities, particularly improvements to tenants' homes and our estates. We also work with residents to provide the services they want and pay for in their service charge.

Some of the ways we have improved value for money include:

- £2 million savings from the two year entrance door programme
- Offering cheaper contents insurance to tenants and leaseholders
- Recharging more tenants for deliberate damage or neglect and improving collection
- Freeing up Housing Officers to spend more time out visiting tenants and properties
- Cheaper alarms
- £100,000 annual savings from a new electricity contract to be passed onto residents in reduced service charges
- The new repairs partnership will bring cost savings plus a better service and wider community benefits such as apprenticeships
- Saving £25,000 a year through the resident led new laundry contract.



"The brand new laundry contract will definitely save money and we will no longer have to subsidise the service"

Faith Matyszak MBE, Laundry Facilities Group

We reduced the cost of managing tenants' homes from £18.58 per property per week in 2005/6 to £17.11 in 2008/9 and £17.03 in 2009/10. We aim to further reduce our costs so that we compare better with the best landlords. The Audit Commission recently reported that the council is improving value for money and our housing management costs have reduced to average when compared to other councils.

Residents are involved in setting our budgets. For example, residents' Area Panels decide how to spend the Estate Development Budget each year to meet their local priorities and helped to develop the £76 million three year capital programme.

We report our performance to resident representatives at Housing Management Consultative Committee every three months, including comparisons with the top performing landlords. We are developing our 'benchmarking' to include information on costs, as well as tenant satisfaction and performance, as recommended by the Audit Commission.

In 2009/10 the average rent was £65.72 per week. We collected 98.29% of rent due from tenants and improved our performance on collecting former tenancy arrears. We have cut current tenant arrears significantly in the last 5 years.

"Rent collection is still going up so there's more to spend on services."

Tina Urquhart, Housing Income Management Monitoring Group



In 2009 we consulted with the Leaseholders Action Group Committee on a new major works leaflet with comprehensive payment

advice and information for leaseholders when consulted or billed for works of £250 or more. This was agreed and is now being used to inform leaseholders of all aspects of major works, the costs and the help with payment that may be available. In 2009/10 we achieved our highest ever collection rate of leaseholder service charges.



"The LDV aims to give the council best value for money for properties in need of refurbishment."

Roy Crowhurst, Tenant Board Member, Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes

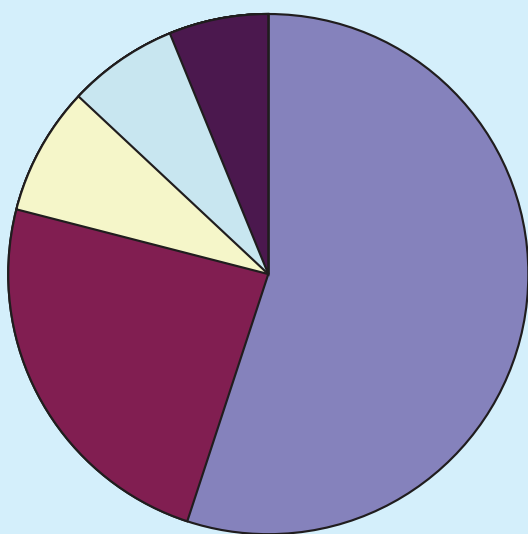
What did tenants and leaseholders say?

Most residents who gave us their views said the council partly meets the standard of providing cost effective, efficient, quality services and homes to meet tenants' needs. They were divided on whether the council provides value for money for their rent and service charge. Comments included: **"Cost effective – yes, efficient – yes, quality services – no"**, **"The rent is value for money. Limited services are offered."**

"They should not just tell us about things they have done but also what they are going to do. Let us know how much things are going to cost."

All tenants in the TSA focus groups were happy with the rent they pay but none felt involved in the spending on services. Some thought this would be a huge task to try to involve tenants. When they were asked whether they would be willing to pay extra for better quality services there was a strong reaction against the idea.

How we spent tenants' rents and service charges in 2009/10



- Repairs and improvements
- Cost of operating housing services
- Services recovered in service charges
- Repaying loans
- Subsidy payable to Government

How will we improve?

We will continue to involve residents in working to ensure that the services we provide meet your priorities, are high quality and at the right cost.

We will review with residents how we report to you so you can see how well we provide value for money and compare our performance and costs to other landlords.

If you'd like to know more about our performance and plans, you can get a more detailed version of this annual report from our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing or from your housing office. You can also e-mail us on council.housing@brighton-hove.gov.uk or phone 01273 290591 and we'll send you a copy.

If you'd like to find out about your local tenant and resident association, or would like to get involved in other ways, please contact your local housing office.

Please let us know what you think of this annual report and what you would like in a future year's report. Send your comments to Carol Jenkins, Housing Stock Review Manager, Room 235, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2SR or email carol.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk. Thank you.

Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office.

- ترجمة؟ تليق هذا الصندوق وتأخذ إلى أي مكتب المجلس. Arabic
- অনুবাদের জন্য টিক করুন এবং যেকোনো কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান। Bengali
- 번역하십니까? 이 상자 체크하시고, 어느 시정 사무실에 가져가주세요. Chinese
- ترجمة؟ تليق هذا الصندوق وتأخذ إلى أي مكتب المجلس. Hindi
- Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council. French
- 翻案? 何項申請表格之翻案, 請於何項表格之翻案表格內。 Mandarin
- Тлумаченне? Зазначыце, па-колькі зварот да кірагавальніцкіх афісаў самаўрады мясцовага (council office). Polish
- Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office). Portuguese
- Тердүмеси için кәреји ішәретлейһиз һе бир сәһт бәледије бӯросуна верһиз. Turkish
- Other (please state)

This can also be made available in large print, Braille, or on CD or audio tape

Housing Management
Brighton & Hove City
Council
Kings House
Grand Avenue
Hove BN3 2SR



HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 43

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Temporary Accommodation Strategy Annual Update 2009-2010		
Date of Meeting:	8th September 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Sylvia Peckham	Tel: 293318
	E-mail:	Sylvia.peckham@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes/No	No	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report is the annual update of the 5- year Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2008-2013) that outlines key achievements and progress in implementing year 2 of the strategy 2008-2013.
- 1.2 The Temporary Accommodation Strategy is a sub section of the Homelessness strategy and should be read in conjunction with the Homeless Strategy Annual Update.
- 1.3 The Vision of Temporary Accommodation is *'We will provide good quality, effectively managed properties, that meet the needs of Brighton and Hove's diverse population, contributing to the development of sustainable communities.'*

This report seeks to demonstrate that we are operating and developing a service which realises this vision.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes the report and progress made on delivering strategic actions of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy during year 2 of the strategy 2008-2013.

3. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2008-2013 was approved by Housing Cabinet in March 2008. The strategy outlines the core objectives for the local authority with regard to the management and procurement of temporary accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable households in the city in the next five years.
- 3.2 Our strategic objectives are:
- a) to commission temporary accommodation corporately to meet the needs of our internal partners
 - b) effectively manage emergency and temporary accommodation, in accordance with best value
 - c) to commission temporary accommodation and support for vulnerable households to enable them to successfully move on to settled accommodation
 - d) maximise settled housing opportunities

Review undertaken between April – July 2010. Results of the review are listed below.

3.3 **Objective 1 To commission Temporary Accommodation corporately to meet the needs of our internal partners.**

3.3.1 **Priority 1 To Increase the Supply and Quality of Temporary Accommodation.**

Marketing to landlords is regularly reviewed and updated. We now have in excess of 500 additional units of high quality Temporary Accommodation which has been sourced from the private sector.

3.3.2 **Priority 2 Develop the Corporate Commissioning Role By Working With Our Internal Partners to Procure Suitable Accommodation To Meet Their Requirements.**

All partners have been met with collectively and individually and have agreed revised and improved SLA's which reflect the service needs. We are procuring accommodation to specifically meet their needs.

3.3.3 **Priority 3 End the Use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation For All Pregnant Women, Households With Children and 16 an 17 Year Olds by 2010.**

All households in this category are prioritised and moved on from Bed and Breakfast within 6 weeks. The average for families and pregnant

women is 3 weeks and therefore we are comfortably achieving our target.

3.3.4 Priority 4 To Reduce The Number Of Statutory Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation by 2010 to 333.

On the 31.3.10 we had reduced the number of Statutory Homeless Households to 317. We are currently meeting weekly to maintain this target.

3.3.5 Priority 5 Advise and support Private Sector Landlords to ensure that properties are of a high Standard.

113 Landlords have signed up for the Accreditation scheme this year, and are booked on training courses. We regular attend meetings with Landlords to ensure all parties are kept abreast of National issues and Best Practice.

3.4 **Objective 2 Effectively manage Emergency and Temporary Accommodation.**

3.4.1 Priority 1 Maximise income collection.

Rent accounting systems have been set up for all leased accommodation, and we are now planning rent accounts for all Emergency Placement accommodation. We have effective protocols in place to ensure that all clients are effectively case worked.

3.4.2 Priority 2 Establish active community, service user and stakeholder engagement.

In October 2008 Temporary Accommodation user groups were instigated but were poorly attended. As this was not the most effective means of taking the views of our clients into account, we followed up with a wide ranging tenant's satisfaction service by telephone. Details of the proposal that came out of this survey with regards to onward consultation are listed as Appendix 2. We are also investigating a web based forum by which people can actively engage with us.

3.4.3 Priority 4 Auditing and monitoring all temporary and emergency accommodation stock ensuring the maintenance of high standards of health and safety.

- Carry out quarterly inspections of all Emergency Accommodation to ensure high standards of Health and Safety are met.

All Emergency placement units are visited on a monthly basis exceeding our original target to visit quarterly. Inspections are carried out to ensure that proprietors are meeting the Health and Safety Inspections. Records of these inspections and the outcomes are kept and are auditable.

- Quarterly contract meetings with providers of Emergency Accommodation to resolve any issues and to jointly work to ensure the accommodation is safe and secure for our communities of interest.

Proprietors or Managers of Emergency Accommodation are present during the monthly inspections and issues are resolved there and then.

- Carry out quarterly inspections of all Temporary Accommodation properties to ensure that properties are being maintained to a reasonable standard.

