

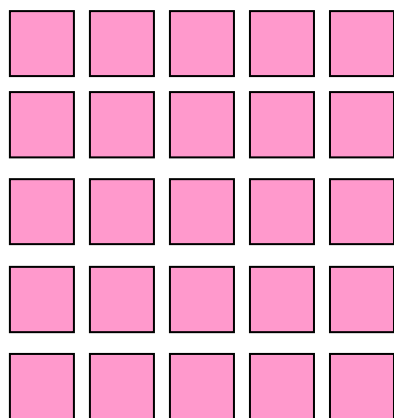
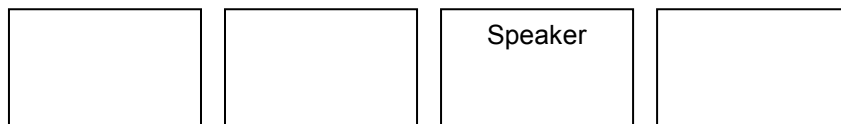
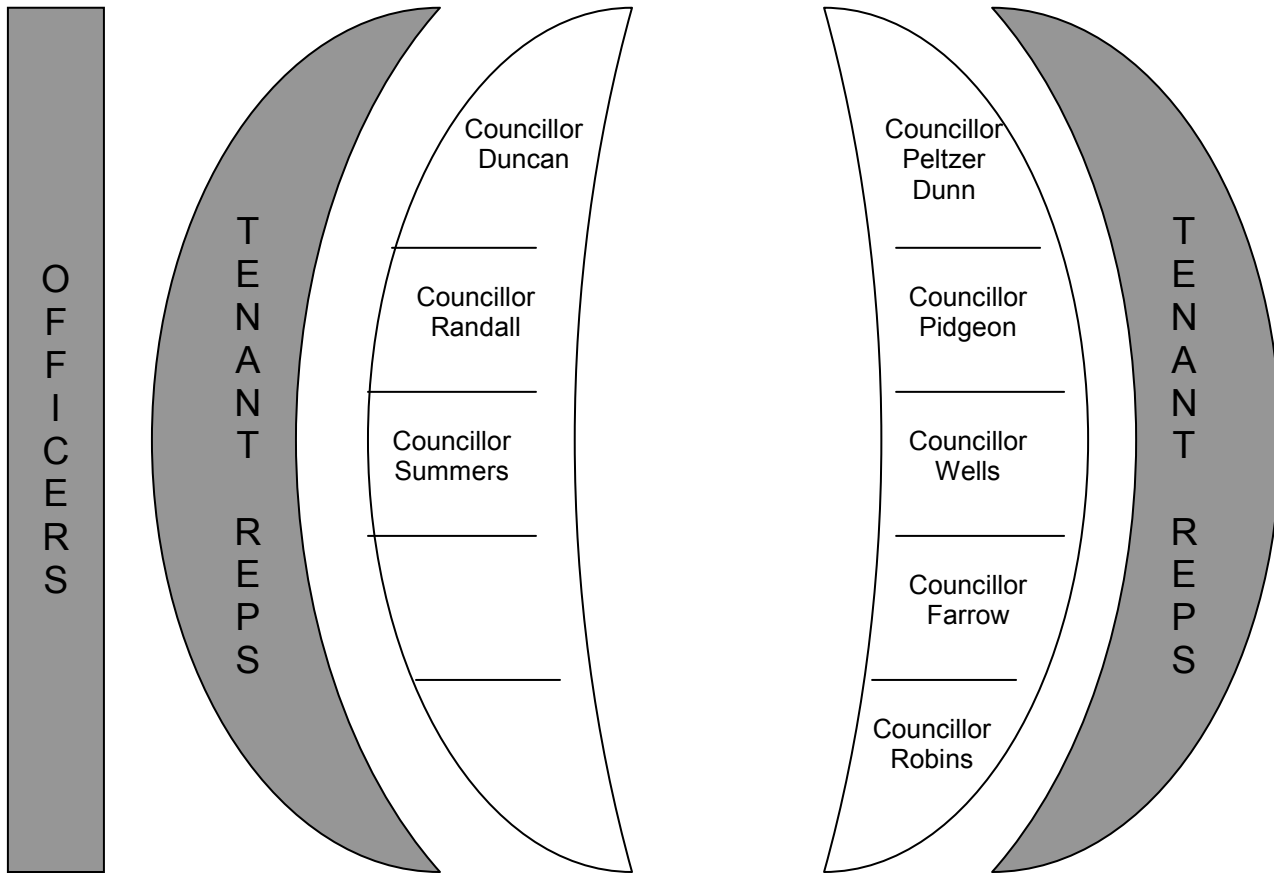
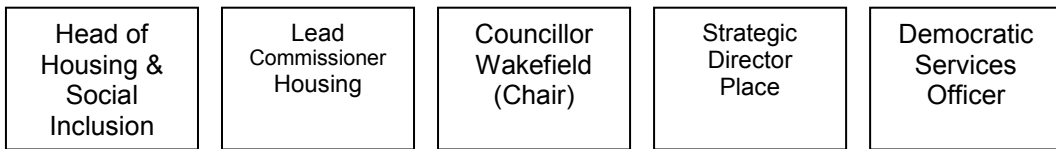
**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Housing Management Consultative Committee

Title:	Housing Management Consultative Committee
Date:	26 September 2011
Time:	3.00pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: Wakefield (Chair), Duncan, Farrow, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Randall, Robins, Summers and Wells
Contact:	Caroline De Marco Democratic Services Officer 01273 291063 caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk

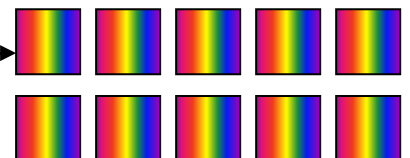
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Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



Public Seating

Members in Attendance



Press



Tenant Representatives:

Ted Harman, Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel

David Murtagh, Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel

Trish Barnard, Central Area Housing Management Panel

Jean Davis, Central Area Housing Management Panel

Stewart Gover, North & East Area Housing Management Panel

Heather Hayes, North & East Area Housing Management Panel

Tina Urquhart, West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel

Beverley Weaver, West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel

Chris Kift, Hi Rise Action Group

Muriel Briault, Leaseholders Action Group

Colin Carden, Older People's Council

Tom Whiting, Sheltered Housing Action Group

Barry Kent, Tenant Disability Network

AGENDA

25. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

- (a) Declaration of Substitutes - Where Councillors are unable to attend a meeting, a substitute Member from the same Political Group may attend, speak and vote in their place for that meeting.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1 - 12

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2011 (copy attached).

27. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

28. CALLOVER

29. PETITIONS

No petitions have been received by the date of publication.

30. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(The closing date for receipt of public questions is 12 noon on 19 September 2011)

No public questions have been received by the date of publication.

31. DEPUTATIONS

(The closing date for receipt of deputations is 12 noon on 19 September

2011)

No deputations have been received by the date of publication.

- 32. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS** **13 - 14**
Policy Issues. Letter from Councillor Mears (copy attached).
- 33. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**
No written questions have been received.
- 34. HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE** **15 - 20**
Report of Strategic Director, Place (copy attached).
Contact Officer: Sam Smith *Tel:* 01273 291383
Ward Affected: All Wards
- 35. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY** **21 - 56**
Report of Strategic Director, Place (copy attached).
Contact Officer: Ododo Dafe *Tel:* 29-3201
Ward Affected: All Wards
- 36. ESTABLISHING A TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL** **57 - 62**
Report of Strategic Director, Place (copy attached).
Contact Officer: Nick Hibberd *Tel:* 29-3756
Ward Affected: All Wards
- 37. CUSTOMER ACCESS PHASE 3 - CUSTOMER SERVICE & ACCESS STRATEGY FOR HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION** **63 - 96**
Report of Strategic Director, Place (copy attached).
Contact Officer: Ododo Dafe *Tel:* 29-3201
Ward Affected: All Wards
- 38. ALLOCATIONS POLICY** **97 - 100**
Report of the Strategic Director Place & the Strategic Director People (copy attached).
Contact Officer: Sylvia Peckham, Verity Walker *Tel:* 293318, *Tel:* 01273 293130
Ward Affected: All Wards
- 39. HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT OPTIONS - INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS TO COUNCIL OWNED HOMES** **101 - 110**
Report of the Strategic Director Place (copy attached).
Contact Officer: Martin Reid *Tel:* 29-3321
Ward Affected: All Wards

**40. HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT
(QUARTER 1)**

111 - 118

Report of the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Ododo Dafe

Tel: 29-3201

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.

Agendas and minutes are published on the council's website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. Agendas are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

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 - Friday, 16 September 2011

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 26

Brighton & Hove City
Council

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 5 SEPTEMBER 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Wakefield (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Robins, Summers and Wells

Tenant Representatives: Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Jean Davis (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Tina Urquhart (West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel), Beverley Weaver (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Chris Kift (Hi Rise Action Group), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network)

Apologies: Councillor Randall and Chris El Shabba (substitute tenant representative).

PART ONE

14. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

14A Declarations of Substitute Members

14.1 Tony Worsfold declared that he was attending as a substitute for Muriel Briault.

14B Declarations of Interests

14.2 Councillor Summers, Councillor Wells, Heather Hayes and Ted Harman declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

14C Exclusion of the Press and Public

- 14.3 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.
- 14.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 15.1 Tom Whiting asked for the second sentence of 11.6 to be amended as follows: "Tom Whiting stressed the need for sheltered housing. This was *more* financially viable *especially where care services are involved.*"
- 15.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2011 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendment above.

16. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**Resident Involvement and widening participation**

- 16.1 The Chair explained that she was aware that there has been some recent concern that the administration might not value the involvement of residents in the way it did things. She wanted to clear up misunderstandings and hear peoples' concerns.
- 16.2 The Chair stressed that she wanted to be absolutely clear that she would place residents at the heart of everything that the administration did in relation to the management of council housing.
- 16.3 The Chair valued tenants' involvement and she would be attending as many tenant meetings as she could during the next few months up to Christmas, in order to observe, listen and answer questions. She stressed it was important for her to hear the tenants' concerns. If she was unable to attend a meeting she would send another councillor.
- 16.4 The Chair wanted a partnership with residents, working together to design, deliver and monitor housing services.
- 16.5 At the next round of Area Panels the Chair wanted to spend some time to consider how the administration could make a bigger difference to resident involvement and engage more people to support tenants' work, give their views, and help hold the council to account. The administration be not be foisting decisions on tenants and the Chair stressed that she fully recognised what her predecessors had put in place. She did however, think that participation could be widened to include more tenant involvement.
- 16.6 The Chair reported that the Administration had pledged to increase engagement and introduce a tenant-led scrutiny panel. Officers within the housing and democratic

services have been exploring ways of introducing tenant scrutiny and would be bringing a report to the next HMCC at the end of the month. The Chair now wanted to directly involve residents in further developing ideas around introducing tenant scrutiny. At the next round of Area Panels she would be establishing a resident-led 'innovation group' to start some early work on this. She would chair this group as she wanted to be directly involved in working with tenants. The group might also have ideas on how the administration could give tenants and leaseholders opportunities to be more involved, working on approaches that removed barriers and increased democracy, and the number and types of groups. It was likely that the group would work together between September and December 2011, and be made up of current tenant representatives, some tenants who are not currently engaged, councillors and officers.

- 16.7 The administration wanted to widen participation and encourage new tenants and leaseholders to get involved, but this did not mean that the administration did not value the input and valuable experience that long standing tenant representatives brought.
- 16.8 David Murtagh informed the Chair that he was annoyed with what he read in the press and would like to know how many tenants had been in discussions with Councillor Randall. Feedback from tenants was not good. Consultation had not been so good since the elections.
- 16.9 The Chair stated that the administration wanted to improve communications. She had spoken to councillors who wanted more information before meetings. She agreed with their view and was happy to share information. The Chair invited members to get in touch with her if they had any questions.
- 16.10 Chris Kift mentioned that it was minuted in the last Tenant Compact Monitoring Group meeting that some members wanted to write a letter to Councillor Randall about how few councillors were attending meetings. Councillor Randall responded straight away and councillors had attended a following meeting. This had been achieved informally by ringing Councillor Randall. When Chris had raised concerns about changes to the Area Panels, the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion had contacted him within 10 minutes. The matter was discussed at the last two City Assemblies and the only gaps needing re-election were where people had stood down. He could not see why this matter was causing problems.
- 16.11 Ted Harman informed the meeting that he had only found out about a letter sent to tenant representatives this morning. The last letter he received about Area Panels was in July 2011. He had not heard the outcome of a meeting with Councillor Randall. Chris Kift explained that he would be reporting on the outcome of that meeting at a meeting of the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group on Monday 12 September.
- 16.12 Councillor Robins referred to the Chair's comments about attending meetings. He asked if she was unable to attend, did she intend her substitutes to be Green councillors? The Chair explained that this was her intention but she was happy to work co-operatively with all councillors.
- 16.13 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the lack of communication with tenants and councillors. He accepted that this was not the fault of the Chair. It was the duty of officers to inform tenants and councillors. It was worrying that there were tenant representatives who had not been kept informed. He found it difficult when people

phoned him and he was not able to advise them, as he had not been kept informed. He stressed that co-operation was the way forward. A platform of trust had been damaged by inaction.

- 16.14 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion acknowledged the concerns raised. A decision had been made to defer the elections at Area Panels for a few months in order to look at the various tenant groups. It was necessary to talk to 70 organisations. This was not possible on the phone, and it was decided that a letter should be sent out. The letter had been sent out in August as that was when the agendas were set for the Area Panels. He apologised for the lack of communication and acknowledged that the content of the letter could have been shared with members of the HMCC and the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group. However, the contents of the letter needed to be shared with constituents wider than this group. He apologised if the process was causing anxiety and concern.
- 16.15 Stewart Gover remarked that most people in the meeting room were paid to attend. However, tenants' representatives were in attendance for free. He referred to the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 as authority for the proposition that no-one in the country should interfere with tenant representation at the Area Panels. He considered that officers and councillors had no authority to interfere with the due process of an Area Panel Meeting.
- 16.16 Councillor Duncan stressed that the administration were trying to embed new structures and new ways of doing things, and wanted to ensure more voices were heard. He had been carrying out visits around the city to hear the views of residents. Democracy and listening were at the heart of what the administration wanted to do.
- 16.17 David Murtagh referred to a special meeting held last year that looked at this issue. He asked why the matter was being discussed again.
- 16.18 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that officers were continuing that work. At the next meeting of the HMCC there would be a report on a Resident Involvement Strategy. The Localism Bill would be going through parliament and there was a legislative need for scrutiny. This would build on the work of the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group.
- 16.19 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to Stewart Gover's comments about the legality of the proposed changes to the Area Panels. He asked for the Senior Lawyer's view. The Senior Lawyer informed the Committee that what had been stated did not seem quite right. She would need to read the Act of Parliament and report back.
- 16.20 Tom Whiting considered the whole business to be a shambles. There was a need to start again to put things right.
- 16.21 The Chair stated that she was happy to have a fresh start and had taken on board the above comments regarding communications. She urged tenants to bring concerns to the administration.