We aim to visit newly tenanted properties for the first four quarters of the client's tenure. Subject to satisfactory assessment that the Tenant is managing their accommodation we will reduce inspections to bi-annual. This is less intrusive for the client and also highlights that we are happy with their ability to manage their tenancy. Our service remains flexible and responsive to the needs of our tenants and if there are concerns about the client's ability to cope, then inspections can be increased.

These inspections have been effective in identifying where vulnerable clients are not maintaining their tenancies which have allowed us to look at additional support that the client might need. This has also assisted us in minimising potential losses through wilful damage or neglect on the part of the tenant. Offering this service also allows us to demonstrate to our landlords that we are proactively managing their properties and dealing with issues as they arise

We have also recently completed a programme of risk assessing all of the Temporary Accommodation we have with communal areas or shared gardens. This has allowed us to identify any possible risks to tenants and staff who might be working in our accommodation.

- Comply with all legal Health and Safety obligations and promote best practice in these areas through the provision of training for staff.

In March 2009 a Health and Safety working group was set up to govern the management of Health and Safety for Temporary Accommodation. This includes compiling a database of relevant training undertaken and updating the Health and Safety Management Plan. This has been audited and passed by the Corporate Health and Safety Team and we have completed all of the tasks from our audit action plan. The SMS plan is part of an ongoing review of Health and Safety conducted by the above working group.

Annual Gas servicing records, electrical safety certificates and fire alarm testing records and any other records relating to be available on each property file.

Achieved.

3.4.4 Priority 5 Effective management of repairs and Health and Safety through monitoring and inspections, and contract and performance management.

The Council's new repairs contract with Mears commenced in April 2010. Monthly monitoring of performance will be provided by Mears under the terms of the contract. Low level repairs and maintenance is carried out by our Caretakers which minimises cost and provides an efficient service.

3.5 **Objective 3 To commission Temporary Accommodation and support for vulnerable households to enable them to move on to settled accommodation**

3.5.1 Priority 1 Provide advice and assistance to clients and supported housing providers on accessing the Private Rented Sector.

A move on Tool kit has been developed and is actively used by all service providers.

3.5.2 Priority 2 Advise and support health and social care professionals on housing issues.

Regular advice and information sessions held with social care professionals, including but not limited to attendance at area panels, training sessions with individual teams, Options input at Millview, joint working with CYPT and SIT 65. Further to all of the above the regular meetings and reviews regarding SLAs.

3.5.3 Priority 3 Improve access to floating support for vulnerable households, preventing homelessness, and increasing empowerment and independence.

The supporting People Commissioning Team has remodelled services across the city to meet local need. There is currently an ongoing floating support provider's forum to ensure shared good practice.

3.5.4 Priority 4 Improving access to our supported Housing sector.

Effective referral and monitoring of the Support Pathway through the use of an Integrated IT system. Project team are looking into developing an IT system, however integrated paperwork has been completed.

3.5.5 Priority 5 Develop work and learning opportunities for households in Temporary Accommodation.

This piece of work will be prioritised in the next three years of the strategy..

3.6 **Objective 4 Maximise settled housing opportunities**

3.6.1 Priority 1 Increased participation in the Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

This is to provide good quality private rented accommodation. 82 Landlords have participated in Training with a further and 8 pending.

- 3.6.2 Priority 2 Increase the ability of households to access private rented sector accommodation.
Average of 11 properties per week being acquired which we match to households.
- 3.6.3 Priority 3 Build contacts with private landlords and letting agents, maximising the provision of adapted properties, and the neighbourhoods where properties are available.
Permanent invitation to Landlords Association established.
Establishment of online landlord Forum. Several private sector properties adapted.
- 3.6.4 Priority 4 Provide a client focused service to match people with suitable properties including providing introductions, viewings and support.
Direct let officer appointed so as to quickly match households with available private properties to respond to landlords needs.
- 3.6.5 Priority 5 Develop a full register of adapted and adaptable accommodation to improve matching of applicants and properties.
A Full time Accessible Housing Coordinator (AHC) has been employed within the Homemove Team, who works with all the social landlords in the city to ensure that all adapted or adaptable housing is used and allocated in a correct and timely manner. This is to ensure that these high demand properties are used in the best way and that funding for adaptations is used appropriately and for this most in need. To enable this joint working with Occupational Therapy, Social Landlords, Adaption's Teams and Social Services has been on going. The AHC also assesses household access requirements and this enables household to understand in a clear and concise way what properties they are eligible to bid on and if these are or could be adapted to the families needs.
- 3.6.6 Priority 6 Continue the development and implementation of sub regional working to maximise access to housing across the sub region.
The Pan Sussex Partnership now included BHCC, Adur, Lewes, Eastbourne, Chichester, Rother, Wealdon, Hastings, Mid Sussex, Arun and Worthing Local Authorities. We are aiming to reduce the magazine print and to offer a 'personalised freesheet' to those who need more help with the choice Based Lettings Scheme. The homemove Team holds a vulnerable People Register which shows those who need help with the moving process. Within the bidding process cross boundary properties are now available and people from Brighton area have been successful within this scheme and have moved to other Local Authority areas within East/West Sussex
- 3.6.7 Priority 7 Make best use of our existing housing stock.
The Homemove Team now has an Older Peoples Housing Coordinator (OPHC). The age restrictions have been dropped and anyone who now moves to Older Peoples housing must have a recognised and assessed Support Need as well as a Housing Need. Ongoing work is

continuing with other social Landlords in the city who work with older people's housing. The OPHC also works with household to help them with the physical, emotional and financial side of Choice Based lettings as well as an actual move and this has proved a positive role and has increased the number of moves to what was sometimes hard to let properties. Work is on going within this area of housing and extra care housing is now allocated via Choice Based Lettings in a similar way to older peoples housing.

3.7 **SUPPLY**

Private Sector Leasing (PSL)

Over the past 6 years we have increased the supply of good quality self contained units of temporary accommodation, through our 3 - 10 year private sector leasing scheme. We currently lease around 525 self contained leased housing units which provide good quality accommodation.

We can also use leased properties to alleviate overcrowding within the social housing sector. 17 overcrowded households have been re-housed through this process, therefore widening the housing options available.

	Bedsits/ Studio (Single person only)	Bedsits/ Studio (Double suitable for 2 adults)	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed +	Totals
PSL inc. Sanctuary 10 year leasing	0	32	152	212	121	36	553
Council owned HRA*	43	32	25	7	2	0	109
HAMA	0	0	13	78	30	2	123
B&B	0	200	0	0	0	0	200
Total	43	264	190	297	153	38	985

Yearly Demand for Temporary Accommodation

Client Group	1 bed/Studio	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	Total
Statutory Homeless*	270	190	40	4	504
Mental Health	50	0	0	0	50
CYPT	0	35	15	1	51
Learning Disability	25	0	0	0	25
Older People	20	0	0	0	20
Asylum Seekers	3	2		0	5
Physical Disabilities	20	5	0	0	25
Sub Total	388	232	0	5	680

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken in 2007 which informed the development of the strategy.
- 4.2 This report will be published and shared with our partner agencies and communities of interest once approved..

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith

Date: 11/08/10

5.2 Legal Implications:

This report provides an update on a strategy that has already been considered from a legal perspective. There are no specific legal implications arising from it, although Legal Services will advise on the procurement of suitable temporary accommodation if required. It is not considered that there are any adverse Human Rights Act implications arising from the report, and in fact the strategy actively supports some convention rights such as respect for private and family life

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date:17/08/10

5.3 Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and a full Equalities Impact Assessment of the Temporary Accommodation Service was completed in 2009/10. There is an action plan which is currently being implemented to ensure that our services are appropriately targeted and accessible. These documents are due to be published in 2010/11.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

Enabling better use of resources to meet requirements more effectively, will ensure that accommodation is sustainable for the tenants and contribute to settled communities when households move on when they are ready to be independent

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Working in partnership with Agencies including the police to reduce Anti Social behaviour in Temporary Accommodation will contribute to reducing crime and disorder in neighbourhoods where the accommodation is situated.

5.6 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

The demand for Temporary Accommodation is increasing as a result of the economic downturn and people being less able to obtain accommodation and provide for themselves. This is reflected in the increasing numbers of homeless presentations and acceptances which are detailed in the Homelessness Strategy Update. There is a risk that we will need to increase the use of unsuitable B&B accommodation in the short term to meet this growing demand, until we can replace it with good quality leased accommodation.

In addition, the announced changes to Housing Benefit will also impact on the supply and demand for Temporary Accommodation and provide the following Risks and Opportunities.

• Risks:

Preventing homelessness and providing alternative private rented accommodation may be a less attractive option for households who are affected by the changes. This will result in more households making a homeless application and the Council having a statutory duty to provide accommodation. Demand for Temporary Accommodation will therefore increase.

Second, those tenants in temporary accommodation who are in receipt of JSA for more than a year will see a reduction in their HB of 10%.

This may impact on our income collection rate although this is a minor risk as the majority of our tenants have additional vulnerabilities such that they are not in receipt of JSA but receive other benefits such as Incapacity benefit.

- Opportunities:

The reduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate to the bottom 30th percentile will not be applied to Temporary Accommodation and so income will not be affected to the extent as for the private rented sector. This may create opportunities for us to increase the supply of Temporary Accommodation as Landlords may prefer the stability of leasing their property to the Council for a fixed period and for a fixed price.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

Providing good quality temporary accommodation that will meet the needs of our partners corporately will result in maximizing income and minimizing expenditure for our corporate partners. We will be better placed to secure private sector accommodation by having one interface and coordinating our work with the private sector.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 This report is an annual update of a current strategy and no alternative options are being considered at this time.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To update members on progress and implementations of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2008-2013 to date.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment.
2. Business Continuity Plan.

Background Documents

1. None

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 44

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 Annual Update
Date of Meeting: 8 September 2010
Report of: Director of Housing, Culture and Enterprise
Contact Officer: Name: Steve Bulbeck Tel: 29-3120
E-mail: steve.bulbeck@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report outlines the key achievements and progress of Brighton and Hove City Council's Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 which is a sub strategy of the Housing Strategy 2009-14.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities to have a Homelessness Strategy which is renewed every 5 years, and sets out a strategic approach to responding to and preventing homelessness.
- 1.3 The vision for the Homelessness Strategy is:
To prevent homelessness through early intervention and the timely intervention of advice and support. When homelessness is unavoidable, to ensure that people receive appropriate housing, care and support, with a clear pathway towards living independently.
- 1.4 The Homelessness Strategy is formulated on the principle that prevention is better than cure. 'Homelessness Prevention' can be defined as housing advice and/or positive action that the Local Authority and partner agencies undertake to enable a household at risk of homelessness to remain in their home or to secure alternative suitable accommodation before they become homeless.
- 1.5 This report should be read in conjunction with the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2008-2013 Annual Update.

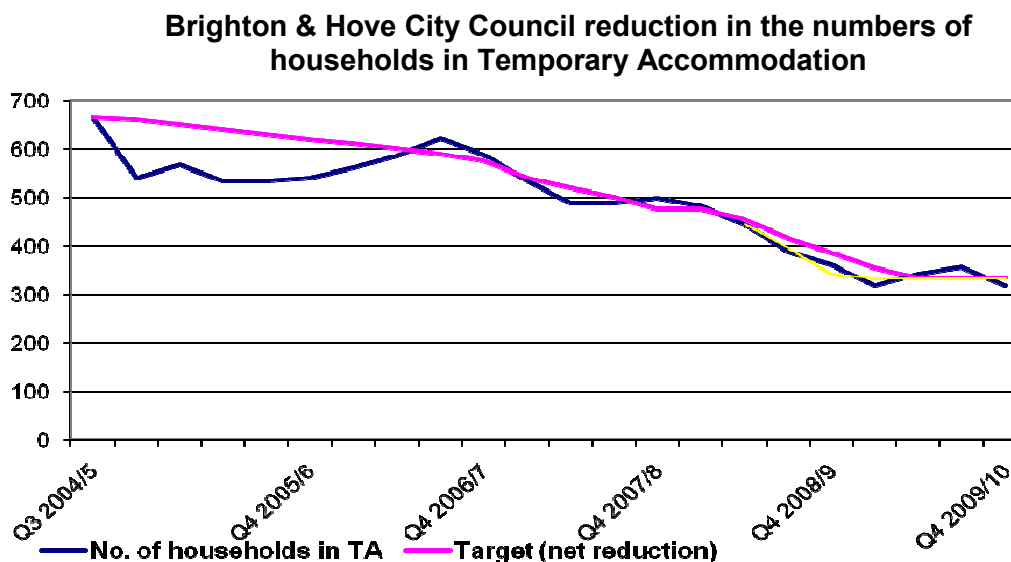
2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes this report.

3. BACKGROUND AND PERFORMANCE:

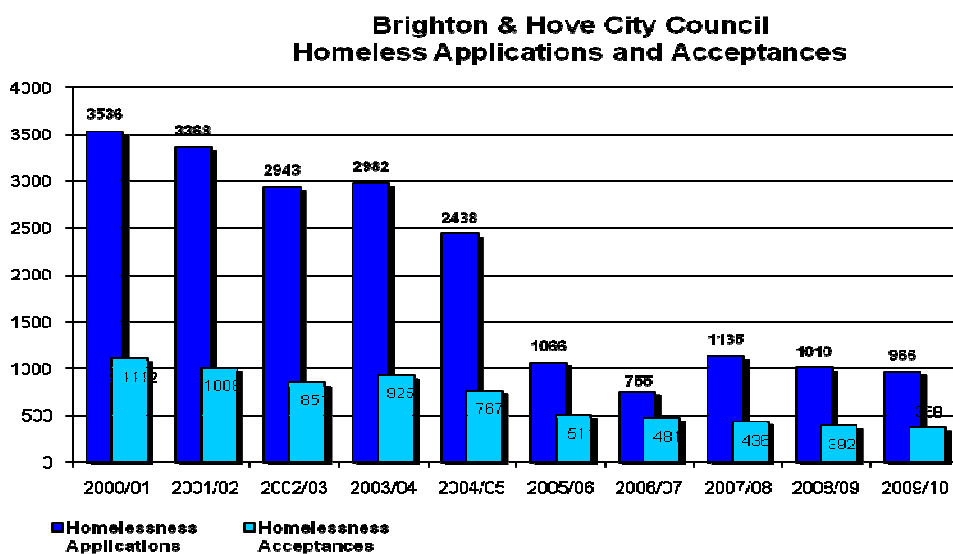
- 3.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 is Brighton and Hove City Council's second Homelessness Strategy and was formulated following a review of the original strategy in 2007.
- 3.2 As part of the review an extensive city wide consultation was undertaken gathering the views of citizens and partner agencies throughout the city. The Housing Needs Survey 2005 and the Reducing Inequality Review 2007 also informed the development of the strategy.
- 3.3 The Homelessness Strategy addresses issues local to Brighton & Hove but also national government targets such as the 50% reduction of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 and an end to using temporary accommodation for single 16/17 year olds, except in an emergency by 2010.
- 3.4 Over and above this the Homelessness Strategy seeks to link into a broader 'prevention agenda' (for example preventing looked after children, re-offending and unnecessary hospital admissions) in an attempt to improve wider outcomes and life chances for citizens and contribute to social inclusion in the city.
- 3.5 The Homelessness Strategy has been successful in enabling the council to meet these targets by increasing homelessness preventions and reducing homelessness applications and acceptances. A city wide multi-agency approach to preventing homelessness has been critical to the progress made.
- 3.6 The tables below demonstrate the success of the Homelessness Strategy in improving performance. It should be noted that performance trends have continued to improve despite the economic downturn. The council met the government's Temporary Accommodation Target by more than halving the number of households in temporary accommodation from 665 on 31st December 2004 to 316 on 31st March 2010.

Table 1



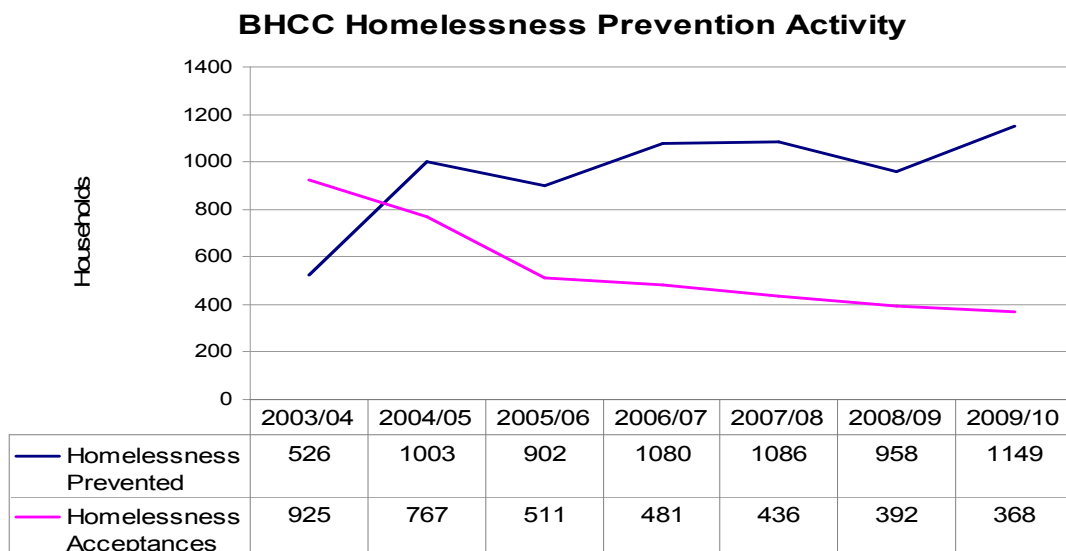
3.7 Table 2 below shows that from the peak of 3563 applications in 2000/01 homeless applications have reduced by more than two thirds and that since the implementation of the prevention approach in 2005/06 they have decreased further to 966 in 2009/10. Homeless Acceptances have continued on a downward trajectory reduced from 1112 in 2000/01 to 368 in 2009/10 representing a 16% reduction over the past two years and a 67% reduction since 2000/01.

Table 2



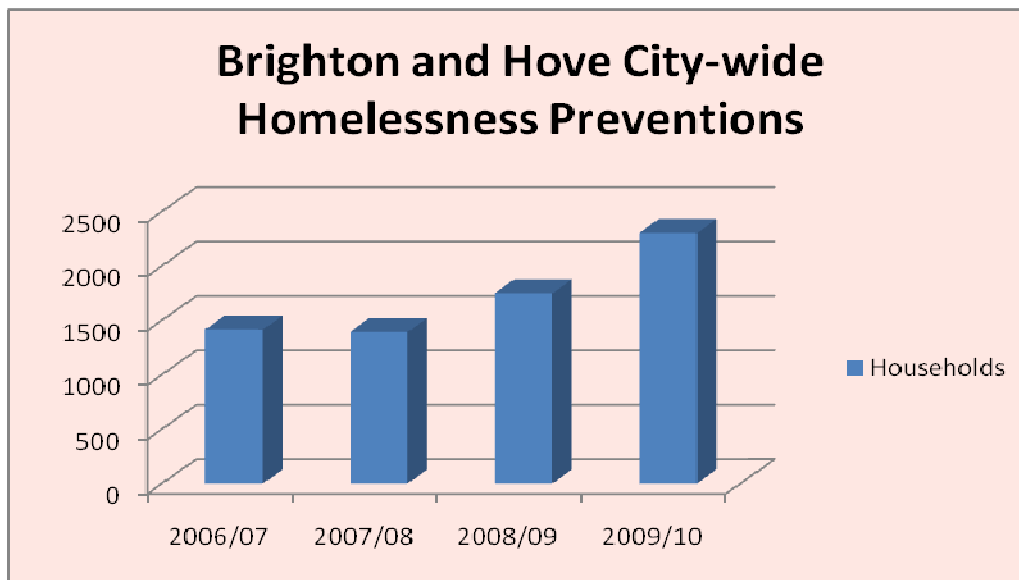
3.8 Table 3 below shows the direct impact of the council's Housing Options service on Homeless Prevention and Homeless Acceptances. Preventions have risen from 526 in 2003/04 to 1,149 in 2009/10 an increase of 118 %.

Table 3



3.9 The table below shows performance on prevention of homelessness including contributions from statutory and third sector partners linked with the Homelessness Strategy. Preventions have increased from 1416 in 2006/7 (11.5 preventions p/head of population) to 2303 in 2009/10 (18.6 preventions p/head of pop.) placing Brighton & Hove well within the upper quartile of national performance.