Tenant Inspectors.

- 16.22 The Chair stated that some committee members might remember that tenants had previously expressed an interest in being trained to become Tenant Inspectors to evaluate the quality of service provision by Mears and the council's other repairs and maintenance contractors. The Chair knew that this is something that David Murtagh had been requesting for some time.
- 16.23 Since the last meeting of HMCC, the Chair had met with Mears to discuss issues raised by residents. As part of this she had asked Mears to come up with some proposals for how the council could train a group of tenants to become tenant inspectors. To get this started, the Chair had asked Mears to arrange for some tenants to visit another social housing landlord to meet other tenant inspectors and learn how this works in their area. Mears would be discussing this at the next meetings of the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel. The Chair asked tenants to let her know if they would like to be involved. She requested that residents emailed her as this was likely to get the quickest response.

17. CALLOVER

- 17.1 The Chair asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.
- 17.2 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for debate and determination.

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. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2010/11 FINAL OUTTURN AND FORECAST
OUTTURN FOR 2011/12 AS AT MONTH 4**

- 23.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion which set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2010/11 final outturn and the forecast outturn

for 2011/12 as at Month 4. The report was presented by the Head of Finance – Business Engagement. The 2010/11 outturn was a net underspend of £1.377 million compared to budget as shown in Appendix 1 to the report. The forecast outturn for 2011/12 was an underspend of £0.656 million as shown in Appendix 2.

- 23.2 Stewart Gover asked why the rent income from car parks and garages had fallen so drastically. The Head of Finance – Business Engagement explained that the drop in income related to St James’s House Car Park being closed for some time.
- 23.3 **RESOLVED** – (1) That it is noted that the final outturn for the HRA for 2010/11 was an underspend of £1.377 million. This represents a variance of 2.85% of the gross revenue budget of £48.294 million. General HRA revenue reserves have increased by £1.077 million to £4.700 million as at 31 March 2011.
- (2) That the forecast outturn position for 2011/12 as at Month 4, which is an underspend of £0.656 million, be noted.

24. ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS 2011

- 24.1 The Committee considered a report of Head of Housing and Social Inclusion requesting the Committee to consider the final draft annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders for the year ending 31 March 2011 at Appendix 1 and recommend that the Cabinet Member for Housing approve it for publication and distribution to all council tenants and leaseholders with Homing In later this month.
- 24.2 The Housing Stock Review Manager explained that she would outline the context and how the annual report was produced. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion would then report on the main highlights of the performance and improvement plans as set out in the report itself.
- 24.3 Members were informed that since April 2010 the council has come under the regulatory framework for social landlords of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), along with other council landlords and housing associations. This framework required social landlords to publish an annual performance report to their tenants and to reach a number of minimum standards.
- 24.4 The annual report was required to assess the council’s performance against the TSA’s standards and meet a very detailed brief, including setting out how tenants had been involved in producing and scrutinising the report and the ‘service offer’ and improvement plans for the current year. Landlords were required to meet the commitments they made to their tenants.
- 24.5 The first annual report last year was very well received, so officers followed a similar plan and format this year. On 24 January 2011, the HMCC noted the progress officers had already made in meeting the commitments in last year’s report and agreed the plan and timetable for involving council tenants and leaseholders in producing and scrutinising this year’s report.
- 24.6 Like last year’s report, officers were keen that the current Annual Report included in their own words and in pictures tenants’ and leaseholders’ own perceptions of the

council's performance and what resident working groups had achieved, working in partnership with members and officers.

- 24.7 Officers also wanted to give all residents the opportunity to tell the council what they wanted to say or see in the report. So officers asked everyone – in last year's annual report itself, in feedback and suggestion forms, on the council website, through Homing In and at Area Panels and the City Assembly:
- for feedback on last year's report and how it could be improved
 - for comments and suggestions for this year's report
 - and to send short quotes on the achievements of their groups.
- 24.8 Officers also, like last year, issued a consultation draft report for everyone to comment on, at the end of June. A copy was sent to all tenant and resident associations with a feedback form, copies were available at council offices and put it on the council website and the council's consultation portal. Officers emailed over 2,200 tenants and leaseholders that the council have email addresses for with a link to the report and asking them to have their say and put postings on Twitter and Facebook.
- 24.9 Officers arranged more publicity than last year and made sure every council tenant and leaseholder had the opportunity to be involved. Fewer responses were received than last year, but the final draft report reflected the feedback that was received. The council was very grateful to those residents and representatives who provided feedback and quotes and pictures for the report, which brought it alive and also gave residents' point of view.
- 24.10 This year the report also featured staff who made an exceptional contribution last year. The mix of photos and quotes reflected the partnership between residents and the council to achieve excellent performance.
- 24.11 Last year officers consulted a large number of tenants to see how they thought the council met the new TSA standards at that time. Officers used that information to outline in last year's annual report how they met the TSA standards, any gaps and what they planned to do by 31 March this year to improve the council's services.
- 24.12 The council continued with the same structure, following the TSA standards for the sections in this year's report. In each section officers had set out clearly how they met those commitments and the council's plans to improve further over this current year.
- 24.13 The final stage for residents to scrutinise the annual report was at this meeting, but officers were also grateful to have received some suggestions from the Homing In Tenant Editorial Board, such as a caption for the photo on the front cover.
- 24.14 The Tenant Services Authority would be abolished next year and a 'backstop' role to intervene on consumer matters was being transferred to the Homes and Communities Agency. The TSA would be consulting on changes to the regulatory framework later this autumn. In the meantime it had said that the council don't need to send them a copy of this year's annual report.

- 24.15 The requirement to produce an annual report to tenants was expected to continue. The government was currently consulting on new directions it proposed to make to the new regulator and those included requiring landlords to publish an annual report.
- 24.16 Accordingly, The Housing Stock Review Manager highlighted that officers were once again asking residents on the back cover of the Annual Report to let the council know what they think of it and what they would like in a future report.
- 24.17 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that the Annual Report documented improvements in service over the last year. It demonstrated that the council had listened to residents and met the promises made in last year's Annual Report.
- 24.18 It was not 100% good news – and there were areas where the council needed to improve. However, in every area tenants were involved in making improvements.
- 24.19 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion highlighted some of the achievements from the report. There had been good improvements to the website including the Customer Online System which had resulted in positive feedback. There had been a lot of work to streamline processes to improve customers' experience of the service. The City Assemblies were getting better each time and becoming more interactive.
- 24.20 74% of tenants' homes now met the Decent Homes Standard and the council was still on track to bring all tenants' homes up to Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013/14. The Council remained in the top quartile for energy efficiency of housing stock. The repairs service had provided a challenge but 95% of the almost 6000 people surveyed last year were satisfied or very satisfied with repairs carried out. More work needed to be done to get this right.
- 24.21 A great deal of good work had been carried out with mystery shoppers and it was good news that lettings were quicker now. The Estate Service reported that there was now 80% satisfaction with the cleaning service. Officers were challenged to further improve this service. The council was continuing to carry out improvements in fire safety. There was increased resident satisfaction with anti social behaviour and with regard to Value for Money the council had achieved the highest ever level of rent collection rate. He thanked staff who worked in that area.
- 24.22 Finally, the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion thanked tenants for their involvement in the report. He also thanked the Housing Stock Review Manager for her hard work in producing the report.
- 24.23 Chris Kift reported that in relation to fire safety, a recent high rise fire drill had put to bed the myth that fire fighters could only reach the 5th floor. They had reached the 11th floor. He stressed that these drills should be carried out throughout the city, so that residents could see what the fire service could achieve.
- 24.24 The Chair reported that she was a member of the Fire Authority and that the council was already requesting that these drills should take place.

- 24.25 Jean Davis reported that automatic fire doors at Essex Place and other blocks were fitted but did not work. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion undertook to get a response to Jean on this matter.
- 24.26 Councillor Pidgeon reported that he was a member of the Fire Authority and expressed concern about the fire doors. He asked for a full report so that he could raise this issue with the people concerned.
- 24.27 Stewart Gover congratulated the Housing Stock Review Manager on the report. He asked about the current position regarding the Local Delivery Vehicle. He understood an offer had been made by Santander. He asked why progress had been stalled.
- 24.28 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that officers were in the final stages of looking at an offer from Santander. The council's lawyers were currently looking at the offer. It was still on track as far as he was aware.
- 24.29 Councillor Robins referred to the section of the report on Repairs and Maintenance. It reported that 95% of the 5,839 residents spoken to in 2010/11 being either satisfied or very satisfied with the repairs carried out. He asked how these people had been selected for the survey.
- 24.30 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that there were two methods, telephone surveys and satisfaction surveys tenants completed on the handheld devices of operatives. Satisfaction surveys were a proxy and not the full picture. The council did not rely on this information.
- 24.31 Councillor Robins queried whether Mears were asking people if they were satisfied and if so if they were paid for saying people were satisfied. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that that Mears did ask if people were satisfied but they were monitored by a Core Group with residents on it. Mears were not paid to say people were satisfied. A high survey rate had been achieved and the results could be broken down to see where things are not so strong.
- 24.32 Ted Harman reported that he was on the Partnership Group. More complaints were taken to the group than reports of good work being carried out. He called for more balance in the report. The Chair replied that if something went wrong, more people mentioned it, but agreed that it would be useful to see both sides of the reporting.
- 24.33 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that officers did monitor complaints and looked at what could be learnt from the complaints. He agreed that the response time for complaints needed to improve.
- 24.34 David Murtagh made the point that tenants needed to be trained as inspectors. Chris Kift reported that the last City Assembly had agreed that problems with Mears needed to be investigated.
- 24.35 The Chair reported that she had requested bi-monthly meetings with Mears. She asked tenants to share problems with the council so they could be sorted.

- 24.36 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to one of the sections of the Annual Report “How will we continue to improve?” As the report was being sent to leaseholders he asked about the legal position regarding re-charging leaseholders for improvements. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion said he would reply in writing on this issue. However, overcladding was an example of an improvement for which leaseholders would receive a service charge.
- 24.37 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if leaseholders had the right to object to improvements. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that work charged to leaseholders must be reasonable and the improvements must be required for the building.
- 24.38 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for a legal view on how an improvement could be required. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion responded by promising to investigate this matter and contacting Councillor Peltzer Dunn.
- 24.39 Beverley Weaver considered that Mears should not have been used for the survey. The council should be using their own tenant satisfaction survey. Meanwhile, leaseholders were not happy and were having to pay extra amounts. Beverley referred to the 95% satisfaction rate for repairs and said that this needed to be broken down. She considered 95% a ridiculous figure. People did not know where to go to complain. Beverley reported a case of a woman who she said had been forced to complete a survey, which she had only signed to get rid of the man from Mears.
- 24.40 The Chair stressed that she took this situation seriously and was concerned to hear of the case of a woman who said she was forced to complete a survey. She agreed that figures should be broken down.
- 24.41 Stewart Gover agreed with Beverley. He mentioned a case of a kitchen which had been fitted and then ripped out and fitted again. He stressed the importance of monitoring and Value for Money. The council should be better at monitoring quality.
- 24.42 Stewart Gover referred to the comments made by Councillor Peltzer Dunn regarding leaseholders and suggested that the more leaseholders in a building the less they paid. If there were fewer leaseholders they would pay more.
- 24.43 The Chair reported that when tenant inspectors were trained, it would be really useful in checking the work carried out by Mears.
- 24.44 Nick Hibberd stressed that leaseholders paid a proportion of the costs in a building. It was not the case that if there were fewer leaseholders they would pay more. They only paid a fair proportion of the total cost.
- 24.45 Barry Kent asked why leaseholders were asked to pay a percentage of the cost when repairs were carried out to the roof. He also asked why leaseholders were being charged for another person’s front door. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion responded by stating that leaseholders should not be charged for work done on another person’s flat. He suggested bringing back a report for discussion, which looked at how the council charged leaseholders. The Chair agreed to this suggestion and said she would welcome clarification on this issue.

- 24.46 Tom Whiting stated that improvements were measured against the Brighton & Hove Standards or Decent Home Standard. Anything below standard needed to be improved. He complimented the Housing Stock Review Manager on the report which he considered very balanced. He suggested that the Annual Report should be sent out with the Tenant Compact brochure as a tool to encourage more tenant participation.
- 24.47 Councillor Robins asked who the council proposed to train as resident inspectors. He thought it would not be possible to train residents to inspect work in a matter of weeks. The Chair replied that there would be discussions with Mears about this matter. She suggested work could be inspected just after being completed, and again a few months later to check wear and tear. This information would be shared.
- 24.48 Councillor Robins did not think it possible to train residents to check gas fittings. He would like to see details of the training being put in place.
- 24.49 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that the starting point was to work with a group of interested tenants. It was very common across housing providers to invite tenants in assessing the quality of the service. However, tenants would not always be able to assess the more technical side of the service. There was a number of training courses available and information about the courses could be given to tenants. Some of these were organised by national tenants' organisations.
- 24.50 Ted Harman approved of the idea of having tenant inspectors and was thinking of becoming one himself. He considered it essential to get involved in this scheme.
- 24.51 David Murtagh stressed that tenants needed technical guidance when they were inspecting plumbing and central heating. There was no reason why experience could not be passed on. There were many tenants with experience in these trades who would be able to pass their knowledge on to other tenants.
- 24.52 Councillor Wells stated that he would not like tenants' representatives to be trained by Mears Ltd. People with experience in the construction industry should be involved in this scheme.
- 24.53 The Chair stated that she was sure that people with construction experience would be involved in the scheme but she would not want to exclude other people from becoming involved.
- 24.54 Chris Kift stressed the need for experience. There needed to be enough trades people involved who could be inspectors or trainers of inspectors.
- 24.55 Councillor Peltzer Dunn liked the idea of tenant inspectors and considered that there needed to be a range of training. However, he stressed that the council had a responsibility to the tenants and leaseholders. It was the council who should take responsibility, not semi retired amateurs with experience. He considered it wrong to rely on a voluntary service, although as an enhancement it would be helpful. Chris Kift objected to Councillor Peltzer Dunn's comments. He stressed that tenants worked extremely hard and did so because they wanted to.