Table 4



3.10 The Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 sets 5 Objectives in order to realise the vision. The following section outlines some of the key activities in relation to each objective which have contributed to improved performance and improved outcomes for customers.

4. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES:

Number of actions in strategy: 150
 Actions completed: 82 (55%)
 Actions in progress: 46 (93% on track)
 Actions not started: 22 (14%)

4.1 Objective 1: Provide Housing and Support Solutions that Tackle Homelessness and Promote the Health and Well-Being of Vulnerable Adults.

4.1.1 The Housing Options Service is comprised of four teams providing tailored housing solutions to customers. The Vulnerable Adults Team, Families & Young People Team, Crisis Intervention Team and Advice & Assessment Team.

- 4.1.2 The Vulnerable Adults Team comprises specialist roles in Mental Health, Older People, Substance Misuse, Transitions from Care, Offenders and Learning Disabilities.
- 4.1.3 The team has worked closely with our partners in Adult Social Care and Health to ensure that delayed discharges from hospital due to housing are minimised. Housing issues are identified on admission and these patients are referred to Housing Options. Cases are tracked and monitored while still in hospital with a view to ensuring that a solution is identified prior to discharge. Housing Options surgeries are offered at Millview Hospital to enable staff and patients to receive timely advice. Since 2008 Homeless Acceptances of those who are vulnerable due to mental health issues has reduced by 18%.
- 4.1.4 Two officers specialise in work with Offenders. The council has worked in partnership with Hastings Council, Lewes Council and the Probation Service to develop the Preventing Offender Accommodation Loss project (POAL). The project aims to ensure short sentence prisoners do not lose their accommodation whilst in prison or have alternative accommodation upon release. In 2009/10 POAL provided pre-release advice and assistance to 267 offenders only one of which went on to make a homeless application.
- 4.1.5 The team also works with high-risk offenders through the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). Relationships have been developed with landlords, the Housing Benefit Service and a Support Service to manage risk and enable this group to be housed and managed in the community.
- 4.1.6 The team has also developed specialist literature for customers who have a learning disability and provide specialist assistance to enable those customers who wish to live independently to move into suitable housing. Targets have been exceeded over the first two years of the strategy. In 2009/10 18 people were assisted to move into their own tenancy.

4.2 Objective 2: Provide 'whole families' housing and support solutions that tackle homelessness and promote the well-being of families and young people.

- 4.2.1 The Families and Young People Team have been trained in Brief Solution Focussed Therapy to improve skills in working with this client group.
- 4.2.2 A Respite Scheme has been set up with Sussex Central YMCA to provide respite accommodation for young people who would otherwise be homeless due to family breakdown. Family mediation is used with a view to the young person returning home or ensuring that links between the young person and the family are maintained if this is not possible. This has allowed us to only use bed and breakfast accommodation in an emergency for homeless 16/17 year olds so that on 31st March 2010 there were only 3 16/17 yr olds in B&B, a reduction of 94% in the past 5 years.

- 4.2.3 The Team provide a housing options service from Sussex Central YMCA Housing Advice Hub which provides a wide range of services for young people including life-skills training, counselling, drug and alcohol services and sexual health advice.
- 4.2.4 Work to prevent Youth Homelessness has been developed through the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007- 2010. 92% of the action plan has been completed with the remainder of the actions in progress. As a result of this work Homeless Acceptances due to eviction by family or friends has reduced by 29% in the first two years of the Homelessness Strategy.
- 4.2.5 The Domestic Violence and Hate Crime Officer Role continues to develop and participate in the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and relevant Hate Crime Case Panel to ensure a multi-agency approach to managing domestic violence cases.
- 4.2.6 The Sanctuary Scheme provides a solution to householders at risk of violence who wish to remain in their own home by working in partnership with the police to provide security measures such as locks, grills and panic alarms.
- 4.2.7 A multi-agency Domestic Violence Housing Liaison Group has been set up through which procedures and protocols have been reviewed with the Community Safety Team. This has contributed to a 15% reduction in Homeless Acceptances due to domestic violence in the first two years of the Homelessness Strategy.

4.3 Objective 3: Develop Access to Settled Homes

- 4.3.1 Brighton and Hove City has a relatively small social housing stock (18%) and a large private rented sector (20%). The Homelessness Strategy therefore recognises the need to make the best use of the housing stock and ensure that people can secure accommodation that meets their needs.
- 4.3.2 The Integrated Support Pathway for Supported Housing provides around 1,500 units of accommodation and support for homeless people with support needs provided across the city by the council and its partners such as Brighton Housing Trust, Sussex Central YMCA, CRI, Brighton YMCA and Southdowns HA. The pathway enables customers to move from high-support accommodation through a transition of lower supported projects into their own tenancies. The transitional nature of the pathway enables customers to gain the skills required to manage a tenancy successfully.
- 4.3.3 Work has been conducted with private sector landlords to improve the quality and supply of private sector accommodation to customers. This includes a 'one stop' phone line for landlords who need to contact the council for advice and information. An online landlord's forum has been set up and the Landlord Accreditation Scheme providing training for landlords has been expanded.

- 4.3.4 A private sector property matching scheme for landlords and prospective tenants who are threatened with homelessness has been set up to enable access to the private rented sector. This operates in conjunction with a Deposit Guarantee Scheme which has allowed 341 households to access private rented accommodation since April 2008. This scheme is being expanded for use by partner agencies such as the Probation Service.
- 4.3.5 A 'move-on toolkit' for people living in temporary accommodation has been developed to assist them to move on into more settled accommodation. Since April 2008, 138 households have been assisted to move from temporary accommodation to a private sector tenancy. This represents an increase of 452% on the preceding two years.
- 4.3.6 Work has continued with the Housing Benefit Service Prevention Team to ensure an integrated housing benefit and housing options service to resolve benefit issues that threaten current tenancies or obstruct new ones.
- 4.3.7 Housing Options and Brighton Housing Trust have worked in partnership to provide a range of housing options for those at risk of homelessness due to mortgage arrears or rent arrears. This work has included increased staff training, the development of a 'tool-kit' for those households at risk and a campaign to promote public awareness. A multi-agency Recession Impact Working Group monitors court activity and employment trends in the city and works strategically to mitigate against the impact of the recession.

4.4 Objective 4: Reduce Inequality and Tackle Homelessness Amongst Our Communities of Interest

- 4.4.1 A comprehensive system for monitoring outcomes against equalities strands is used to identify barriers and improve access to our service for our communities of interest. Complaints are also monitored by equalities strands to feed into service development and improvement.
- 4.4.2 The Housing Options service has appointed an LGBT Housing Options Officer who has developed links with LGBT services and community groups with a view to ensuring that we are meeting the needs of this client group. Front-line staff have been trained in awareness of issues relating to Trans-gender customers and in challenging discriminatory behaviour and reporting Hate Crime.
- 4.4.3 The Housing Options service attends the BME Community Partnership 'one stop shop' to provide advice and information to BME communities and asylum seekers and refugees.
- 4.4.4 Wheelchair accessible social housing properties are now captured on a register and 8 temporary accommodation units have been adapted for people who use wheelchairs.

4.5 Objective 5: Provide Integrated Housing, Employment and Support Solutions as a Platform for Economic Inclusion

- 4.5.1 Specialist Financial Inclusion Housing Options Officers have been developing links with other agencies such as Debt Advisors, the Department for Work & Pensions and Credit Unions to maximise opportunities for customers to tackle financial problems, maximise benefit uptake and ensure that they have access to ethical savings and loan organisations.
- 4.5.2 The Financial Inclusion Specialists contact companies where staff are at risk of redundancy to offer housing options advice. Training on housing options has also been provided to Job Centre Plus staff so that they can signpost their customers to relevant services.
- 4.5.3 Work placement opportunities are provided through Business Action on Homelessness and numeracy, literacy and life-skills programmes are commissioned to provide a pathway to employment.
- 4.5.4 Work and Learning is often an integral part of a customer's support needs. Brighton Housing Trust has set up three Working Hostels to integrate supported housing with work opportunities.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken in 2007 which informed the development of the Homelessness Strategy.

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Mike Bentley

Date: 11/08/10

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 As there is no specific right to housing under the European Convention on Human Rights or Human Rights Act 1998, there are no significant human rights issues to be considered in relation to this report. This is an update report. As stated above there is a requirement under legislation to have a Homeless strategy and we should keep this under review. This report meets the best practice requirements.

Lawyer Consulted:

Simon Court

Date: 10/08/10

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and a full Equalities Impact Assessment of the Housing Options Service was completed in 2009/10. An action plan is currently being implemented to ensure that the services are appropriately targeted and accessible. These documents are due to be published in 2010/11.

Sustainability Implications:

- 6.4 The prevention approach, embodied in the Homelessness Strategy, represents a sustainable approach to tackling homelessness by attempting to intervene early to address the underlying causes of homelessness rather than simply responding to it.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 6.5 Objective 1 of the Homelessness Strategy includes actions which are directly linked to the prevention of crime and disorder and reducing reoffending.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 6.6 The Homelessness Strategy and the prevention approach at its heart, provides an invest to spend model which is key to preventing a wide range of social problems over and above preventing statutory homelessness and so improving broader outcomes for citizens whilst reducing the cost burden on statutory services. A cost/benefit analysis is planned for 2010/11 in order to be able to demonstrate this.
- 6.6.1 There is a risk that the demands on the service will increase as a result of the current economic situation. Presentations have been steadily increasing but as interest rates rise, public sector funding cuts come into force and housing benefit changes are enacted, it is very likely that presentations will increase more dramatically. It will be important to maintain the strategic work to prevent homelessness but it may be necessary to channel more resources into responding to statutory homelessness which could impact on the ability to deliver our strategic actions within timescales.
- 6.6.2 Access to the Private Rented Sector is central to the council's ability to deal with homelessness in the city. Housing Benefit changes are likely to have a significant impact on the ability of those on Job Seekers Allowance or a low wage to access or remain in private rented sector accommodation due to affordability issues.