- 24.56 The Chair stressed that the tenant inspectors would be in addition to any legal requirements for the council to check work carried out.
- 24.57 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if every job carried out by Mears was inspected by the council. The Chair replied that a cross section of jobs were checked.
- 24.58 Trish Barnard mentioned that when she had gas central heating installed the copper piping was visible on the walls. (This was not carried out by Mears). When she complained she was told she was lucky to have gas central heating as she was a council tenant.
- 24.59 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to approve the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2011 at Appendix 1 for publication and distribution to all council tenants and leaseholders.

The meeting concluded at 4.51pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 32

Brighton & Hove City
Council

Mr. John Barradell
Chief Executive – Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House

13th September 2011

Dear John,

I would be grateful if you could ensure that this letter is included on the agenda for the Housing Management Consultative Committee meeting on 26th September under Council Procedure Rule 23.3.

I have very serious concerns about a lack of openness and transparency which is becoming evident in the attitude of the Administration towards council tenants and I would like this to be addressed by HMCC as a matter of urgency.

Two recent events have led to my concern:

1. The decision to delay the elections for the area panels due to the introduction of an "innovation group".
2. The decision to replace the Council's Homemove magazine with a largely internet-based service for property bidding. This decision has serious equalities implications for groups of residents who are not necessarily as internet-savvy as the rest of the general population.

Both of these significant changes in policy were simply announced in letters to tenant reps. and councillors without any proper consultation. The feedback which I have had from tenants on this is that they believe that the Administration has acted in a high-handed and arrogant manner towards them in the way that these changes have been imposed.

I would like to address the Committee to propose changes to the way these sort of policy issues are handled in the future for the benefit of the Council's fourteen thousand or so tenants and leaseholders.

Kind regards



Mary

Cllr. Mary Mears – Rottingdean Coastal Ward

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 34

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Housing Improvement Programme update		
Date of Meeting:	26 September 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director - Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Sam Smith	Tel: 29-1383
	Email:	sam.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report informs Housing Management Consultative Committee of the progress made in the delivery of the Housing Service Improvement Plan and proposals for the next phase of the Improvement Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee notes the progress made in Phase 1 and the preparations for Phase 2 of the Improvement Programme.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

What is the Improvement Programme?

- 3.1 The improvement programme is the way that the council manages and organises our work to improve our services. We ensure that all the work in the programme is 'project managed' helping to deliver it in a controlled way; to budget and on time. Taking this approach helps to ensure that the variety of work is co-ordinated and helps ensure that projects achieve the anticipated benefits and service improvements. The overall programme is managed by Sam Smith, the service's Programme Manager.

The Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009–12

- 3.2 The Improvement Plan presented a three year programme for managing and maintaining council housing. It was developed with the overall objective of improving services to an excellent standard. The first phase of the improvement programme is now coming to a close and proposals have been developed for the next phase of the programme.

- 3.3 The first phase of the Improvement Programme included the delivery of a number of projects that have improved the services provided to residents and the services financial position. Projects completed in the first phase include:
- **Repairs & Improvement Partnership** – procurement and mobilisation of the new partnership with Mears Limited
 - **Housing Centre** – the development of the new centre in Moulsecoomb which houses the partnership and the council’s administrative teams
 - **Turning the Tide** – project to tackle anti-social behaviour, inequality and improve neighbourhoods (including the ‘Rate Your Estate’ initiative)
 - **Resident Involvement Strategy** – review of the Tenant Compact and development of a strategy including a menu of involvement opportunities
 - **Financial Inclusion** – cross agency project to improve financial information, opportunities and advice for residents
 - **Sustainability** – development of the resident energy efficiency working group and initiatives including the training of resident Energy Champions
 - **Customer Access** – review of how we can improve access to, and experience of our services
 - **Website development** – improvements to the council’s website to make it easier to use and provide more opportunities to access services online
 - **Information Technology** – staff training and systems development to improve the service’s use of computer systems
- 3.4 These projects and others have been successfully delivered in the first phase of the Improvement Programme. They have helped to improve the service’s performance and we are now among the top 25% of landlords in areas such as income collection and empty property turn around time. The programme has also lead to significant financial savings which have been re-invested in homes; enabling the council to be on target for all properties meeting the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013/14 financial year.
- 3.5 The first phase of the Improvement Programme has helped us to improve performance and ensure that residents are getting value for money. However there is still work to be done to ensure that all residents are getting the service they deserve, and a second phase of the programme is currently being prepared with the aim to make our services more effective, efficient and responsive to residents’ needs.

Delivering the council’s priorities - Improvement Programme Phase 2

- 3.6 The council’s administration has outlined their key priorities for the city and made a number of manifesto commitments relating to housing. The next phase of the Improvement Programme will help to deliver these commitments. The new priorities are:
- Tackling inequality
 - Creating a more sustainable city
 - Engaging people who live and work in the city

- 3.7 The programme includes a range of projects that will help to deliver these priorities including those to improve the sustainability of homes, tackle inequality and increase resident involvement in budget setting and decision making. The programme will aim to reduce the service's management costs in order to re-invest in supporting these priorities. Projects that will be delivered over the next three years include:
- **Carbon reduction** – work to improve the sustainability of homes and tackle fuel poverty e.g. solar photo voltaic panels and energy efficiency work
 - **Resident Involvement** – work to develop resident scrutiny and help ensure that as many residents as possible get involved e.g. through social media
 - **Service reorganisation** – reorganising our staffing structures and changing roles to make sure they are right for the services we provide
 - **Service contracts** – continued work to ensure that all our contracts provide excellent service and value for money
 - **Customer Access** – continuing work to ensure that our services are easy to contact and that issues are resolved quickly and effectively
 - **Lettings review** – work to further improve our lettings process
 - **Accommodation strategy** – making sure that we are making best use of all of our offices and buildings
 - **Working with communities** – working on new project and delivery models e.g. white goods recycling and discretionary schemes
 - **Services online** – further work to improve our web site and access to online services e.g. improved online repairs reporting

What happens next?

- 3.8 The programme will now start to deliver the projects listed above and others over the next three years. There will be plenty of opportunities for residents to get involved and there will be regular progress reports and updates to HMCC and in Homing-in magazine. The programme is flexible and it is likely that some new projects will join the programme and some leave as it progresses.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The service is committed to involving residents in our work at all levels and via a wide range of methods. A range of consultation has been undertaken with residents in order to inform our improvement priorities such as questionnaires (e.g. 'Tell us what you think' and regular customer satisfaction surveys), residents' contributions to our annual reports in 2010 and 2011 and feedback on the consultation drafts, resident mystery shopping, focus groups, meetings and resident working groups.
- 4.2 The development of the programme has been informed by the Performance Compact that has been agreed with the council's Lead Commissioner for Housing and the council's Housing Strategy 2009-14.

- 4.3 We have outlined our improvement plans in the annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders being published in September 2011. The annual report 2011 also updates all residents on the completion and achievements of the first three years of our Improvement Programme. It goes on to state that we will launch the next phase of our Improvement Programme and carry on taking a co-ordinated project management approach, involving residents in this work.
- 4.4 Staff affected by any changes will be consulted following the council's 'Managing Change' Policy.
- 4.5 Residents will continue to be involved in the projects to deliver the programme and regular progress reports will be brought to Housing Management Consultative Committee.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs or cost savings relating to the Housing Improvement Programme Phase 2 will be included within the Housing Revenue Account Budget Strategy for 2012/13, which will be reported to this Committee in February 2012.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Susie Allen Date: 08/09/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As the report is primarily for noting, there are no specific legal or Human Rights Act implications to be drawn to the Committee's attention. The legal issues associated with the future projects outlined in paragraph 3.7 will be considered as and when they arise.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 14/09/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on relevant projects included in the programme. The programme will aim to tackle inequality through its many of the projects.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The improvement programme will aim to help with the council's aim of becoming the 'greenest city in the UK' and all projects will undertake an analysis of their sustainability impacts as part of the project planning process. There are a number of ways that the programme can help the council to achieve this goal e.g.
- The programme includes projects to improve energy efficiency and install renewable sources of energy on homes; helping to tackle climate change and fuel poverty
 - Projects will take steps to maximise re-use and recycling, and minimise waste to landfill e.g. through procurement conditions

- The programme will help to develop the council's work with local communities and the development of opportunities for apprenticeships and training
- Projects will aim to utilise local labour, products and companies where possible
- Project will take steps to use materials and products which are as sustainable as possible and minimise embedded carbon

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Providing good quality housing and support is essential to help reduce anti social behaviour and other crime. There are specific projects within the programme which should contain specific objectives around tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Projects included in the programme will have their risks captured and monitored as part of the project management process. A programme level risk log will also be maintained.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are strong links between improving housing and tackling public health inequalities. The programme has so far delivered a number of projects which will have impacts on public health, for example reducing maintenance and improvement costs in order to bring all homes up to the Decent Homes Standards and projects to improve financial inclusion. The next phase of the programme will include projects that will help to further improve housing condition and tackle inequality.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The improvement programme will need to be delivered in partnership with residents, other services and organisations. The benefits of improving council housing will have affects across our neighbourhoods and the city and not just confined to those living in council managed housing.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 There are a number of different approaches to delivering service improvements, however a programme management approach has been effective through the first phase of the programme and is in line with best practice within the council and across other private and public sector organisations.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide Housing Management Consultative Committee with an update on our progress in phase 1 of the service improvement programme and advise on the launch of phase 2.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 35

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Resident Involvement Strategy		
Date of Meeting:	26 September 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafé	Tel: 29-3201
	Email:	Ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report concludes the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group's (TCMG) current round of work on the Resident Involvement Strategy and presents the revised and recommended document to committee.
- 1.2 The report is presented by members of the TCMG in person.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) endorses the Resident Involvement Strategy.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 This report follows on from two previous reports to Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) that were presented on 14 June 2010 and 27 September 2010. These reports outlined the consultation process and the considerable number of responses that had been collected from the consultation process on the Resident Involvement Strategy.
- 3.2 At HMCC, on 27 September last year, the report presented stated that the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group had met on 13 August 2010 to consider the large variety of suggestions for further amendment or additional items for inclusion that had been received from the consultation with tenants and other stakeholders. Having looked at a number of options the TCMG concluded that, while the Resident Involvement Strategy was approved as a broad, strategic framework,

further development was needed to ensure that the document remained live and accessible to all who might wish to read it and use it.

- 3.3 It was through this process that the TCMG decided on an approach that would see the creation of four tenant-led working groups, one for each of four established objectives. These groups would be able to consider all comments and be open to exploring some of the points raised, in more detail, if this seemed appropriate. The consequence would be to ensure that the Resident Involvement Strategy remained under constant review and open to further development in the light of experience and policy development at national and local level.
- 3.4 The TCMG expressed its desire to be free from officer or councillor influence and therefore recommended that the working groups should be “Tenant/Leaseholder Only” with officers attending by invitation. This was accepted by the HMCC.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 As an outcome of the above, the TCMG resolved to base their consideration around objectives suggested by the Tenant Services Authority. These were seen as central and appropriate to the inclusion of customers. The four Objective Groups looked at how to:
- Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in developing and commenting on policies and practices affecting their housing and communities. The method of involvement would need to recognise the variety of ways customers might wish to become involved, in addition to attending meetings.
 - Develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities resulting in a series of pledges covering a range of service areas.
 - Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services.
 - Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services.
- 4.2 Members of each group considered the suggestions and amendments suggested, through the consultation process, and amended the draft document accordingly. A number of meetings took place and each suggestion, obtained during the consultation process, was considered in turn. These were then brought together and presented to the TCMG for approval. At their meeting of 18 April 2011 the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group approved the collected changes to the Resident Involvement Strategy document and agreed that it could be presented, by the TCMG, back to the September HMCC meeting as a consulted and approved document. In addition it was agreed to produce a shorter, summary version of the document to support the full version. A glossary of terms was also added to assist better understanding of the full document.

- 4.3 Group members considered that certain parts of the document spoke to tenants and leaseholders as a whole whilst other parts of the strategy appeared to address only the tenant reps. As a consequence, the wording was altered to make the distinction clear.
- 4.4 The term 'residents' rather than 'tenants and leaseholders' was kept but the distinction is explained in the glossary. Members wanted to reach out to other members of the community who are not tenants or leaseholders. It was suggested it was essential to emphasise that the work of the Resident Involvement Strategy took place within a broad and complex web of relationships that included health, safety, education and environmental issues in addition to numerous other relationships that went across housing tenure, age, ethnicity, faith, disability and sexuality, race, sex and gender reassignment. The current Strategy, before HMCC, should not be seen as referencing only issues of tenancy but as representative of residents involved in this broader complex set of community relationships.
- 4.5 The working groups wished to emphasise their desire to retain the current system of Area Panels where local associations could meet to discuss relevant area based issues. There was also a wish to retain the City Assembly as a means of discussing and communicating issues of citywide importance.
- 4.6 It was acknowledged that the governance of the national housing sector was going through a period of change and that considerable uncertainty remained around the future of the Tenant Services Authority. As a consequence a decision was taken to refer to the regulator in generic terms rather than specific.
- 4.7 As a result of the process an additional set of requests were made. These included:
- Contact names and numbers of officers of association committees should be made available to residents on all association notice boards.
 - A continually updated list of all associations should be published in Homing in and on the council website.
 - Minutes of association meetings should be made available on the council website, where individual associations made such available.
 - Younger members of households should be targeted when conducting consultation by questionnaire, by including in the questionnaires specific questions for younger members of households where relevant.
 - More detailed and local information on the improvement works and maintenance programmes should be made available to help with estate development budget bid planning. Ideally this would also include direct involvement in other areas of council spend.
- 4.8 The fourth objective group proposed a residents scrutiny panel and met with the chief executive during the course of their deliberations to discuss options. The need for such an option is included in the strategy as a consequence of that meeting but also in expectation that progress will be made in this area in the near future.