- 6.6.3 If the council is to sustain the prevention approach it is vital that the Private Rented Sector is utilised as an alternative to social housing and recent government announcements would suggest that increasing private sector leased accommodation is an option that should be explored.
- 6.6.4 The impact of any cuts to the Supporting People budget and potential loss of supported accommodation units also raises a significant risk to the council's ability to deal effectively with homelessness. The supply of this accommodation is vital to preventing homelessness and homeless applications and subsequent use of unsuitable B&B accommodation.
- 6.6.5 In the light of the changing external environment and the internal moves towards intelligent commissioning, it is proposed that the Homelessness Strategy is fully reviewed ahead of its current end date to ensure that the council's response to the changes provides the best opportunity for success.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 6.7 The implementation of the Homelessness Strategy has the potential to contribute to 22 measures in the Local Area Agreement.
- 6.7.1 Delivery of the Homelessness Strategy also contributes to the delivery of the 2020 Community Strategy.
- 6.7.2 Measures in the Homelessness Strategy link to the priorities in the Corporate Plan.

7. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 7.1 Under the terms of the Homelessness Act 2002 it is a legal requirement to formulate and deliver a Homelessness Strategy.

8. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To appraise the Cabinet Member for Housing as to the progress of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms:

1. Homelessness Strategy 2008-13
2. Homelessness Strategy Action Plan to date

Background Documents:

1. None

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 45

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)		
Date of Meeting:	8th September 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture and Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Richard Denyer-Bewick	Tel: 29-2933
	E-mail:	Richard.denyer-bewick@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Within its duties as a local authority, Brighton & Hove City Council aims to ensure that vulnerable people are protected and provided for during the winter cold season, when extreme cold temperatures for extended spells can threaten the safety and wellbeing of some people living in the city.
- 1.2 The Homelessness & Housing Support Directorate of the Department for Communities & Local Government (CLG), recommends that local authorities ensure that there are a range of provisions in place to address the needs of rough sleepers in their area during winter. These provisions are commonly termed 'Severe Weather Emergency Protocols' or SWEP. *[Appendix C. CLG SWEP Letter January 2010]*
- 1.3 Housing Strategy have apportioned some funds each year from the CLG Homelessness Grant to ensure that provision exists to protect rough sleepers from sub zero temperatures and ultimately to ensure as far as possible that people do not die while sleeping on the streets during winter.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the plan for delivering of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during the winter 2010/11 be noted and the protocol agreed.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Guidance around the establishment of SWEPs comes from CLG and Homeless Link, a charity which supports local authorities and the community & voluntary sector to deliver against the central government strategies and agendas. *[Appendix D. Homeless Link SWEP Good Practice Guidance]*

- 3.2 The City Council first implemented a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol in line with Government policy in the winter of 2005/06 and has been implemented each winter since.
- 3.3 The current approach to SWEP, which has been developed and tested with our third sector partners since its launch, is reviewed each year with key teams and partners that are involved. *[Appendix A. Draft 2010-11 SWEP Protocol]*
- 3.4 The protocol ensures that any verified rough sleeper with a local connection is found accommodation, and that those who have no connection or are not entitled to receive services are given shelter and assistance in reconnecting to an area that they can receive services and accommodation to meet their needs.
- 3.5 The aims of the protocol are:
1. To prevent loss of life
 2. To reduce rough sleeping to as near zero as possible by:
 - i. Using SWEP to engage with entrenched rough sleepers with a local connection who would normally be resistant to coming inside
 - ii. Using SWEP to engage rough sleepers who do not have a local connection with relocation services
- 3.6 The protocol is triggered by a weather forecast from the Met Office predicting three consecutive nights, or more, of a temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower.
- 3.7 The protocol contains detailed information of the responsibilities of partner agencies including Brighton Housing Trust, First Base Day Centre, Crime Reduction Initiative and Brighton YMCA.
- 3.8 Under SWEP the Council uses Wellbeing Powers to provide two forms of accommodation:
1. Emergency Temporary Accommodation
 2. Emergency Cold Weather Shelters (normally 1 x 20 bed shelter)
- The budget allocation covers the opening and running of the emergency shelter for approximately 20 nights.
- 3.9 At the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 3rd March 2010 when the allocation of the CLG Homelessness Grant for 2010-11 was agreed, a request was made that a full briefing of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol in 2009/10 was presented to a future Cabinet Member Meeting for consideration.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The protocol was developed in consultation with
- Department for Communities & Local Government
 - Homeless Link
 - Rough Sleepers, Street Services & Relocation Team (CRI)
 - Brighton Housing Trust (BHT)

- Sussex Central & Brighton YMCAs
- Day & Street Services Working Group (Single Homeless Strategy)
- Head of Housing Needs & Social Inclusion (BHCC)
- Head of Temporary Accommodation & Allocations (BHCC)

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

"The Homelessness Grant is £856k 2010/11. Within the grant, £10k has been allocated for this scheme; therefore there will be no additional cost to the council. The running costs of the scheme will be managed within existing resources"

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil J Smith

Date: 21/07/10

5.2 Legal Implications:

"The significant legal implications arising from the Severe Emergency Protocol - the council's duties under the Civil Contingencies Act and commissioning of the service in accordance with the Council's procurement rules - are addressed elsewhere in the report."

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 30/07/10

5.3 Equalities Implications:

The Council has an equalities and inclusion policy. The "priority equality strands" include groups that are covered by statutory provision as a result of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation & religion or belief. It also covers a number of social inclusion "key groups" including the homeless, unemployed, ex-offender and people with mental health and substance misuse issues.

Whilst the data collected shows us that rough sleepers in the City are male and predominantly white it is clear that the majority are homeless, unemployed and suffer from a range of mental health and substance misuse issues and clearly fit within those key socially excluded groups who we need to take every opportunity to engage with and support.

SWEP is considered to be one such opportunity; allowing the contracted CRI Rough Sleepers Team and other professionals to engage with people that are sometimes very entrenched rough sleepers and unwilling to speak with services during the rest of the year.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

The commissioning of the SWEP service is in accordance with BHCC sustainability objectives and the process follows BHCC procurement, Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Street based behaviour and lifestyles can be closely linked to antisocial behaviour. The delivery of SWEP ensures that clients who have been living on the streets who would not normally engage with the Council and its partner providers are linked in to support, housing, health and relocation services. The SWEP intervention is a key way to engage with hard to reach and vulnerable individuals and leads on to improved outcomes for all parties; reducing street based activity and thus potential crime and disorder implications.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on councils to have in place documented, tried and tested Business Continuity Plans which they could activate should there be any form of emergency. These need not necessarily be 'disaster' status but might mean any situation which poses a threat to the health and wellbeing of citizens or service users. SWEP forms part of the Business Continuity Plan for Housing Strategy, Housing Needs & Social Inclusion.

5.6.2 Prevalence of weather conditions is unpredictable. In some years severe cold weather occurs in short spells however in the 09/10 winter the freezing weather remained for a long time and a decision was taken to extend the opening of the night shelter in excess of 20 nights. If this happens this year there may be a resulting pressure generated on the Homelessness Grant budget, however we are developing contingency plans to meet a pressure of an extra 10 nights.

5.6.3 In previous years the premises for hosting the emergency shelter has been 1st Base, a Brighton Housing Trust building. In the 09/10 season 1st Base closed for refurbishment and will not be available this year. We are currently liaising with our partners across the city to source suitable accommodation from which to run the shelter. We are confident we will have premises in confirmed before the cold weather sets in as we currently have a high number of contingency options to follow up.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The delivery of SWEP for this client group is aligned with the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and Single Homeless Strategy 2009-14. Specific outcomes and objectives that it meets are to:

- Improving Housing Support
- Preventing Homelessness
- Reducing the number of rough sleepers to as near to zero as possible
- Reducing health inequalities

6. **EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

6.1 **Choosing not to provide a SWEP**

This is not a recommended option. Our plans ensure there is a humanitarian response to prevent rough sleepers dying from the cold while there is prevailing

severe weather. Not providing a SWEP service would put people at risk because for some service users there would be no other option than to sleep out in cold weather extremes.

It is expected that rather than limiting the offer of support, all rough sleepers (including those who would normally have no recourse to public funds) will be made an emergency offer with arrangements being made outside the usual eligibility/entitlement framework that governs access to housing.

Fatality during the winter season due to cold and exposure is potentially very high profile for any local authority. Even with SWEP in place and all our partners working together, there remains potential for fatality and sometimes this tragically does happen. Failure to provide a plan for this eventuality may mean the Council fails to meet its duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the best practice arrangements specified by the Department for Communities & Local Government.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 At the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 3rd March 2010 when the allocation of the CLG Homelessness Grant for 2010-11 was agreed, a request was made that a full briefing of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol in 2009/10 was presented to a future Cabinet Member Meeting.
- 7.2 The grant allocation for SWEP this financial year is £10,000. and this report outlines the strategic relevance and methodology of discharging these funds through our third sector partners in order to ensure as far as possible that people do not die if rough sleeping this winter in Brighton & Hove.
- 7.3 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on councils to have in place documented, tried and tested Business Continuity Plans which they could activate should there be any form of emergency.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- A. BHCC Sever Weather Emergency Protocol 20010/11 (SWEP)
- B. CLG SWEP Letter October 2008
- C. CLG SWEP Letter January 2010
- D. Homeless Link SWEP Good Practice Guidance
- E. GLOSSARY of terms

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol 2010/11 (SWEP)

1. Introduction

Within its duties as a local authority, Brighton & Hove City Council aims to ensure that vulnerable people are protected and provided for during the winter cold season, when extreme cold temperatures for extended spells can threaten the safety and wellbeing of some people living in the city.

This document sets out the mechanism by which rough sleepers in Brighton & Hove can access accommodation and support during periods of exceptionally cold weather when a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is activated.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) advise that SWEPs should be activated by a weather forecast predicting three consecutive nights, or more, of a temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower.

BHT is the organisation responsible for co-ordinating SWEP on behalf of the Brighton & Hove City Council and the Single Homeless Strategy Partnership. The delivery of SWEP is the responsibility of RSSSRT (CRI) and other partner organisations working within the partnership.

2. Aims:

1. To prevent loss of life
2. To reduce rough sleeping to as near zero as possible by:
 - i. Using SWEP to engage with entrenched rough sleepers with a local connection who would normally be resistant to coming inside
 - ii. Using SWEP to engage rough sleepers who do not have a local connection with relocation services

The priority of the above aims in any case supporting any decision making is to prevent loss of life over the intent to verify rough sleeping, local connection status or engage with reconnection and relocation policies.