- 4.9 The authors of the Strategy recognise that in a changing and developing service it is essential to keep documents such as this one live and open to further consideration. The TCMG therefore suggest that this, revised, version should also be placed on the council website for continuous comment. This will allow the document to remain live and open to future evolution and development, in recognition of the fast changing world of involvement and influence in service delivery.
- 4.10 The Cabinet Member for Housing has made clear her commitment to building on the excellent work of everyone currently involved in community participation by seeking further opportunities to extend involvement in ways and on matters that residents prefer. This is as part of the new Administrations manifesto commitment to widen engagement. The Cabinet Member for Housing will establish an 'Innovation Group', working with residents to see how we can make an even bigger difference to engagement, and enabling residents to play a part in helping monitor and improve their housing services. Work will also include using technology to widen participation, listening to a range of ideas for how we can remove any current barriers to involvement, and establishing with residents the type of scrutiny arrangements they would like to see in place.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Any costs associated with the completion of the Resident Involvement Strategy have been contained within the 2010/11 and 2011/12 Housing Revenue Account budgets. It is anticipated that any costs arising from the work of the 'Innovation Group' can be contained within current budgets and will be monitored as part of the monthly system of budgetary control (TBM). Any work arising that required significant financial resources would need to be the subject of a further report to this Committee.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Monica Brooks Date: 31/08/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As this is one in a series of reports on the Resident Involvement Strategy, there are no specific legal or Human Rights Act implications to draw to the Committee's attention.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 14/09/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for this Strategy and is attached as an appendix for the report. The Tenant Compact Monitoring Group remains acutely aware how essential it is that the Resident Involvement Strategy is and remains a beacon for equality and inclusion. In this way there can be an assurance that the strategy genuinely reaches out to involve residents in a way, a manner and at a time and place to suit the individual resident.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 As with all our activities, any area in which we involve residents will invariably focus on issues of sustainability whether that be environmental, economic or social aspects of sustainability. This strategy seeks to place resident involvement on a sustainable footing for at least the next five years, and ensure greater representation of all groups within our tenant profile.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The Resident Involvement Strategy emphasises the importance of communities taking responsibility for all aspects of their environment, not only those concerned with structural aspects of the buildings.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The tenant and leaseholder representatives who were responsible for developing this strategy were mindful of the need to expand and develop residents' involvement and finding new ways of engaging with them as citizens. The risk of failing to do this in the most appropriate way is that the representative voice will be limited and significantly reduced. The opportunity rests in further developing expanded options of involvement and communication that the Resident Involvement Strategy affords.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are no significant direct public health implications arising from this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The Resident Involvement Strategy maintains Brighton & Hove Council tenants in the vanguard of active involvement in the community. It also demonstrates the commitment of those involved to continue reaching out to those parts of the community not involved in an effort to include them in ways appropriate to their needs. This work also sits in the context of the Council's Community Engagement Framework.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The consultation process outlined at section 4 above, sets out the method by which alternative options were considered which resulted in the resident involvement strategy proposed.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide a framework within which innovations in resident involvement can be made, building on the existing Tenant Compact.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Resident Involvement Strategy (revised version following consultation).
2. Equalities Impact Assessment

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

Housing & Social Inclusion

Resident Involvement Strategy

2011-2016



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Foreword

I am delighted to present the Resident Involvement Strategy. What follows, in this document, will act as a framework for maintaining and increasing resident involvement over the next five years and will ensure that the council maintains its commitment to supporting, developing and increasing the ways tenants and leaseholders influence the services they receive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many residents who have contributed to the development of this document.

Brighton & Hove City Council has remained at the forefront of including residents in the decision making process for many decades. This document maintains the forward thinking ideals by recognising the difficulty some people have in attending meetings and the need to consider how to find ways of including under-represented groups such as those from the black and minority ethnic communities, younger people and young families in the decision making and opinion setting process.

The strategy sets out clear ways that we can seek to include and involve individual residents in ways and at times to suit them. The strategy also introduces the idea of a tenant led Scrutiny Panel that will take an overview of decisions and actions taken and make suggestions as to how improvements might be made.

New technology and different forms of social media will have a part to play, for example enabling people to take part in citywide meetings, such as the City Assembly through Twitter and Facebook, even though they might not be able to attend in person.

The result of all this will be to make sure that as many residents as possible can be involved at a time and in a way that suits them, and that we continue to work together on developing and growing new ways of involving you in your service.

Liz Wakefield,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Introduction

This Resident involvement Strategy sets out to build on the existing resident participation system, among the council's tenants and leaseholders, seeking to present new opportunities for increasing the number of residents who get involved, whilst also encouraging those that don't normally engage with us to do so. The strategy works within the council's existing Community Engagement Framework and the city's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Our vision for achieving excellence in Housing Management

The Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009-2012 aims to '**achieve excellence in housing management with residents at the heart of everything we do**'. The priorities of the plan are to:

- Improve services to an excellent standard, with residents at the heart of everything we do
- Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods
- Deliver Value for Money services and maintain a sustainable 30 year business plan
- Make best use of our housing stock to address housing need
- Ensure that social housing provides a platform for reducing inequality and creating opportunity.

Our guiding principles for involving residents

During the development of the Resident Involvement Strategy we agreed with residents the following guiding principles that underpin everything we do when involving residents in the management of their housing:

- Every tenant and leaseholder matters and should be able to have a say in how their housing is managed
- We will offer residents support to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered

- We are committed to equal opportunities and social inclusion in how we deliver services, provide information and involve residents
- We will treat all residents with fairness and respect and expect residents to do the same with staff
- We are committed to openness and transparency with our residents in reaching decisions about our housing stock and providing information about our performance
- We will ensure we meet regulatory requirements on tenant involvement and empowerment and fully involve our tenants in co-regulating our housing management services
- We will increase the areas in which tenants are fully involved by for example introducing tenant led scrutiny and participatory budget setting.

How tenants and leaseholders have been involved in developing this resident involvement strategy

The Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG) is carrying out a review of the Tenant Compact and has had a key role in developing this strategy. A resident involvement workshop was held by the group, who identified issues that would lead to better resident involvement. This group identified the key themes they want to see reflected in the strategy. These themes form the key objectives of this document, and include an agreement that the development of the strategy is tenant led which will result in a proactive resident involvement network. The outcome from implementing the strategy should deliver more residents getting involved, and clear evidence of how residents contribute to policy development, service delivery and performance improvement.

The TCMG have identified that residents need to be empowered through training and education. Building resident's capacity to be fully engaged was a central theme. This is to include training of all residents that want to get involved, making sure that special provision is made for encouraging younger residents gain the skills and enthusiasm to become fully engaged. Group members seek to change perceptions around resident involvement, and want to raise the expectations of those that do volunteer. They want to have more influence on decision making, and also be in a position

to demonstrate this. Good communication is seen as central to the success of the Strategy. The TCMG want the council to become excellent at this, whilst accepting that resident representatives will need to develop their communication skills as well. The members of the group want the strategy to focus on ways of providing more information, both to residents from the council and from resident representatives to their resident members. They also want to see more front line staff being trained on resident involvement. Caring for other residents was a central theme identified and one that the group members felt would lead to the encouragement of more respect within the involvement system.

As well as developments from the TCMG workshop, resident representatives' were invited and responded to a communications and profile survey in April 2009. Their priorities are reflected in this document. Residents responded to an involvement survey sent to all tenants and leaseholders in December 2009. The results were encouraging as over 15% responded. 95% of those that responded want their names retained in a database of those that would want to become further involved in a number of ways.

The TCMG then took each strategy as identified in the draft document and set up four working groups to look at each one in detail. Each group also considered and made changes to the rest of the document taking into account residents and staff responses to the involvement survey. The 'objectives groups' work was presented to the full TCMG to approve.

Our Resident Involvement Strategy objectives

Through our consultation with residents we have agreed the following objectives for delivering the Resident Involvement Strategy 2011 – 2016

- Objective 1** **Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in their housing**

- Objective 2** **Develop, a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities with our residents**

- Objective 3** **Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services**

- Objective 4** **Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services**

Objective 1

Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in their housing

You have told us that you would like:

- To be more involved in decisions that affect you or your local area
- An extended menu of ways to get involved, from serving on formal groups and answering questionnaires, to other less formal ways like personal visits by officers and joining in to social networks to make your views known, helping to bring about improvements in your neighbourhood (see table showing involvement commitment on page 19)
- To be supported through training and workshops to develop the confidence, skills and capacity to engage with housing services in a way that is right for you
- To broaden the opportunity for involvement to encourage participation from sections of the resident population not currently as involved.
- Regular city-wide gatherings and for as many residents as possible to be invited to the City Assembly; the twice yearly forum where all residents' associations meet and debate issues of interest to residents across the city
- To see a high level of flexibility in the timing of meetings and methods of contact by officers. To make sure that all meetings (including tenant and leaseholders only meetings) are reflected in the community participation calendar through one officer
- All residents to be given the contact name and phone number of the Chair of their local association. This contact information should be on all association notice boards and on housing offices notice boards
- To see a continually updated list of all tenants and leaseholders groups and the roles of each officer published in Homing in and on the council website
- To see minutes of all groups on the council website
- Opportunities to be involved in the management of your homes.

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective are:

- Help associations to adopt a surgery approach allowing members to discuss problems with committee members
- Encourage younger members of each household to join in with consultation activities by including in appropriate questionnaires to the household specific questions designed for younger members
- To make more use of social media and emerging technologies to provide more opportunities for communication and involvement
- Make clear to residents who can get travel and or child care support to meetings
- Provide all residents with the contact information for out of hours service
- Continue to ask all tenants and leaseholders how they would like to be involved in the management of their housing and record their preferences in our new database.
- Use tenant preference information to invite interested residents to participate in their preferred ways and preferred topic areas
- Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved
- Improve the training and development programme for residents who wish to become involved by continuing to utilise the Resource Centre, and providing coaching and support by the Housing Management Community Participation Officers
- Provide training workshops to resident groups to look for ways to increase involvement
- Publicise opportunities and arrangements for resident involvement and empowerment
- Work with partners to engage a broader range of residents, eg Children's & Families to develop links with groups representing young people
- Provide tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise our performance against agreed standards
- Provide on the council's website a list of all groups with the responsibility of their officers and an opportunity for each group to post their minutes on the website.

Objective 2

Develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities with our residents

You have told us you would like:

- Area Housing Management Panel meetings to be focused on issues that affect the local area, and City Assembly meetings to be concerned with city-wide issues
- Locally based issues identified by residents to be resolved locally (either through the local tenants association working with Housing Officers or by individuals not working in a group who make contact with the housing officer or tenant association rep)
- Housing Officers to spend less time on administration and more time engaging with the residents who live in their neighbourhood. Housing management advisers to take over the administration role in the office
- More detailed and local information on what maintenance and improvement works are planned to help you decide what additional improvements to use your Estate Development Budget (which you control and very much value) to bid for each year
- Tenant's profile information which is recorded on the council's computer system to be used to support tenants and leaseholders who want to be involved in setting local priorities.

Also you would like to be involved in:

- Agreeing priorities and standards of service delivery that reflect what is important to you at a local, neighbourhood and city-wide level
- Prioritising local improvements to your estates and neighbourhoods (through regular estate inspections carried out to the standard of the 'rate your estate' pilot in Moulsecoomb that detail work needing to be done, utilising the estate development budget and capital investment programme).

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective to you are:

- Provide a quarterly timetable of local estate inspections by residents, Housing Officers, and Councillors that must be adhered to:
 - Identify what is important to residents in their estate or neighbourhood and agree local priorities
 - Identify specific items of work needing to be completed. You have indicated that repairs and maintenance, issues affecting your tenancy or property, and anti social behaviour are high in your consideration of work to be done
 - Resolve issues locally as far as possible
 - Report back on agreed actions
 - Evaluate the quality of the local service
- Encourage all residents who wish to, to take part in their local estates inspections
- Housing officers and community wardens will increase their engagement and communication with resident associations and individual residents
- Increase the local focus of Area Panels by presenting outcome feedback reports that summarise the work done at local level over the last quarter, leading to agreement on neighbourhood priorities and the setting of local offers
- Build local priorities into service plans and involve residents in the development of the capital investment programme through the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel working together
- Involve residents in the follow up and management of city wide long term issues agreed at the City Assembly through feedback based on agreed actions
- Work with residents to continually improve neighbourhoods
- Through our local offers we will offer commitments to tenants on
 - Local standards of performance
 - How performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants
 - Outline what will happen if we do not meet our local offers
 - Have in place arrangements for reviewing local offers on a periodic basis.

Objective 3

Involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services

You have told us you value:

- Your representative's involvement in developing housing policy and influencing our strategic priorities at Housing Management Consultative Committee. You also value the role and influence of your representatives at Area Panels and other resident groups such as the Sheltered Housing Action Group and the Estates Service Review Group in reviewing and shaping housing services
- Your representative's full involvement at every stage of the procurement of the new repairs, maintenance and improvement partnership; the laundry equipment contract; and choice of contractors
- Your representative's involvement in developing a Brighton & Hove standard for improvements to tenants' homes.

You also want to be more involved in:

- Developing and delivering change and improvement
- Developing housing services you can access easily
- Establishing the strategic priorities of the service
- The direct testing of the services you receive (for example, mystery shopping) and giving feedback on your experiences
- Developing a clear and accessible policy for responding to complaints and using the policy to improve services and receive regular reports on how improvements have been made.

You would like:

- To have more choice over the services you receive
- Tenants and leaseholders with additional support needs, to be involved in the design of housing services and to be provided with facilities to help them do that
- To be part of an involvement system that considers equality issues and the diversity of residents
- A clear line of communication to responsible officers when things go wrong, and an undertaking that officers will always make contact with you or your representatives to address the issues that concern you.

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective to you are:

- Work with you to strengthen the tenant participation structure for consultation on policy and plans. This will be done through a tenant compact review
- Continue to involve you in all aspects of the service, including adopting new approaches for deeper involvement in budget setting
- Continue the work of the Asset Management Panel (AMP) and the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group (RMMG) in the long term planning and operational delivery of the 10 year repairs, maintenance and improvement partnering contract
- Manage and operate resident involvement by mutual respect and trust through for example the code of conduct agreement governing resident involvement and the powers of the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG)
- To use your views obtained through focus groups, panels, mystery shopping questionnaires, telephone surveys, on-line forums and other ways as appropriate, to review and improve performance in areas such as:
 - Cleaning of common areas and grounds maintenance
 - Health and safety
 - Security in the neighbourhoods, including dealing effectively with anti social behaviour

- Continue to involve you when we are considering making a significant change in how we manage of our housing stock
- Feedback how your individual or group responses to consultation has impacted on decisions or services by having regular ‘You said, we did’ feedback in our resident magazine *Homing in*
- Develop and add to the range of ways that make it easier for you to express a complaint, and give details about what to do if you are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint
- Develop, agree and monitor service pledges for complaints with you and make sure that complaints and other feedback are managed and resolved promptly, politely and fairly
- Develop a way for reporting good and bad performance to focus on all services provided by the council
- Continue to involve you in the planning, delivery and management of the new repairs and improvement partnership.