3. Activation / Deactivation:

The RSSSRT will be responsible for checking the five day forecast every day before 10:00. The measurement must be taken from the BBC Weather Website (fed directly from the MET Office). This is the link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/forecast/2132>

The RSSSRT are responsible for making the decision to activate SWEP. Once a decision has been taken it will stand until the following day's check. The service will be reviewed on a daily basis with a commitment made every morning to open for a further three nights based on the forecast. SWEP should be de-activated by a forecast predicting two or more consecutive nights of a temperature of one degree Celsius or higher.

The following people outside of RSSSRT may authorise a decision to activate or de-activate SWEP outside of the protocol:

- BHCC Single Homeless Manager: Richard Denyer-Bewick
- BHCC Head of Housing Needs & Social Inclusion: Steve Bulbeck

4. Notification:

When SWEP is activated or deactivated by RSSSRT, the following people will be notified before 11am:

Name	Designation	Org	Email	Phone
<i>Placeholder</i>	Duty Manager Housing Options	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Emergency Placement Team	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Housing Options Manager	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Senior Emergency Placement Officer	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Credit Control & Emergency Placement Manager	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Single Homeless, QA & Risk Manager	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	First Base Manager	BHT	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Director Homelessness and Complex Needs	BHT	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Housing Services Development Manager	Sussex Central YMCA	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Deputy Chief Executive	Brighton YMCA	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Street Community NPT	Sussex Police	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Hospital Social Work Discharge Team	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Urban Rangers / Park Warden	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>
<i>Placeholder</i>	Cityclean	BHCC	<i>Placeholder</i>	<i>Placeholder</i>

5. Assertive Outreach & Assessment

- Once SWEP has been triggered RSSSRT workers will work assertively to track down known rough sleepers and initiate allocations to accommodation.
- Assertive outreach may be suspended or re-scheduled if the weather conditions are so severe that RSSSRT staff would be put at risk if they undertook the activity. This decision is to be taken by the RSSSRT Manager and the BHCC Single Homeless Manager to be informed.
- RSSSRT workers will undertake rough sleeper verification and assess their local connection status. The RSSSRT and First Base will work together, endeavouring to ensure that the service user has identification wherever possible.
- RSSSRT should ensure that every service user referred has a risk assessment; this will either be newly completed or an existing assessment e.g. one from First Base.
- RSSSRT will make a preliminary decision regarding appropriate placement for each service user (this will be either to an Emergency Shelter or Temporary Accommodation. All referrals using SWEP must go through RSSSRT.
- RSSSRT will ensure that any person who is refuses or disengages with the provision of accommodation under SWEP be the subject of a safeguarding adult alert and referral to the 'Safeguarding Hub'.
- The Single Homeless Manager must also be informed of any case where a service user puts his or her self at significant increased risk during SWEP through refusal or disengagement with support.

6. Relocation

- Most service users accommodated under SWEP will not have a local connection to Brighton & Hove. The service provides an opportunity to link them in with relocation services provided by YAC and CRI.
- RSSSRT workers will support Service Users to attend appointments with relocation services, which will work assertively within clients staying at First Base.
- Where RAF's are completed for referral to B&B, RSSSRT should also refer to CRI relocation team at the earliest opportunity to enable these services to plan for an increased workload during cold weather provision.

7. A8/A10 Nationals

- A8/A10 Nationals - should be only be referred to the Emergency Shelter, and targeted for assertive relocation.
- The RSSSRT will continue work with this group to inform them of their housing options and to link them in with relocation and potential sources of support.

8. Emergency Shelter Provision

- Rough sleepers may be offered Emergency Shelter accommodation regardless of their Local Connection status.
- Access to any Emergency Shelter will be limited to up to 20 rough sleepers who have been verified as currently sleeping rough by the RSSSRT. The limit is to ensure that an Emergency Shelter is manageable safely for a staff team of two people.
- The shelter will open at 8.30pm and close at 7.30am the following morning.
- The shelter will only admit people who are referred by RSSSRT. There will be no direct access to the shelter.
- RSSSRT will email an updated list of service users to a named contact at the Emergency Shelter every day that SWEP is activated. Names must not exceed 20 at any one time.
- Any changes to the daily list of referrals need to be agreed between the managers of the Emergency Shelter and RSSSRT.
- The Emergency Shelter staff will complete a summary sheet detailing all service users using the centre and outcomes, and circulate to the RSSSRT, Single Homeless Manager and BHT's Director of Homelessness and Complex Needs.
- The RSSSRT will maintain a full list of people who have been accommodated via SWEP and will forward this to the Single Homeless Manager at the end of each SWEP period. This list will detail the name of each person accommodated and their length of stay.
- The RSSSRT will provide support to service users. An initial assessment of risk and needs will be undertaken to enable the RSSSRT worker to develop a short term support plan for the individual and access suitable accommodation.
- Service users that are placed at the Severe Weather Emergency Shelter will receive support from shelter staff while the provision is open (8pm-7.30am). The RSSSRT and the relocation team will continue to work with this group until they are resettled or relocated.
- It is recognised that coming inside can be a difficult experience for entrenched rough sleepers. RSSSRT workers will use their skills and knowledge to ensure that service users are able to sustain their accommodation while the SWEP is in place.
- RSSSRT workers will also aim to ensure that non-locally connected service users attend appointments with relocation service.
- Workers will automatically be referring SWEP clients to the relocation team which should be assertively working with these clients.

9. *Temporary Accommodation (B&B) Provision*

- Where appropriate or if the Emergency Shelter is at capacity, referrals may be made to Emergency Temporary Accommodation. A service user may be unsuitable for referral to the Emergency Shelter if they are too vulnerable or have been barred from the shelter.
- In any case where a referral to Temporary Accommodation is to be made, RSSSRT will ensure that full referral documentation is completed using the Wellbeing Powers Referral procedures.
- RSSSRT are authorised to sign off referrals under Wellbeing Powers with delegated authority from Brighton & Hove City Council.
- Referrals under SWEP **need not** take account of a person's **Local Connection** status but **will** take account of a person's eligibility under No Recourse to Public Funds status.
- In normal working hours the RSSSRT will ensure the documentation is sent by email to the BHCC Housing Options Team for allocation and that the team are contacted by phone. Out of hours, the Duty Homeless Officer can be contacted on **01273 680065**
- Staff must ensure that the terms of this agreement are made clear to the service user, providing information verbally and in writing. Most importantly the service user must be made aware that this accommodation will only be provided during the extreme weather conditions.
- Upon completion of the assessment and sign-off, the BHCC Housing Options Team will pass the referral to the Emergency Placement Team who will then complete all the paperwork – license agreement, housing benefit claim and confidentiality waiver
- The Emergency Placement Team should ensure letters inform clients that their placement is temporary and could end at short notice, if the weather goes above zero / gets warmer.
- The Emergency Placement Team will **cancel** SWEP placements in B&B accommodation, and send out cancellation letters to placements, including contact details such as RSSSRT, Housing Advice etc, and notify the RSSSRT.
- RSSSRT workers will engage with potential Service Users prior to the implementation of any period of SWEP to ensure that the necessary identification and benefits claim are in place to enable timely payment of housing benefit.
- RSSSRT and the Emergency Placement Team/Credit Control will continue to communicate regularly to share information about placements, barred Service Users, problems with housing benefit claims, and exits from B&B.
- If housing benefit does not go into payment during the SWEP period, the Credit Control Team will inform the Single Homeless and Work & Learning Manager, for a decision on payment.

10. Dec / Jan 2010/11 Xmas & New Year Operating Hours

RSSSRT / CRI
Placeholder for information
Placeholder for information

BHT Offices
Placeholder for information
Placeholder for information

First Base Day Centre	
December 20 th - 24 th	Placeholder
December 25 th - 28 th	Placeholder
December 29 th	Placeholder
December 30 th	Placeholder
December 31 st	Placeholder
January 1 st - 3 rd	Placeholder
January 4 th	Placeholder

BHCC Housing Options (Barts) and HN&SI (Palace Place)			
	Notes	Barts Contact	Palace Place Contact
December 20 th - 24 th	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder
December 25 th - 28 th	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder
December 29 th	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder
December 30 th	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder
December 31 st	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder
January 1 st - 3 rd	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder
January 4 th	Placeholder	Placeholder	Placeholder

30 October 2008

To all local authorities

SEVERE WEATHER PROVISION FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS

In advance of any severe weather across the country this winter, I am writing to remind you that you should have plans in place to ensure that there is cold weather provision for any rough sleepers in your area to ensure that they can be brought in from the street. Your plans should deal with any rough sleepers on the streets in extreme cold weather including those without recourse to public funds such as A10 nationals from EU Accession States.

Many local authorities already have considerable experience of dealing with rough sleepers and their plans will be well advanced in the case of cold weather. However, there are many boroughs where rough sleeping historically has not been an issue. Therefore, it is important for these authorities that plans are in place.

Authorities should work closely with the voluntary sector who may have local intelligence on any problems. Other common tactics include:

- brokering emergency places with hostels in their area
- encouraging a flexible approach by hostels to maximise referrals and minimise evictions
- negotiating with day centres to stay open at night if required
- identifying other suitable accommodation that might be used as a night shelter
- publicising contact phone numbers which the public can use to report rough sleepers
- partnership arrangements with neighbouring boroughs (e.g. Nightstop arrangements)

The object should be to identify sufficient additional spaces to ensure those most vulnerable, who are sleeping on the streets, are able to get some provision.

Usually practice dictates that the trigger for severe weather provision will be a weather forecast predicting three consecutive nights, or more, of a minimum temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower.

If you would like any advice on the issue, could you contact jose.espineira@communities.gsi.gov.uk (tel: 0207 944 3601)

Yours sincerely,

Steve Guyon

Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Policy

1/B4

Eland House

Bressenden Place

London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 0207 944 8782

7th January 2010

Dear colleague

Re: Rough Sleepers - Severe Weather Emergency Provision

We wrote to all local authorities in England in November 2009 to remind them of the need to consider Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEPs) for rough sleepers. SWEPs set out the types of arrangements that local authorities should have in place to ensure people are not at risk of dying on the streets during cold weather. SWEPs arrangements are triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights.

Given the protracted period of extreme cold weather this winter, CLG is aware that in some areas, existing arrangements may be under strain because of the level of demand (for example, in London the Street Rescue Team had 294 individual requests in the week before Christmas – making it difficult for them to reach everyone in the required timescale.)