Objective 4

Involve residents in the monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services

You have told us that you would like:

- To be involved in developing how performance is monitored, is communicated, and how you will be able to scrutinise it
- Performance reports that are presented to you to include comparisons with performances of other social housing landlords, particularly top performers
- Performance measurements to be outcome focused and based on what is of value to you, in addition to the performance measures set by government

- Independent access to facilities that will allow you to compare performance with other landlords
- Independent access to regulatory body if performance is consistently below what you want
- To be involved in reviewing of local offers
- To be involved in the monitoring of the quality and performance of the new repairs and improvement partnership.

Our strategic actions to deliver this objective are:

- Increase the range of opportunities for you to inspect our performance carefully through resident led scrutiny
- Adopt a co-regulation approach. We will provide training and support to help increase local skills and involvement to make co-regulation effective
- Report on our performance monitoring plan which will include information to residents on
 - Definition of each performance indicator
 - The source, method, frequency and schedule of performance reports
 - The office, team, or individual responsible for ensuring performance reports are available on schedule
- Involve you in what performance information is reviewed and presented and how it is used to inform decisions
- Provide you with links to the regulator's web portal and benchmarking organisations, so you can independently compare our performance with other landlords and contact the regulator about our performance
- Produce an annual report with you and for tenants setting out
 - Our performance against our regulator's standards in the previous year
 - Our performance against local offers in the previous year
 - How you have been involved in scrutinising our performance
 - How we have used external validation, peer review and benchmarking, where appropriate to gauge the impact of our actions
- Develop training in performance monitoring and scrutiny as an opportunity for you to be

effectively engaged

- Maintain residents on the Core Group monitoring the quality and performance of the new repairs and improvement partnership
- Ensure you have the opportunity to measure and scrutinise how effective this Resident Involvement Strategy is
- Involve you in any review of democratic arrangements to ensure we are involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the housing management service in the best way.

Glossary of terms

- Strategy – The planning of our vision. Identifying our objectives and how we aim to achieve them.
- Service pledges – The commitments residents have identified as most important and Housing Management Consultative Committee have pledged to deliver.
- Local offers – These are the service pledges identified by you.
- Residents – Includes all tenants and leaseholders.
- BME – Those tenants and leaseholders from a Black and minority ethnic background.
- TCMG – Tenant compact monitoring group, these members elected at area panels, oversee the running of the tenant and leaseholder's participation structure.
- Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) – Tenants sit on this group with councillors. It is where policies and policy changes are discussed and taken forward to cabinet for final decision making.

Appendix 2 Future development options

- Maintain and build on the 'community focus' of the participation system, emphasising stronger communities as well as resident involvement, working with groups and companies that are already working in a particular community or subject area we are interested in
- Forge closer links between resident groups and existing community ethnic organisations that residents belong to. This would help with initial contacts and consultation opportunities of residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, as residents are drawn by the cultural and faith based activities of these groups
- Some residents from BME backgrounds would prefer the use of less written communication whilst using the phone more to contact and involve residents. There are some issues to do with language and others to do with literacy that are barriers to effective involvement. So continuing to develop accessibility for all is a main priority
- The TCMG would like a residents forum for BME residents to be set up
- Involve vulnerable residents that are being supported to maintain their tenancies by developing a peer led project to encourage other residents in this group to join in
- Target the involvement of younger residents by developing the 'sign post of ideas' presented in 'Successfully engaging young people in participation'. This considers the present barriers to participation, communicating with young people and encouraging combined staff and residents associations
- Encourage residents to become members of frontline teams within the participation system to build team work towards service delivery goals. This is an opportunity to get involved and will lead to opportunities for personal development
- Organise a recognition day for achievements in participation during the year. This will be celebrated at a yearly 'golden lunch' where awards will be given out in recognition of volunteering
- Set up a marketing and communication central resident and staff group to develop and promote strategic activities for the year. The group will devise marketing plans in relation to the resources available.

Equalities Impact Assessment Template

EIA Title:	Resident Involvement Strategy	Reference Number:	HM 32
<p>Aim of Policy or Scope of Service:</p>	<p>To build on the existing resident participation system amongst the council’s tenants and leaseholders, seeking to present new opportunities for increasing the number of residents who get involved whilst also encouraging those that don’t normally engage with us to do so.</p>		
<p>Approach to the Impact Assessment:</p>	<p>The purpose of this EIA is to consider the possible positive or negative impact introduction of this strategy may have on the council’s tenants, leaseholders and Housing Management staff.</p>		

Scope of the Assessment

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtain missing data & info minimise negative impacts maximise positive impacts
<p>All (impacts that apply to all groups)</p>	<p>(-) Changing the established practices for engaging with individuals and groups may prove challenging.</p> <p>(-) Changes to the way officers engage with residents over service delivery may be challenging for housing management staff.</p> <p>(+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service delivery through a channel that best suits them.</p> <p>(+) A clear commitment to value for money in service provision.</p> <p>(+) A clear commitment to put tenants and leaseholders at the heart of all aspects of</p>	<p>Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire</p> <p>Tenant profiling data</p> <p>Age Regulation 2006</p> <p>United Nations Convention on the rights of the child – Article 12</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p> <p>Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Tenant Census 2006</p> <p>20/20 Engagement Framework</p> <p>Joining In Project</p> <p>2009 resident representatives Communications & Profile Survey</p>	<p>Improve training and development programme for residents and groups that wish to become involved in the decision making process.</p> <p>Staff training on resident involvement.</p> <p>Agree local priorities.</p> <p>Regular city-wide gatherings of residents, representatives and officers.</p> <p>An extended menu of ways to get involved, from serving on formal groups and answering questionnaires to other less formal ways which include social networks, widely publicised and fully accessible.</p> <p>Review Tenant Compact.</p> <p>Continued use of tenant and leaseholder involvement</p>	<p>Improve training and development programme for residents and groups that wish to become involved in the decision making process.</p> <p>Staff training on resident involvement.</p> <p>Agree local priorities.</p> <p>Regular city-wide gatherings of residents, representatives and officers.</p> <p>An extended menu of ways to get involved, from serving on formal groups and answering questionnaires to other less formal ways which include social networks, widely publicised and fully accessible.</p> <p>Review Tenant Compact.</p> <p>Continued use of tenant and leaseholder involvement</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • obtain missing data & info • minimise negative impacts • maximise positive impacts
<p>All (impacts that apply to all groups) cont.</p>	<p>Housing's service provision.</p> <p>(+) provides tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise our performance against agreed standards.</p>			<p>questionnaire and regular review of information gathered.</p> <p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents to develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p> <p>Regularly report back on local performance and objectives set and evaluate the quality of the local service.</p> <p>Use residents' views to regularly review and improve performance.</p> <p>Independent access to facilities that will allow residents to compare performance with other landlords.</p> <p>Building capacity for residents to be fully involved.</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtain missing data & info minimise negative impacts maximise positive impacts
<p>Race (BME people, asylum seekers/refugees)</p>	<p>(-) Potential for those who are not confident in reading or speaking English to be excluded from consultation or from influencing service delivery.</p> <p>(-) Lack of understanding of cultural differences that could exclude tenants from being able to influence service delivery.</p>	<p>Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire</p> <p>Joining In Project</p> <p>Tenant profiling data</p> <p>Equality Act 2010</p>	<p>Interpreters</p> <p>Translating information.</p> <p>Information on OHMS</p> <p>Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.</p> <p>Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009-12</p> <p>Tenant Compact</p>	<p>Equalities awareness training for tenant representatives.</p> <p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p> <p>Offer residents support to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered.</p> <p>Provide training workshops to resident groups to look for ways to increase involvement.</p> <p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p>
<p>Gender (men, women)</p>	<p>(+) Residents will be presented with a wide range of opportunities to be involved in shaping and agreeing local offers.</p> <p>(+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service delivery through a</p>	<p>Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire</p> <p>Tenant profiling data</p>	<p>Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.</p> <p>Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009-12</p>	<p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p>

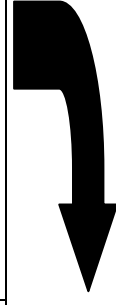
Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtain missing data & info minimise negative impacts maximise positive impacts
Gender Reassignment	channel that best suits them. (+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service delivery through a channel that best suits them. (+) Residents will be presented with a wide range of opportunities to be involved in shaping and agreeing local offers.	Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire Tenant profiling data	Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.	Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.
Marriage	No specific impact identified	-	-	-
Civil Partnership	(+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service delivery through a channel that best suits them. (+) Residents will be presented with a wide range of opportunities to be involved in shaping and agreeing local offers.	Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire Equality Act 2010	Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.	Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to:
Pregnancy & Maternity	No specific impact identified	-	-	-
Disability (people with a physical or mental health issue, long term limiting illness, learning disability, or physical/sensory impairment)	(+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service delivery through a channel that best suits them.	Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire Tenant profiling data Equality Act 2010	Documents translated into Braille. Fully accessible meeting venues and DDA works undertaken and completed on all community rooms across housing. Regularly reviewed to ensure still meeting requirements. Use of sign language interpreters. Information on OHMS. Work of the Tenant Disability Network. Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.	Equalities training for tenant representatives. Tenants and leaseholders with additional support needs to be involved in the design of housing services and to be provided with facilities to assist them in this. Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.
Age (older, younger people)	(+) Encourage younger members of each household to join in with consultation activities by	Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire	Work of the Sheltered Housing Action Group Tenant and leaseholder	Use tenant profiling data to engage directly with younger residents in ways that they have indicated they would like

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtain missing data & info minimise negative impacts maximise positive impacts
<p>Age (older, younger people) cont.</p>	<p>including in all questionnaires to the household specific questions designed for younger members.</p> <p>(+) Work with Children & Young Peoples Trust to develop links with groups representing young people.</p> <p>(-) extending the use of social media and other electronic methods of communication may be challenging for older residents.</p>	<p>Equality Act 2010</p> <p>United Nations Convention on the rights of the child – Article 12</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p> <p>Tenant profiling data</p>	<p>involvement questionnaire.</p>	<p>to be involved.</p> <p>Extend social media to encourage involvement from younger residents, publicise widely.</p> <p>Special provision to be made for encouraging younger residents to gain the skills and enthusiasm to become fully engaged.</p> <p>Provide support and training for older residents to enable them to participate through social media.</p> <p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtain missing data & info minimise negative impacts maximise positive impacts
<p>Religion or belief (faith communities, including no belief)</p>	<p>(-) Lack of understanding could exclude tenants from being able to influence service delivery.</p> <p>(+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service delivery through a channel that best suits them.</p>	<p>Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire</p> <p>Tenant profiling data</p>	<p>Faith Awareness information</p> <p>Information on OHMS.</p> <p>Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.</p>	<p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p> <p>Faith awareness training for staff and tenant reps.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual and unsure people)</p>	<p>(+) Individual tenants and leaseholders will be able to directly influence service in a way that that best suits them.</p>	<p>Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire</p> <p>Tenant profiling data</p>	<p>Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.</p>	<p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p>
<p>Other groups (carers, homeless people, socially or financially excluded people, people experiencing domestic violence or abuse, etc)</p>		<p>Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire</p> <p>Tenant profiling data.</p>	<p>Tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire.</p>	<p>Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents and develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impacts (positive and negative) on this group	Existing data / information (inc. relevant legislation)	Current action to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts	Potential new actions to:
Staff	(-) Changes to the way officers engage with residents over service delivery may be challenging for housing management staff.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtain missing data & info minimise negative impacts maximise positive impacts Provide training in resident involvement for Housing Management staff.



New actions to be transferred to Action Plan

Consultation

What consultation has been used or taken?	Date	Methods used	Findings
Tenant Compact Monitoring Group.	2010/11	Group workshops to discuss in detail the four objectives set out in the resident involvement strategy. This information then taken back to full TCMG for approval.	Feedback from these groups used to develop the strategy.
Resident Representatives	2009	Communication and profiles survey sent out to all resident representatives.	Priorities identified through this survey reflected in the strategy.
Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire	December 2009	Questionnaire sent to every tenant and leaseholder.	15% response to this questionnaire. 95% of those responding wanted their names retained in a database to become further involved in a number of ways.
Draft resident involvement strategy document sent to staff.	August 2010	Copy of consultation document sent to staff members inviting comment	Feedback from staff incorporated in final draft document.