We want local authorities to take all possible steps to avoid unnecessary deaths on the streets.

If you believe someone is at risk due to sleeping rough during the extreme cold weather then you should take prompt action to ensure they have access to shelter. This may involve arrangements such as:

- Providing emergency B&B placements;
- Paying taxi fares so people can reach shelters that have been set up;
- Arranging to use communal rooms in hostels, day centres etc. to provide emergency shelter

CLG is aware that some local authorities will be facing additional burdens and costs in ensuring people are not at risk by remaining on the streets. If you think you will incur costs that cannot be covered from your homelessness prevention grant then **please contact us for advice** - to talk through the options and what support we may be able to provide.

Please err on the side of caution – and act to ensure people who are sleeping rough are not left outside at risk of dying from the cold.

Thank you

The Rough Sleeping Team

Severe Weather Emergency Protocols: Making arrangements to prevent rough sleeper deaths during extreme cold weather.

Top Tips

Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP) for rough sleepers set out the types of arrangements that need to be made to ensure people are not at risk of dying on the streets during cold weather.

SWEP arrangements are triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights.

Local authorities should take all possible steps to avoid unnecessary deaths on the streets and take prompt action to ensure all rough sleepers have access to shelter if you have reason to believe someone is at risk due to sleeping rough during the extreme cold weather. Local authorities are expected to use their own resources in tackling the problems caused by severe weather including those associated with rough sleeping. Where available, this would be an entirely appropriate use of the homelessness grant.

This note reflects local authority approaches from around the country in the hope that sharing a range of approaches to implementing SWEP will be useful to LA officers who have not been involved in making such emergency plans in the past.

Humanitarian response

The focus of SWEP arrangements should be on ensuring there is a humanitarian response to prevent rough sleepers dying from the cold while there is severe weather. As such the quality of the accommodation might necessarily be of a lower standard than that offered ordinarily. Additionally, it is expected that all rough sleepers, including those who would normally have no recourse to public funds, are made an emergency offer as these arrangements will often be made outside the usual eligibility/entitlement framework that governs access to housing.

Information: communicate a simple and effective offer

It is more effective to get a simple message across than to communicate more complicated information of arrangements. A statement along the lines of "*No one needs to sleep rough during the coldest weather – xxx local authority will ensure everyone has access to shelter. Call this number....*" Is easier to disseminate than details of where to go, what sort of different arrangements are available etc.

Use your local paper, leaflets, e-mail networks, voice mails etc. to get key information to people.

Co-ordinated response

Housing options/ homelessness prevention teams may take a lead in putting severe weather arrangement in place, but robust provisions will involve a range of individuals and services.

Speaking to your Emergency Planning Co-ordinator for information and advice about other contingency arrangements and resources available locally for other types of emergency may be useful in putting effective plans into practice at short notice.

Let your police, faith and community groups, town centre managers, neighbourhood and park wardens know who to contact if they come across someone who is sleeping rough during cold weather and, as best you can, try to balance the need to ensure

that the emergency accommodation is focused on those who are actually sleeping rough with the need to act swiftly to accommodate people without lengthy assessment processes and lots of hurdles.

Make the most of your existing accommodation resources

You may not need to set up new services from scratch – but can make the most of existing facilities and resources. For example:

- You could use communal rooms in existing hostels or winter shelters (provided by voluntary sector agencies, churches or local authorities) to put up people who would otherwise be sleeping rough. You may wish to use mattresses on the floor, camp beds, or simply provide arm chairs in a safe warm space for people to use.
- You could use your existing temporary accommodation for a short period of time – outside the usual access arrangements for humanitarian reasons. Some local authorities do this during the year for selected rough sleepers who are waiting for supported accommodation and would otherwise be on the streets.
- You could use day centres or rooms in community centres or church halls to provide basic shelter at night. Again, this may involve mattresses on the floor, camp beds, or arm chairs.
- Some rural areas have used static caravans – ensuring they have heating – as safe havens for rough sleepers
- You could use B&B – some local authorities have existing block contract arrangements that they extend to include people who would otherwise be sleeping rough. B&B may be more expensive, but it can offer flexibility and is easier to access than negotiating and making arrangements such as the above.

Using existing accommodation and facilities may still involve additional resources such as:

- Extra staffing – even hostels with 24 hour cover may need to increase staffing levels (e.g. use waking staff; have an additional on site staff member) to manage the increased number of people using the service, especially where less is known about some of the individuals than would normally be the case.
- Using day centres, community centres and church halls etc. will usually require additional staffing – you may be able to use a mix of experienced staff and volunteers.
- You will need to ensure that extra bedding/ mattresses and food is available, as well as toiletries and towels. A hot evening meal is important if the provision is only available during the night, as people may be cold and hungry when they arrive.

Additional resources and considerations

Some rough sleepers may have specific needs to consider:

- **Personal care.** Some very entrenched rough sleepers may have poor personal care. Additional support – including cleaning and assistance with self care and laundry – may be important to help people keep their accommodation – even where B&B is being used.
- **Couples.** Some rough sleepers have partners and will want to be accommodated as a couple. In emergencies, single or double rooms could be used for couples. This is harder to manage where accommodation is in dormitory style – but you may wish to consider short term B&B placements if the alternative is to leave people on the streets.
- **Dogs.** Some rough sleepers may have dogs. Ideally, you may be able to negotiate with hostel providers to accept dogs for a short period (there are good policies and guidelines for managing dogs available at the National Canine Defence League’s website). You may also be able to use your TA – including units that can accept dogs. You may be able to find volunteers to accommodate a dog for a short period if time, and bring it to a central location each day to reunite it with their owner. If the only way to ensure someone comes in from the extreme cold is to house their dog, then arrangements for kennelling may be considered.
- **People refusing hostels.** Some rough sleepers have had poor past experiences of hostels and may be entrenched living on the street. Others may have complex needs and feel vulnerable (or pose risks to others) in communal settings. These individuals are often hard to engage and using B&B has been found by many local authorities as a good way of helping this process, and reducing the likelihood of someone returning to the streets.
- **Exclusions.** Despite the best management and support, it is likely that there will still be incidents and challenging or threatening behaviour in some services. Services should seek to manage risks and focus on inclusion policies which minimise the likelihood of someone being excluded from services. This may include moving people between different services or increasing staffing levels and providing additional specialist support. If this is not possible, then any exclusions should only be made on a night by night basis – with no lengthy bars. Where someone is excluded, sign-posting people towards basic shelter, providing sleeping bags and asking police or outreach teams to check on them will provide some safeguards.
- **Refusing help.** The extreme cold weather increases the risk of death or serious illness to people who sleep rough. Given this, a refusal to accept accommodation may be new grounds to trigger referrals to services for mental health assessments.

APPENDIX F: GLOSSARY

TERM	TITLE	DESCRIPTION
A2/A8 & A10 Nationals	-	People from the ten European Union Accession Countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)
BHCC	Brighton & Hove City Council	The Local Government Authority
BHT	Brighton Housing Trust	A charity contracted by BHCC to manage SWEP
CRI	Crime Reduction Initiatives	A charity contracted by BHCC to tackle rough sleeping in the city
DCLG / CLG	The Department for Communities and Local Government	Central government department responsible for what local authorities deliver.
EPT	Emergency Placement Team	A team in BHCC that sources and provides temporary accommodation in emergency situations
FB	First Base Day Centre	Day centre for homeless people run by Brighton Housing Trust
HNSI	Housing Needs & Social Inclusion	A department in BHCC that commissions homelessness targeted services.
Housing Options	Housing Options	A team in BHCC that provides statutory homelessness advice and processes statutory homelessness applications.
LC / No LC	Local Connection	The term used to define whether a homeless person has an established link with the city.
RAF / RA	Resettlement Assessment Framework / Risk Assessment	The assessment tool used to identify specific risks presented by service users, among other things such as support planning.
Relocation / Reconnection	-	The means by which people with no local connection are assisted to move outside of the area to a place they have an established link with.
RSSSRT	Rough Sleepers, Street Service & Relocation Team	A team within CRI responsible for tackling rough sleeping issues in the city and for delivering SWEP
Safeguarding Hub	-	A group representing homelessness accommodation services in the city who ensure complex safeguarding adults cases are addressed and consistently managed
SCYMCA	Sussex Central YMCA	YMCA is a charity committed to supporting all young people, particularly in times of need. Sussex Central YMCA are one of their organisations in Brighton & Hove.
SWEP	Severe Weather Emergency Protocol	An emergency plan to safeguard rough sleepers which is triggered by freezing weather.
TA / TACC	Temporary Accommodation	A department in BHCC that manages all temporary accommodation provision in the city.
YAC	Youth Advice Centre / Young Person's Housing Advice Centre	Homelessness advice centre commissioned by BHCC, run by SCYMCA at Ovest House on West St.

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 46

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Local Investment Plan for Housing		
Date of Meeting:	8th September 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing Culture and Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Reid	Tel: 29-3321
	E-mail:	Martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Improving housing supply is one of the key strategic priorities of the citywide Housing Strategy 2009-14. A key goal is to increase the supply of affordable rented housing. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the body the government currently uses to help fund local authorities and housing associations to develop new affordable housing. The Local Investment Plan will inform HCA planning around priorities for future housing investment based on strategic priorities identified by local authorities.
- 1.2 In 2009 the HCA introduced a new business process entitled the 'Single Conversation' in order to coordinate the planning of housing investment with the key role given to local authorities to commission housing development in their area.
- 1.3 The HCA divided the country into sub-regions, based on the HCA's view of the operation of housing markets. Brighton & Hove is grouped with Arun, Adur, Chichester and Worthing, the 'Coastal West Sussex' sub-region.
- 1.4 In February 2010 the authorities in this sub-region were invited to prepare a Local Investment Plan (LIP) for housing which would set out their priorities for housing investment.
- 1.5 Following the adoption of a Local Investment Plan in September 2010, a Local Investment Agreement will be agreed, which will set out the HCA's proposed investment in the area over the next 3 years.
- 1.6 It is planned that the LIP will be adopted in September 2010 and will enable a realistic assessment of funding requirements for the 3-year period 2011-14 that can feed into the next public sector spending review.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To seek the agreement to the proposed process and timetable for completion of a Brighton & Hove Local Investment Plan for housing.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Housing delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Housing Strategy to agree the final content of the Local Investment Plan prior to the sign off with the Homes & Community Agency in September 2010.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 For the HCA, the LIP will help determine where investments and interventions should be made and ensure that any future funding is targeted for maximum benefit. Importantly, the LIP will enable local authorities to have more control over investment and future funding opportunities (including sources other than via the HCA) and will ensure a joined-up approach to investment planning along the coast.
- 3.2 The plan will focus on short term priorities (2010-2013), but will also look at the medium term (2013-2015) and longer term objectives (up to 2025).
- 3.3 The LIP will not seek to duplicate work that has already been completed or is underway (including Local Development Frameworks, Housing Strategies, Economic Strategies etc), but instead, will consolidate these areas of work into a single, comprehensive plan.
- 3.4 The local authorities will have the leading role in the development of the Coastal Conversation and the LIP, in consultation with the HCA. However, the process is intended to be inclusive and will involve a number of other stakeholders, including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
- 3.5 The aim is for the LIP to be completed by the end of September 2010. Once the LIP is completed and agreed, the intention is for this to be formalised in a Local Investment Agreement (LIA). The LIA will set out the level of investment that the HCA will provide in Coastal West Sussex and Brighton & Hove, subject to budgetary constraints and specific project assessment. It will be a non-legally binding memorandum of understanding between the local authorities and the HCA.
- 3.6 The LIP can also be used to help inform wider sub-regional strategies and is likely to have a number of wider uses.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The LIP is based upon our existing strategic documents and priorities, which have already been subject to extensive consultation.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Finance Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Any council investment required for the delivery of decent homes and the delivery of affordable homes will be subject to full Cabinet approval at a later date.