Action Plan

Agreed action	Timescale	Lead officer	Review date
Improve training and development programme for residents and groups that wish to become involved in the decision making process.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Staff training on resident involvement.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Faith awareness training for staff and tenant representatives.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Provide training workshops to resident groups to look for ways to increase involvement.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Building capacity for residents to be fully involved.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Equalities awareness training for tenant representatives.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Offer residents support to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Special provision to be made for encouraging younger residents to gain the skills and enthusiasm to become fully engaged.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Provide support and training for older residents to enable them to participate through social media.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Regular city-wide gatherings of residents, representatives and officers.	TBC	TBC	TBC
An extended menu of ways to get involved, from serving on formal groups and answering questionnaires to other less formal ways which include social networks, widely publicised and fully accessible.	TBC	TBC	TBC

Review Tenant Compact.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Continued use of tenant and leaseholder involvement questionnaire and regular review of information gathered.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Monitor the profile of residents who are involved in the management of their housing against the profile of all our residents to develop methods of participation that encourage residents from under represented groups to get involved.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Regularly report back on local performance and objectives set and evaluate the quality of the local service.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Use residents' views to regularly review and improve performance.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Independent access to facilities that will allow residents to compare performance with other landlords.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Tenants and leaseholders with additional support needs to be involved in the design of housing services and to be provided with facilities to assist them in this.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Use tenant profiling data to engage directly with younger residents in ways that they have indicated they would like to be involved.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Extend use of social media to encourage involvement from younger residents, publicise widely.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Agree local priorities	TBC	TBC	TBC

Sign Off / Approval

Lead Equality Impact Assessment Officer:

Date:

Departmental Equalities Lead:

Date:

Head of Delivery Unit / Lead Commissioner:

Date:

Communities & Equalities Team:

Date:

(NB: Actions must now be transferred to service or business plans)

Equality Impact Assessment Summary Template

Name of review:	Resident Involvement Strategy	Reference number: HM32
Period of review:	January 2010 – July 2011	
Date review signed off:		
Scope of the review:	The scope of this EIA is to assess the impact to residents and staff of the introduction of the Resident Involvement Strategy.	
Review team:	Jane White Community Participation Officer John Austin Locke Policy, Performance and Community Participation Manager	
Relevant data and research:	This EIA builds on the previous one for resident involvement and takes account of the Tenant Compact, profiling data and the Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Questionnaire.	
Consultation: indicate who was consulted and how they were consulted	Tenant Compact Monitoring Group and staff were consulted on this document through workshops, group meetings and circulation of draft document.	
Assessment of impact, outcomes and key follow up actions:	<p>The EIA has identified a variety of actions and methods by which resident involvement can be extended to include those groups not currently engaged or fully represented.</p> <p>This will include training opportunities for residents and staff as well as the continued monitoring of tenant profiling data to support engagement.</p>	
Name and contact details of lead officer responsible for follow-up action:	John Austin Locke: john.austin-locke@brighton-hove.gov.uk Tel: 01273 291008 Blackberry: 077 953 362 75 www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing	
For full report contact:	Jane White: jane.white@brighton-hove.gov.uk Tel: 01273 293265 Fax: 01273 293289 www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council_housing	

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 36

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Establishing a tenant scrutiny panel
Date of Meeting: 26 September 2011
Report of: Strategic Director - Place
Contact Officer: Name: Nick Hibberd Tel: 291383
E-mail: Nick.hibberd@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report describes how, and why, a tenant scrutiny panel is being developed as a requirement for registered social landlords and outlines the proposed model and timetable for introducing it to Brighton & Hove.
- 1.2 The report follows the development of the Resident Involvement Strategy and outlines proposals for involving tenants and leaseholders in the further development and implementation of the scrutiny arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Management Consultative Committee note the progress made towards establishing a tenant scrutiny panel, and the timetable for involving tenants in its further development.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The council's administration has outlined their key priorities for the city and made a number of manifesto commitments in relation to housing. The next phase of the Housing Improvement Programme will help to deliver these commitments. The priorities are:
 - Tackling Inequality
 - Creating a more sustainable city
 - Engaging people who live and work in the cityA key commitment in relation to 'engaging people who live and work in the city' is to explore how, through Scrutiny, the council's engagement with council housing tenants can be improved.

3.2 Objective 4 of draft Housing & Social Inclusion Resident Involvement Strategy is:

- Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services

Residents within the tenant participation movement have expressed an interest in the development of a tenant scrutiny panel, and these discussions are reflected in the report.

Legislative Context

3.3 The current regulation of social housing is contained in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. However the Government has sought to achieve significant reforms to this sector. This is being delivered through both the Localism Bill and a set of five directions to the social housing regulator.¹ A consultation paper on the draft directions was produced in July 2011 by Communities and Local Government (CLG) which explains that there will be a...'*greater emphasis on local mechanisms to scrutinise performance and stronger tools for tenants to hold registered providers to account on service delivery*'.²

3.4 These draft directions state that registered providers would be expected to give tenants a wide range of opportunities to influence, and be involved in, the following areas:

- Formulating their landlord's housing related policies and priorities
- Making decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including setting service standards
- Scrutinising their landlord's performance and recommending how performance might be improved
- The management of their homes (where applicable)
- The management of repair and maintenance services

3.5 Registered providers would be expected to help their tenants to achieve the above by '*...supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups*'.³ This direction sits alongside the provision in the Localism Bill for tenant panels that have been recognised as a designated person for the purpose of referring complaints to the Housing Ombudsman. It is recognised that tenant panels may not choose to fulfil this role.

3.6 This approach is known as 'co-regulation' and its aim is to improve service delivery, governance and performance. As it has developed, the focus has become on replacing the framework of inspection and auditing social housing with a system where the onus is placed on residents to identify

¹ These directions build on the Regulatory Framework which set out six standards developed by the TSA that registered social housing providers were expected to meet from April 2010

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

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1936126.pdf>

³ *ibid*

issues of concern. Therefore, tenant scrutiny provides a formal route to raise these concerns with their housing provider

What issues could be suitable for tenant scrutiny?

- 3.7 The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) recommend that a mix of staff-selected and tenant-selected areas are considered. This is similar to current scrutiny practice in Brighton & Hove. CIH also suggest that a good place to start scrutinising is looking at service delivery. According to the CIH, this kind of regulation should be characterised by:
- Independence from other governance and management structures
 - Formality in operation
 - Power to effect change

Current Housing Structures in Brighton & Hove

- 3.8 The council currently has a number of tenant forums through which types of scrutiny are undertaken.

Area Panels

These are four geographically based groupings made up of locally elected representatives from the seventy two associations. They consider issues relating to the Council's role as landlord, including performance, services, budgets, delivery, and policy

Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC)

The HMCC considers reports for the Cabinet Member for Housing on the discharge of the Council's functions as a housing landlord before decisions are taken. The Committee makes recommendations and includes non-voting tenant representatives.

The Committee has the following advisory functions:

- Housing Management
 - Tenant Consultation
- 3.9 In addition, various tenant working groups and panels exist that undertake specific pieces of work. Representatives on these groups and on HMCC are largely nominated from the area panels.

How tenant scrutiny could operate in Brighton & Hove

- 3.10 Initial discussions between Tenants, the Housing Department, Scrutiny and the Executive have resulted in a draft set of principles which now require further discussion. These are that a tenant scrutiny panel could:
- be made up of tenants only (including a leaseholder)
 - provide an independent check of housing services and challenge, in order to shape, influence and drive up standards and performance
 - form part of the family of scrutiny committees
 - reflect the demographic profile of tenants in the city

- have a range of powers e.g. to compel officers to attend scrutiny meetings, rights to information, power to receive and consider 'Requests for Scrutiny' from HMCC or the wider tenant body, and the right to make recommendations that are responded to within given timescales

4 INVOLVING TENANTS IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 Members of the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG) have been consulted on the contents of this report and will oversee the delivery of the Resident Involvement Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Housing has made clear her commitment to building on the excellent work of everyone currently involved in community participation by seeking further opportunities to extend involvement in ways and on matters that residents prefer, including establishing arrangements for tenant scrutiny. This is as part of the new Administrations manifesto commitment to widen engagement.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing will establish an innovation group, working with the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group and other residents to see how we can make an even bigger difference to engagement, and enabling residents to play a part in helping monitor and improve their housing services. Work will also include using technology to widen participation, listening to a range of ideas for how we can remove any current barriers to involvement, and establishing with residents the type of scrutiny arrangements they would like to see in place. A key task for the innovation group will be to examine options for developing tenant scrutiny.
- 4.3 The indicative timetable for working with residents to develop final proposals for establishing tenant scrutiny is outlined below.

Launch engagement process	September 2011
Cabinet Member Innovation Group to lead development process	September 2011 – January 2012
Area Panels	September/October
City Assembly	November 2011
Range of engagement initiatives and events	September/December 2011
Report back with final proposals and recommendations for establishing Tenant Scrutiny (and wider resident involvement)	January 2012

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Any costs associated with involving tenants and leaseholders in developing and implementing the scrutiny arrangements will be met from the current Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2011/12 and reported as part of the monthly budget monitoring process as necessary.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 05/09/11

- 5.2 As the proposals for a Tenant Scrutiny Panel are still at an early stage, it is not necessary to consider the specific legal and Human Rights Act implications arising. However, as the Panel's remit and processes are developed, Legal Services will need to consider them.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 14/09/11

Equalities Implications

- 5.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out on final proposals for establishing tenant scrutiny.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 None in relation to this report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None in relation to this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 None in relation to this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 None in relation to this report

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member Innovation Group will be tasked with considering and evaluating different options for establishing tenant scrutiny (and widening inclusive participation), and will report back in January 2012.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide Housing Management Consultative Committee with an update on proposals to establish tenant scrutiny in Brighton & Hove.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None.

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 37

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Customer Access Phase 3 – Customer Service and Access Strategy for Housing & Social Inclusion		
Date of Meeting:	26 September 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafé	Tel: 29-3201
	Email:	Ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report updates Housing Management Consultative Committee on the review of customer access arrangements for the Housing Management Service and presents the Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service and Access Strategy for consideration by committee members.
- 1.2 A report detailing the customer access review and proposals for taking the review forward was considered by HMCC on 12 October 2009. A second report, agreed on 8 February 2010, included 10 'Broad Principles' on which improvements to customer access should be based. Following that, a third report on Phase 2 of the customer access review was agreed at the 27 September 2010 HMCC considering the establishment of a single point of contact for tenancy management enquiries; the co-location of Children and Young People's Trust colleagues at the Lavender Street Housing Office; and enabling access to housing services via community contact points at libraries.
- 1.3 The Housing & Social Inclusion Delivery Unit prides itself on placing its customers at the heart of everything it does, and its considerations for customer access are set out in the attached draft strategy. The strategy outlines actions to support the provision of excellent customer focussed services through a range of channels that increase customer choice.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee comment upon the Customer Service and Access Strategy that is presented with this report as Phase 3 of the Customer Access Review. Key areas for action within the strategy include:

(1) Promotion and support for customers to use more effective methods for accessing housing information and services in line with council-wide 'Improving Customer Experience' work and our corporate Channel Shift Strategy.

(2) Consultations with staff on staffing structure to support proposed new customer access arrangements and service improvement.

(3) Consideration of opportunities for further office moves and best future use of some housing offices – notably Manor Place Housing Office and Victoria Road Housing Office.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Customer Access - Broad Principles

- 3.1 The Broad Principles for reviewing customer access, as presented to HMCC on 10 February 2010 centred on the need for change to provide more accessible, efficient, preventative and better value for money services. It also covered areas of increasing choice, minimising waste, better use of staff resources targeted at where the need sits, and the involvement of staff and residents in the changes.

Lavender Street Housing Office co-location

- 3.2 Temporary staff moves to Oxford St Housing Office facilitated the co-location of Children and Young People's Trust teams at the Lavender Street Housing Office. The co-location has proved very successful, and customers have not been impacted by the new service model at this office.

Housing Centre

- 3.3 The Housing Centre was completed within target timescales and was available for staff to move into from April 2011.
- 3.4 Since then a number of teams have been relocated to the Housing Centre. They are:
- Mears Group
 - Property and Investment
 - Lettings
 - Car Parks & Garages
 - Estate Services
 - Right to Buy & Leasehold
 - Rent Accounting
- 3.5 Staff report that they are really happy with the office space and working environment afforded by the Housing Office, and are realising the benefits of working in close proximity to other teams within the service and Mears.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Residents will be involved in the development of customer access improvements in a variety of ways. Examples include through feedback on our strategy via eg the internet and Homing In; joint working on aspects of service reviews – eg doing customer journey maps around the new tenancy process; Mystery Shopping our customer service; discussions at meetings; and face-to-face surveys on the potential impact of moving staff at the Manor Place Housing Office.
- 4.2 Focus group work and satisfaction survey results have informed the development of the strategy.
- 4.3 Staff feedback has informed some aspects of the strategy, and staff, and their trade unions, will be formally consulted about relevant changes arising from the adoption of the strategy.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs and savings associated with the Customer Service and Access Strategy will be included within the HRA budget strategy for 2012/13 which will be reported to this Committee by February 2012.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Monica Brooks Date: 31/08/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no specific legal or Human Rights Act implications which need to be drawn to the Committee's attention at this stage.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 14/09/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 A summary of our draft Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 2. It will be finalised in light of the adoption or otherwise of the strategy, and before any proposals are implemented. Equalities implications have been considered throughout the strategy, as changing and improving customer access has the potential to affect a range of people including those with disabilities, people for whom English is not a first language, and others who can find it difficult to access services eg with no access to the internet.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Sustainability implications of any changes to customer access have been considered within the strategy. They include the potential to reduce the service's carbon emissions, reduce travelling, reduced use of paper in our operations, and increased use of access channels with the lowest environmental impact.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Rethinking the way we work and streamlining processes will free up officers' time, enabling them to spend more time with our most vulnerable tenants or out on our estates which may reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the perception of crime.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 A risk analysis will be undertaken to identify key risks and their mitigation.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are no direct public health implications arising from this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Changes and improvements to customer service and access arrangements have been considered in a corporate context. Council wide work on eg Smartspace, Workstyles, systems thinking, web development had had, and will continue to have an impact on the actions within the strategy.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The strategy sets a framework within which we can consider different options for improving customer service and access within Housing & Social Inclusion.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To enable consultation with HMCC on the Customer Service and Access Strategy, and obtain feedback on its general direction and the actions within it.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service and Access Strategy
2. Draft summary equalities impact assessment

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

Housing & Social Inclusion

**Customer
Service &
Access Strategy**

2011-2014



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. What the strategy will achieve
4. Current customer access arrangements
5. Offering choice of access channel to improve customer service
6. Knowing our customers better to improve customer service and access (customer profiling)
7. Using technology to improve customer service and access
8. Transforming how we work and developing our workforce to improve customer service and access
9. Sustainable customer service and access
10. Monitoring and review

Appendix 1 Broad principles for changes needed to improve our customers' experience of our service

1. Introduction

Housing & Social Inclusion is responsible for providing landlord services to approximately 12,200 tenants, and 2,300 leaseholders across the city. This customer service and access strategy is designed to support our service delivery priorities which place customers at the heart of everything we do.

It provides information on things that need to be considered in making sure our customers have a full range of methods for accessing our services in ways and at times that suit them - and that are efficient and cost effective.

The scope of this strategy is broad in that it relates to tenants, leaseholders, and members of the public - anyone who seeks information or a service from us. They will all expect excellent, timely, considered, responsive and consistent responses, regardless of the method they use - be it by email, telephone, face-to-face, letter or other new and emerging media.

It is not a stand alone strategy. It complements other council-wide or Housing & Social Inclusion strategies, plans and commitments - for example those on resident involvement, customer access and improving the customer experience, diversity and equalities, value for money, ICT, workforce development, Workstyles and use of assets. As a living document, it will evolve as demands and expectations of our customers change, or as it is informed by service reviews, technological and other changes.

Council's customer promise

As part of the council's 'Improving the Customer Experience' programme, we have developed the following council-wide customer promise, which also provides a backdrop for this strategy:

- We will be easy to reach
- We will be clear and treat you with respect
- We will listen and act to get things done.

We pride ourselves on our customers being central to everything we do, and have produced a series of service pledges that outline our commitments to them. We want customers to have easy access to our services, and receive great customer service at times and in ways that offer choice. Our customer service and access arrangements are also designed to be suitable for a variety of individual needs.