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith Date: 25/08/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no significant legal implications for the Council arising from the report's recommendations. However, once a Local Investment Agreement has been drafted, Legal Services will need to consider it to ensure that Council's interests are properly protected. The development of a Local Investment Plan will not adversely affect any individuals Human Rights.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Date:25/08/10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The plan will address equality issues across all groups in terms of providing affordable, accessible, quality homes.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 A key objective of new affordable housing is to develop or improve sustainable, mixed and balanced communities.
- 5.5 All social housing grant aided housing schemes must meet Code Level 3 of the Sustainable Code. In the 2011 there is an expectation that new affordable housing schemes will meet Level 4.
- 5.6 The funding for BEST (private sector renewal partnership), has a specific programme identified to improve energy efficiency within existing private sector housing stock.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.7 All new affordable housing schemes aim to achieve Secure by Design status, which is an accreditation given by Sussex Police. Each of the proposed housing schemes is consulted on with the police prior to a planning application, in order that new housing attempts to design out potential for crime.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8 The Investment Plan has been developed on a sub regional basis in line with recommendations from the HCA. Failure to adopt the plan by September 2010 will impact on our ability to bring forward investment from the HCA.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 The LIP by supporting investment into the City will support the key corporate priority 'Providing Homes that People Need'.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The following options were available regarding the development of the LIP:

- (a) Brighton & Hove withdraw from the LIP
- (b) Delay the progress of the LIP

- 6.2 The option to withdraw could put Brighton & Hove at a disadvantage, in that the other authorities could go ahead and Brighton & Hove would not secure any portion of any funding to be made available in the future. We could have delayed the approach to developing the LIP, but this would have meant that we would not be in the best position in readiness for the autumn spending review

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The LIP provides not only an opportunity to consider longer-term investment needs from a position of far greater financial and strategic clarity but also offer an opportunity to review progress against the 3-year development programme and to add or adjust in terms of any policy changes, priorities and development proposals as these develop. The LIP is currently being drafted and is based upon known priorities and quantifiable investment needs.
- 7.2 The Leader and Portfolio Holder will be asked to sign off the final version of the document in preparation of approval by the HCA. It is essential that despite the changing landscape in terms of the announcements from the new Government Brighton & Hove positions itself through identification of its long term investment needs so that should any funding be made available in the future it is in the best position to secure funding.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None

Documents in Members' Rooms: None

Background Documents

1. The Core Elements for Local Investment Plans: HCA 2010
<http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/public/documents/core-elements.pdf>

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 47

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Contract for Communal digital TV system for Council Housing		
Date of Meeting:	8 September 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Mark Dennison	Tel: 29-3190
	E-mail:	mark.dennison@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes/No	No	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Presently most of the council's blocks of flats have analogue communal TV aerial systems. The analogue TV broadcast signal is due to be switched off and replaced with a digital signal. The South East (including Brighton & Hove) analogue signal will be switched off in January 2012. The majority of TV sets and aerials not converted to digital by the switchover date will no longer be able to view TV programmes. To meet this deadline the contract needs to be awarded as quickly as possible.
- 1.2 Approval was given for the procurement to *lease* digital TV aerials for relevant council housing properties in September 2008. Recent professional advice has indicated that outright *purchase* rather than lease is likely to be the most the most timely and cost effective procurement route. In order to achieve best value for money, the tender process commenced in July 2010 on the basis of a citywide contract to lease *or* purchase outright and maintain an IRS 9 Wire Sky+ (integrated reception system) digital aerial system for all HRA blocks with existing communal aerials.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes the report

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Presently most of the council's blocks of flats have analogue communal TV aerial systems which are considered to be in poor condition. There are also 165 medium rise blocks without an existing communal TV system. Some blocks have had their analogue system upgraded to a digital terrestrial television or MATV (Master Antenna TV). This allows residents access to free view channels only. There are currently no maintenance contracts in place for any of these systems.

- 3.2 The national digital strategy aims to use the digital switchover to deal with the following;
- Diversity - through the provision of foreign languages channels and maximising choice.
 - Equality – Through maximising resident choice by ensuring residents have access to all the channels they want
 - ‘Satellite rash’ – removal of unsightly satellite aerials from blocks.
- 3.3 The Council can either use an existing national framework to procure the aerials or run its own competition by issuing an OJEU notice and undertaking a full tender process. Procurement using a national framework is likely to reduce the procurement timetable. Frameworks provide benefits from economies of scale through housing providers combining their purchasing power to gain better prices. Bids obtained through a framework would be benchmarked against the wider market to ensure the council is getting best value for money. National frameworks are already in-place which enable housing providers to procure from leading national digital TV aerial suppliers
- 3.4 The Director Housing, Culture & Enterprise in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing agreed to commence the procurement process in July 2010 in accordance with the Council’s constitution. This decision was taken urgently because of the need to commence the tender process prior to the 08 September 2010 Housing Cabinet Member meeting to enable the contract to be delivered before the digital TV switchover in 2012.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The original report also went to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 10 September 2008. Workshops were also held for residents in 2008.
- 4.2 A stage 1 notice has been issued to leaseholders and they will be fully consulted on the procurement outcome following Section 20 legislation.
- 4.3 Once a contractor has been agreed there will be ongoing consultation with tenants.
- 4.4 Before agreeing to commence the tender process, the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise consulted with the Cabinet Member for Housing in accordance with the Council’s constitution.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The original report in September 2008 requested authority to procure digital TV aerials through leasing. This report recommends that the tender should include both leasing and purchasing options in order to secure the solution which provides best value. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 It should be noted that the HRA capital programme includes £1.422 million

over the next two years (2010 – 2012) to cover the costs of additional anticipated cabling works required for the installation of digital TV aerials. This is in addition to the costs of leasing or procuring the equipment.

- 5.3 The costs of leasing or purchasing, and maintaining a new communal digital system will be recharged to tenants and leaseholders through new service charges. Following the award of the contract, the proposed service charges will be reported to Housing Management Consultative Committee and Housing Cabinet.

Sue Chapman

Date: 13 July 2010

Legal Implications:

- 5.4 The report refers to a contract for supply and services (supply, installation and maintenance). The EU procurement threshold for contracts for supplies and services is £156,444. The estimated value of the supply and installation alone is £1.8m and so the contract value exceeds the EU procurement threshold. The contract must therefore be advertised and awarded in accordance with the relevant EU Directive and UK Regulations. Compliance with the EU Directive and UK Regulations is achieved by either the Council running a competition itself which satisfies the EU Directive and UK Regulations or using an existing framework arrangement which was procured in accordance with the EU Directive and UK Regulations. In addition, contracts in excess of £75,000 must be sent to Legal for sealing. The Council is obliged to take the rights of individuals under the Human Rights Act into account when considering any such issues, but the recommendations contained in this report are unlikely to breach any such rights.

Lawyer Consulted: Anna Thurston

Date: 09 July 2010

Equalities Implications:

- 5.5 An equalities impact assessment will be completed by the winning contractor prior to commencement on site, as this is subject to their chosen method of access.
- 5.6 The inclusion of 'Hot bird' (secondary satellite system) allows access to foreign language channels and meets the councils equality and diversity policy.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.7 The specifications will require contractors to submit a sustainability impact statement on the contractor's proposals to reduce waste, recycling, and the reduction in CO2 emissions for this project.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.8 No Crime and disorder implications. In some cases it is possible to link CCTV to the digital systems.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.9 While the council has no legal responsibility to provide any communal aerial service, central government is looking to public landlords to set an example for other private landlords in the area of social responsibility to ensure no resident fails to know or miss the switchover to digital.
- 5.10 Failure to replace/upgrade the councils existing communal analogue aerial system will leave residents without access to a digital system from 2012 and will result in adverse publicity for the council.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.11 This proposal supports the aim of the council to provide maximum choice to the residents of its own housing stock and gives a lead to other landlords across the city regarding the opportunities afforded by digital switchover.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 There are a number of very different Switchover solutions currently available in the UK market:
- MATV (Master Antenna TV)
 - SMATV (Satellite MATV)
 - IRS (Integrated Reception System)
 - IPTV (Internet Protocol Television)
- 6.2 An evaluation of these options was included in the September 2008 report. The IRS solution was clearly identified as providing best overall value for money based on cost and quality of provision.
- 6.3 Consultants have recently advised that the outright purchase option would deliver significant savings compared to the leasing option. On the basis of this advice, this report provides the opportunity to evaluate both options and secure the solution providing best value for money.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The option of purchasing TV aerial systems from an existing framework will enable the council to comply with its obligations under the EU Directive and UK Regulations on public procurement and to more easily meet the digital switchover deadline because of the potential savings in the procurement timetable under a framework. The purchase option offers better value for money than the original leasing recommendation, with bids being benchmarked to ensure they are competitive to the wider market.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

None