2. Background

National perspective

The report by Sir David Varney on 'Service Transformation' in 2006 recommended that public service organisations should improve customer services by aiming to resolve customer enquiries at their first point of contact, and develop more self-service and online services - while at the same time achieving a balance of access channels for all customers.

As far back as 2001, the Cabinet Office and UK Online report '**Framework for channel strategies**' urged organisations to look at how customers contact them, how much each method costs, and then increase choice to customers but with an eye on ultimately moving to cheaper methods where possible, while maintaining excellent customer service.

Local considerations

We are aware that we'll only be successful in encouraging customers to use efficient and cheaper access channels by making it worthwhile and effective for them - eg quicker service, access to all the information they need, and transactions done at a time and pace to suit them. Over time, the more we are able to do this, the more likely we are to see an increased shift from the more traditional and costly channels to the use of cheaper and newer service channels.

The development of this strategy has enabled us to take a closer look at how, why and when customers currently contact us, how effective and efficient we are at responding - and to look at the costs involved.

A range of information has helped to shape this strategy, examples are:

- Government reports
- Customer feedback
- Learning from high performing organisations
- External assessment of our work
- Focused discussions with residents and staff
- Council-wide work on 'Improving the Customer Experience' and the council's three overarching customer promises
- The Audit Commission's 'Access and Customer Care' key lines of enquiry (KLOEs)
- Tenant Services Authority (TSA) standards
- Council-wide Workstyles programme looking at the best use of office space
- Work by staff groups looking at customer access and customer experiences of our service
- Intelligence about our business.

There were important messages from our external assessment work that have shaped this strategy. They centre around our processes being resource and administration heavy and not always delivering what our customers need; how there is a need to change to provide easier access to our services, target our services to people who most need them, reduce waste, and intervene at earlier stages where needed; and the continued need to involve residents and staff. The full list of the broad principles can be found at Appendix 1.

While seeking to improve convenience to customers, their access to and experience of our services, it is clear that in the current economic climate we also have to achieve value for money from tenants' rents, and to the tax-payer paying for the services that support housing eg Housing Benefit and council tax benefit. We are striving to achieve a balance between both the customers' needs, keeping our customers at the heart of everything we do, and our business needs. This strategy is advantageous to both.

We are also looking to better understand our customer in the context of their everyday experiences in receiving services from other organisations and businesses they come into contact with, and how this is most likely to have changed over the past ten years.

3. What the strategy will achieve

Aims of the customer service and access strategy

We have an ongoing desire, commitment and responsibility to deliver the best possible service for our customers, in line with what they've told us, and in a way that is sustainable. The main outcomes we will achieve from this strategy are set out under the following four broad categories:

1. Excellent, positive customer experiences

- using customer information to tailor services and meet individual needs
- engaging with and listening to our customers
- keeping customers informed
- customers feeling valued and respected
- increased customer satisfaction

2. Improved choice and flexibility in accessing services

- working with our customers to identify and reduce barriers
- knowing our customers better
- expanding options and supporting preference
- promoting more effective and cheaper channels

3. 'Right first time' approach

- speedy resolution
- reducing 'avoidable' contact
- value for money
- service review
- lower overall service costs

4. Staff enabled and empowered to make a difference

- changing how we think and work
- redesigning our processes
- sharing learning
- working collaboratively
- high performance working

4. Current customer access arrangements

Current access model

Housing offices

The central focus of our current access model is our five housing offices that have been in operation since the creation of Brighton & Hove Council in 1997, and where customer contact arrangements are replicated in each of them. This consists of having someone at reception for face-to-face visitors, people staffing the telephones similar to a mini contact centre at each office, and a cashier at each office for accepting rent, council tax, tenants' contents insurance and other payments.

We have a number of specialist teams traditionally located at housing offices – for example those responsible for capital works, managing our repairs contracts, lettings, supporting vulnerable tenants and tenancies, reducing anti-social behaviour, and providing older people's housing and services.

Other offices

The Housing Income Management Team are located in a separate town centre location and essentially operate a further mini contact centre where much of their work is telephone based, although they do also offer office appointments and carry out home visits.

Telephone access to services through our offices

There are 14 published telephone numbers for contacting our service, with customers also having direct dial extension numbers for up to 80 individual officers.

From each of these offices, customers can use the free public direct dial phone to access the Mears Repairs Helpdesk, Housing Benefits, Council Tax, Homemove, our gas contractor, the Housing Income Management Team, the complaints line and Cityclean.

The Mears Repairs Helpdesk is accessible on a freephone number (with a local number available for mobile phone users) from 8am to 8pm on weekdays and through an out of hours service at other times.

Home visits through our offices

We also enable access to our services through a range of home visits carried out by staff based in the offices.

Effectiveness of our current model

The profile of services delivered from our housing offices has changed significantly in the last 14 years. Many services customers used to come in for are no longer based at each of these offices - and for example repairs reporting, housing benefits advice, rent arrears support, lettings, serious antisocial behaviour management, and tenancy sustainment are dealt with by specialist, centrally located teams. However, some are accessible through the free direct dial phone at each office. Despite this change in services available, we have kept the same traditional delivery model over the years and

this has resulted in its reduced cost effectiveness and ability to deliver value for money. We now need to modernise our approach.

Data capture exercises in recent years eg iMPower work in 2009 and Customer Access Review Group of Officers (CARGO) work in 2010 revealed that up to 40% of visitors to housing offices enquire about services that are either not provided at the offices (eg repairs) or are not provided by Housing & Social Inclusion (eg Housing Benefits, refuse and recycling).

In addition, some offices are not located close to where our customers live (eg the one in Victoria Road) or they have a low daily footfall (eg the one in Selsfield Drive), being used only by small proportions of our tenants, who are mainly visiting for services that need to be referred elsewhere or to pay rent.

Council wide, colleagues have been looking at the use made of council office space under a programme called Workstyles, to help us become as efficient as possible. Some offices have already been redesigned to make best use of space, using ICT solutions for data storage and communications to reduce the incidence of valuable space being used for housing paper files. This has enabled staff to move from unsuitable or costly accommodation, achieving savings. The Workstyles programme incorporates different technologies, work locations and patterns of work that enable staff to adopt creative and flexible approaches to how they work and deliver services.

We do not feel that we are making optimum use of our housing offices with regard to customer access and customer service, and are therefore looking at what we can do to improve.

What we've done

- As part of the council's Workstyles programme we've changed the use of Lavender Street Housing Office by moving staff who did not provide services solely to residents in that area to free up space for Children & Families staff to be located there. This has improved access for local people needing that service and provided better value for money.
- CARGO (a group of officers looking at customer access) have undertaken a study looking at telephone, face-to-face, email, and letter access channels to better understand what customers contact us about, and the extent to which the contact has added any value to the customer.
- Another group of officers has also looked at a few typical customer requests and carried out customer journey mapping to see how effective we are in responding to them in a streamlined way.
- We've completed a total refurbishment of the previous Allen West industrial building in Moulsecoomb to establish a modern, energy efficient office space large enough to accommodate a number of Housing & Social Inclusion teams as well as our repairs partner, Mears. Teams have moved into the building in a

phased programme since May this year, and are already reaping the benefits of being co-located with colleagues in other teams.

- We have increased the number of contact points where customers can get information or help about housing services through the introduction of a new service across our libraries from March 2011 'Council Connect'. This service is supported by trained volunteers who are able to guide customers to access information or carry out service transactions online. It is part of our council-wide 'Improving the Customer Experience' work, and fits very well with our work on increasing choice in customers' access to services.

Actions we will take

- Enable more teams within or outside our service to move into the Housing Centre – especially after we have followed 'smart space' principles and are able to use technology to reduce the amount of space needed for paper based filing.
- Manor Place - consult on plans to move staff to the new Whitehawk Hub where they will be co-located with other local services including a library, children's services and health centre. Also plans to use our 'Our Neighbourhood' local base in North Whitehawk for a wider range of services.
- Selsfield Drive - in time, transferring tenancy management and targeted interventions staff to the Housing Centre, where they will be co-located with a range of other Housing & Social Inclusion teams.
- Victoria Rd - relocating tenancy management staff into the refurbished Portslade Town Hall, and consideration of customers accessing housing services at a local community library.
- Customers needing to see someone in person will have the same level of access to appointments at their home – or at an increasing number of council locations/hubs than just the current number of housing offices.
- Look at opportunities for locating our services with other council services – eg libraries, and possibly sharing use of our buildings with other organisations.
- Carry out a review of our accommodation needs and costs.

5. Offering choice of access channels to improve customer service

This strategy is essentially about enhancing all access channels so that no matter how customers contact us they can expect an excellent resolution to their enquiry. People will only start to use more cost effective channels if they are easy to use and repeatedly offer a good route to a solution.

The more expensive options are face-to-face, letter and even telephone, while the cheaper ones are those that offer a large element of self service eg self service on the website, interactive voice recognition systems - ie those that do not require staff input at the point of contact or transaction.

A further consideration is that whatever channel is chosen, our service offer needs to minimise the need for further chase up or complaint – elements of ‘avoidable contact’.

As well as having services online, we need to promote their availability, and encourage and support people to access them. The process of putting things in place that help our customers make the transition to get the information they need or carry out the transactions they want using less costly and more streamlined options is known as ‘channel shift’. Where we can achieve this, it frees up increased staff time and resources to support those people or situations that require higher levels of staff interaction.

The table below shows the industry standard costs per transaction incurred by local authorities for different contact channels.

Table 1 Transaction costs for different channels

Channel	Cost	£ saving for each transaction shifted from face-to-face	% saving shifting from face-to-face	% saving shifting from telephone
Face-to-face	£3.76	-	-	-
Telephone	£3.06	£0.70	19%	-
Web	£0.08	£3.68	98%	97%

NB: Average costs based on data gathered by SOCITM in 2011

For our customers, availability, choice and speed of resolution are all important. So for example someone working might want to simply report an incidence of anti-social behaviour (ASB) – if they try to do this in their lunch break, they might do it on the phone – and if so they’ll certainly want to get through quickly. However, they might prefer to do this online in the evening. Someone else might prefer to report ASB face-to-face or by telephone. It is also possible that the same person might prefer one or other method depending on the severity of the ASB and the need, or not, for immediate reassurance. Whichever method is used, assurity that the report has been made to the right place, it has been received, advice on the next steps is available, or pointers for further information are available should be the same.

To encourage our customers to use the range of channels available, we need to be sure that each channel is suitably resourced and that they are all connected so that it gives a consistent response - regardless of the customer’s chosen channel.

Where people prefer or need to access our services using traditional channels, this strategy supports improved telephone answering and freeing up officer time for personal visits and other face-to-face contacts eg at locations that might be more convenient for our customers.

Optimising existing channels

We want to make the best use of the service channels available to customers, and that means assessing whether we are optimising the use of our housing offices that provide face to face services/home visits, and our telephone, email and other services.

To help with this, around a dozen members of staff from a number of housing teams formed the Customer Access Review Group of Officers (CARGO) last year to look at our current access channels. They focussed on office visits, telephone calls, letters and emails to look at the reasons customers contacted us, and some of our internal processes for responding to the queries that came in. Their work was mainly qualitative so there was not a high number of statistics arising from it, however some of the key findings of the CARGO work were:

- 17% of the contacts observed could have been avoided (ie 'avoidable contact')
- A proportion of visits to housing offices were requests for services that are provided by other teams in other locations eg repairs, Homemove, Cityclean, explanation of housing benefit letters
- Some service requests were not from council tenants or leaseholders
- Of all the service requests coming in by mail, email, face-to-face and telephone, approximately 50% needed to be passed to another officer, team or service.
- Areas of work that would benefit from reviewing the processes from the stage at which the customer contacts the service to where the customer receives the service (end-to-end process) were identified. They were Lettings, Homemove enquiries, rent advice and complaints.

Some staff have also since spent a day doing 'Customer journey mapping' work looking at ways that some of our back-office processes could be simplified. Once we have implemented the first stage of our staffing framework to deliver transformational services and service improvements we will be in a better position to apply the suggested changes to our work practices and carry out further reviews.

Reducing avoidable contact and getting it 'right first time'

If we can resolve enquiries when they are first raised it provides a better service for customers and is more efficient for the council. We will continue reducing the number of people contacting us to chase the response to an enquiry, or contacting us because we either haven't done something we should have done, or have done something that we shouldn't have. This is one key plank for overall success in achieving more efficient customer service as it throws up areas that are ripe for service improvements. The national indicator **NI14**, measuring avoidable contact, is no longer a statutory requirement to collect. However, it has been useful in making us focus some attention on understanding how time, and therefore money, is easily wasted on putting right things that could have been done better the first time around.

The resources that we save by reducing avoidable contact can be used for preventative work. For example when we carried out some focus groups looking at how we're performing against some of the TSA standards, residents felt that we do not have a strong enough emphasis on preventative measures for anti-social behaviour (ASB), and that complaints take a long time to sort out. Staff time could be re-allocated to make further improvements in these service areas.

Although some of the older participants in these focus groups said they did not use computers, many participants would like to receive information on the website or by email. This shows that there is an appetite for using different channels, and that we have an opportunity to better meet the needs of certain groups of customers. Our staff will have an important role to play in supporting residents' access to the internet.

What we've done

- Worked jointly with library service colleagues to develop the new 'Council Connect' service.
- Included our website and 'Do it now' details on our out of hours recorded messages.
- Introduced the housing Customer online system enabling tenants to have secure access to their account details.
- Made sure that there are clear advantages to customers when they access services online - ie a speedy response, or their transaction completed end-to-end immediately.
- Ensured that all our customer access points have facilities for customers to use the internet to reach services.

Actions we will take

Examples of things we'll be doing up to 2014 are:

- Work with local training establishments to enable residents and groups to gain confidence and skills in using technology and new media.
- Use the training room at our Housing Centre to support tenants to develop their IT skills
- Ensure that all our outgoing letters and emails prominently display links to the council housing landing page on our website. In the longer term this should be more prominently displayed than telephone numbers to encourage channel shift away from telephones too.
- Have a message promoting our website, our 'Do it now' pages, and/or our Customer online system for callers waiting for a call to be answered.
- Amend our email auto-replies to include links to our website.
- Let customers know when their enquiry could have been resolved online and spend time to explain how to do it if help is needed, or send information for future reference.

- Promote our website on our Estates Service and Mears partnership vehicles.
- Carry out process mapping of our various communication and access channels to see that they all deliver a prompt and efficient service, and that staff are fully supported to respond 'right first time'.

6. Knowing our customers better to improve customer service and access (customer profiling)

It is only through knowing our customers better, knowing what they want and need from us, and knowing what their expectations are that we are able to improve the services we offer to them.

While our customers comprise many different groups, they broadly fit into three access groups:

1. A very large group who we rarely have any contact with. Their rent is paid regularly and they are generally very independent - perhaps requiring the occasional repair from us.
2. Another large group of residents have slightly more contact with us, seeking information on a range of services, contacting us for rent payments and queries, and for repairs.
3. A much smaller proportion who have a high need for contact with us, often because they are vulnerable in some way. They are most likely to prefer face-to-face contact.

This strategy aims to achieve reduced service costs, while keeping customers central to what we do, by:

- managing contacts more effectively
- reducing avoidable contacts
- making good use of the opportunities offered by technological developments, and
- providing a gentle nudge and supporting customers to shift some of their contacts from high cost-to-serve channels (eg mail, office visits and telephone) to cheaper self serve options – mainly through online services.

In doing this, our website becomes the linchpin to how we make information available and how some of our services are provided. It becomes a central resource not only for customers who wish to, and are able to, be quite self-sufficient in their transactions with us, but also for staff who will be using it as the main resource for helping customers with their enquiries.

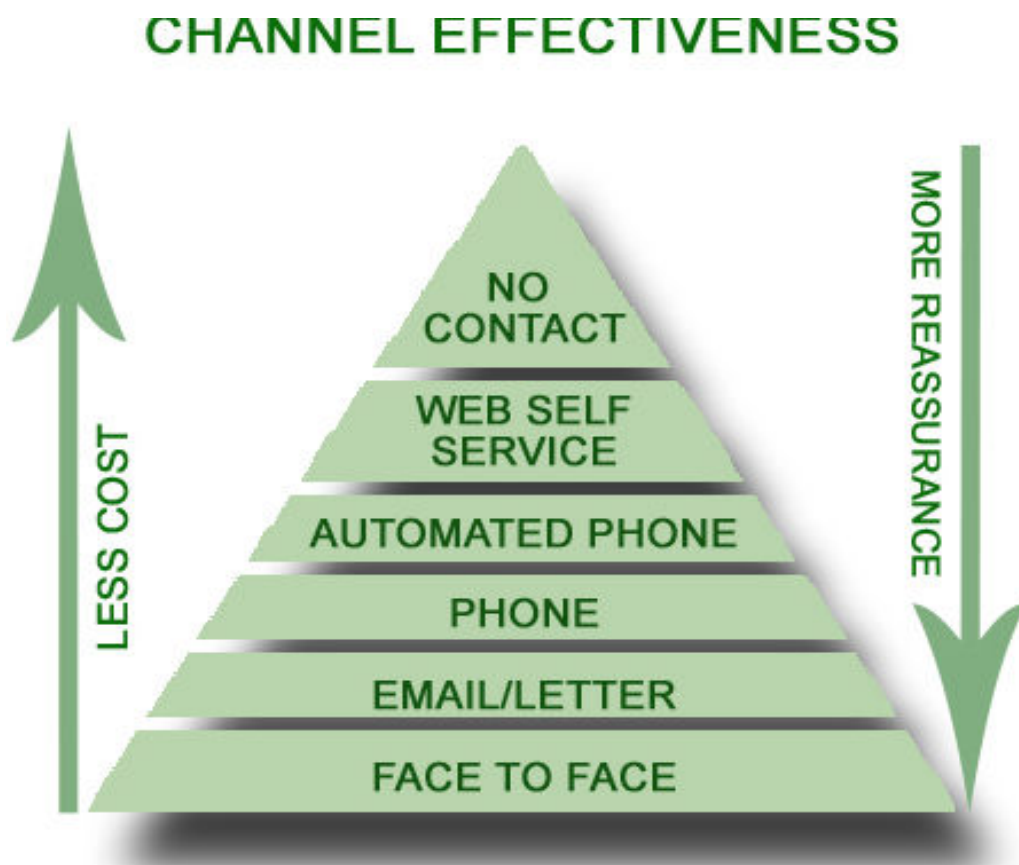
For example, during inclement weather or where we have a lift breakdown, having customers who can access information on regularly updated web-pages will free up officer time to respond to, or initiate contact with, those customers who might not have internet access. Staff in various locations can easily see the latest information about any

situation on their screens, and in this way are able to provide more consistent responses to customers - regardless of the method of contact they prefer to use.

This does not mean that we simply transfer all services to the internet. We know that would not provide excellent and accessible services to people who are currently unable to interact with us or get the information or services they need via a website. What it does mean though, is that we recognise the benefits to our customers, and to our costs, of looking at how technology can help large numbers of people in a whole range of situations.

We anticipate that as the online, self service channel is developed further and gets used more, we'll see a decrease in for example office visits and telephone contacts. Our intention is to increase service satisfaction for all customers, and by making our online and telephone services more attractive to our customers in the first two groups (access groups 1 and 2 above), it enables us to focus more attention on the third group of customers who have higher service needs and/or prefer face-to-face contact.

The diagram below shows how different access channels reduce in cost as they rise up the pyramid, and the preferred channels customers are likely to want depending on the level of reassurance they need.



The website is very effective for obtaining information (eg finding out how to report bulk rubbish) and then doing so, and for simple transactions (eg making a rent payment). Whereas face-to-face contact will be important in cases where a high level of detailed

information, sensitivity and/or reassurance is needed eg serious anti-social behaviour, failing tenancies, or tenancy concerns following a bereavement.

Customer contact channels

During 2010/11 we had approximately 218,000 contacts with customers. The breakdown for how they accessed our service is provided in the table below.

Table 2 Current access proportions across the range of our services

Channel	Percentage
Telephone	60%
Office visit	25%
Home visit	8%
Emails	4.5%
Letters	2.5%

The percentages are of the total contacts by these methods alone. We know that an increasing number of customers are self serving online although we do not have exact figures, but are aware that the proportions are currently low.

Our intention is to support channel shift so that the figures presented in the table above move in the direction indicated below.

Table 3 Target access model with channel shift

Channel	Current percentage	Channel shift direction	2014 Target
Telephone	59%	↓	50%
Office visit	25%	↓	15%
Home visit	8%	↑	10%
Emails	4.5%	↑	8%
Letters	2.5%	↓	2%
Self service - eg website	1%	↑	15%

It is anticipated that initially telephone contact will increase, while customers who want to, are supported in being able to access the information or service aspect they need through our website. Over a two to three year period the percentages of contact made via the telephone is expected to decrease.

What we've done

- We have been working to develop better insight into who our customers are, their needs and their preferences. This has already helped us anticipate some of their needs and will enable us to better provide tailored services, rather than using a one size fits all approach.
- Officers have been carrying out home visits for a considerable time, with an increased focus over the past year, to gather information that improves our knowledge of our customers. So as well as having more insight of our customer profile in terms of age, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and whether someone in the household has a disability, we are also aware of eg how some tenants would like to be more involved in decisions that affect them and their neighbourhood, and which formats they prefer to receive information – and we've been able to send them their new tenancy agreement in their preferred format of tape, large print, Braille or a more easy read pictorial version.
- Introduced the customer online system that enables tenants to securely update their own contact details, as well as check their accounts.

Actions we will take

- Continue our customer profiling work, ensuring we have good information about all our tenants, including eg their email address, whether they are interested in receiving energy saving advice or information about household contents insurance, and whether they need support to access other services in the city. We will do this through campaigns, personal visits or telephone contacts.
- Use our profiling data to make sure that all our customers have excellent and equal access to our services.
- Capture more information about the reasons for customers contacting us, when and how they do so, so that we can use it to strengthen our customer profiles, identify trends, and improve services.

7. Using technology to improve customer service and access

There are so many ways that different or better use of longstanding and emerging technologies and new media can enormously improve customer service and access, and help us achieve our council and service objectives.

This section will use some examples from this ever expanding range of technologies that include telephones, mobile phones, smartphones, social media, hand-held devices, You Tube, Twitter, data sharing, social networking, Skype and Facebook.

Access to the internet and digital inclusion

In 2008 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey confirmed that 30% of social housing tenants use the internet. We do not have updated figures from ONS, but from our own statistics we know that over one sixth of our tenants, or 2,300 residents, have an email account. Other organisations have noted that there's been a rapid change – especially with the increasing popularity of Smartphones such as Android, iPhone and Blackberry. For example, Southern Housing Trust found that their internet access figures matched those of ONS in 2008 at around 30%; and that by 2010 the percentage of their tenants on the internet had increased to between 55% and 65%.

As well as knowing that at least 2,200 of our residents have email accounts, we know that during a one month period to 7 August 2011 we had 890 unique views of our council housing landing page, and 212 unique views of our Housing 'Do it now' pages. In addition, 93% of all bids made on the council's Homemove scheme have been placed via the internet

Our traditional methods of providing services have not necessarily been convenient for all customers. For example:

- people whose working hours are the same as our office opening
- people who'd have difficulty making phone calls in the daytime at work, and prefer to do so in the evening
- people with particular disabilities who'd find it hard to access services face-to-face, and others who'd have difficulty using the telephone. Internet based provision could give people greater independence, not having to rely on other people - especially with tools such as script readers on the internet, and the ability to increase font sizes and tailor web pages to suit
- people whose first language is not English and might find it easier to get a wealth of information on our website translated into their language at the click of a mouse
- consultations and involvement primarily being through attending meetings that not everyone is interested in doing
- some people with literacy skills find it difficult to read the plethora of information we send. Again they could use the screen reader facility on our website or watch video clips on the website similar to the one Cityclean have produced about recycling.

The benefits of competent online services are that they are quick, easy to use, available 24 hours a day, convenient, and carry low administrative costs.

Potential customer cost savings through using the internet

It's worth noting here how access to the internet can result in not only easier access to services, but also cheaper services or products – and therefore reduced financial outgoings for our customers. For example:

- Skype enables free national and international calls
- There is a wealth of free information on the internet
- Internet shopping can reduce grocery bills
- Increasingly job vacancies are advertised only on the internet
- Online billing from service suppliers usually attract discounts
- Internet sourced energy, insurance and other services offer 'self-serve' discounts
- Emails enable messages, photos and attached documents to be freely sent to anywhere in the world

Supporting residents to access the internet can therefore also assist with tackling inequality and supporting financial inclusion. It also helps improve IT skills for seeking work and learning opportunities.

Using social media

There are many definitions of social media, but as distilled by Wikipedia, a common thread running through all of them is 'a blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of value'. It's about the social provision of information that enables people to interact and comment upon it - so it's more like a conversation, a dialogue, rather than information which remains static the way newsprint or a webpage generally does.

It also takes many forms for example blogs, social networking, photo and video sharing. For the purpose of this paper, our main focus is on the social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and video and photo sharing sites such as Youtube and Flickr respectively.

Why use it?

The reasons we want to use social media essentially echo our reasons for resident involvement generally. Some are:

- Give residents the opportunity to engage with us and their neighbours
- Hear their voice
- Quick way to report issues or give their views
- Give them the option of doing this at a time, and a way that suits them
- Potentially strengthens communities and community spirit
- Enables us to be more easily accountable to our customers
- Helps us deliver services that are more relevant to what customers need or aspire to
- Demonstrates a flexible and adaptable approach to service delivery
- Harnesses the resourcefulness of our customers and communities.

Benefits for residents and other stakeholders

In addition to the above bullet points, the benefits of social media for our customers are that:

- It's quick
- Can be fun
- They can have their views heard without having to attend a meeting with the time, financial, childcare and travel costs that entails
- They can comment on things in their own time, at their own pace - on their terms
- It's less formal and bureaucratic than many of our meetings
- Our customers can interact with each other
- It's friendly

Benefits for us

In addition to some of the two sets of bullet points above, the benefits for us include:

- Shows a more human side of our organisation – especially as the relevant staff find their social media 'voice' and are able to confidently engage in/respond to the dialogue
- Real time feedback
- Less paperwork
- Less cost
- Opportunity to hear from anyone who wants to comment – especially those who wouldn't normally do so using other channels, and about what they're interested in
- It's innovative
- Helps us build relationships with our customers
- Enables less formal ways to co-design and improve our services

Our use of social media, and getting our service offer correct on our website, could play a role in increasing digital inclusion by encouraging people to take part. There are people who believe they are not on the 'internet' even though they use Facebook and Twitter from computers or phones. Also they might not visit our website, but might engage with us through social media. If this is their introduction to the internet, there could be later spin-offs for them - eg gaining employment skills, and accessing cheaper products and/or services online.

In addition, some internet providers carry out a full credit check on potential customers, and if people have a poor credit history they may find it difficult to secure a home broadband contract and are more likely to have internet access on their phones – or would find eg a 3G dongle (as offered for loan by our library service now) very useful.

How we might use it

This is not an exhaustive list, but examples of potential usage include:

Flickr

- Estate inspection actions needed
- For tenants to report areas needing attention
- Estate Development Budget (EDB) – share consultation photos for bidding process, and encourage wider participation in EDB spend decisions - people could perhaps then lodge their vote for schemes on our website or via text vote!
- Sharing before and after photos of EDB projects

Youtube video clips

- Introduction to our housing service
- Rent payment options
- Reporting repairs
- Managing anti-social behaviour
- Starting a tenancy
- Ending a tenancy
- Difficulties paying your rent?
- Information for leaseholders - eg payment support
- Being a great neighbour
- Getting involved
- Celebrating initiatives such as estate clean-ups

Twitter

- Giving daily updates on a live issue
- Regular (daily) posting on topics residents following us on Twitter will find useful
- Resident involvement - this affords a really quick, easy and effective way to get views, comment, feedback on an issue, for example at City Assembly for people unable to attend
- Quick and informal reporting and feedback

80% of people who use Twitter do so from their mobile phone. (Source: Acceleris PR and communications agency)

Facebook

- Again, regular news on topical issues eg decent homes updates
- Information we're keen to get feedback on
- Responding to our 'fans'
- Promote events
- Organise quizzes and promotions
- EDB votes
- Reporting issues and commenting on neighbourhoods

Excellent accessible services for everyone

We want to maintain choice for our customers in how they contact us or access our services. Their preferred method will be decided by factors such as:

- Their knowledge of options available
- The complexity of the issue
- Their preferences
- Their access to the internet
- The confidence they have using the internet and their abilities
- The speed within which they need confirmation of an issue
- The extent to which they need assurance of an issue

We are mindful of social, financial and digital inclusion issues, and we will maintain a mix of channels, ensuring no-one is disadvantaged by our service offer. Additionally we will continue to sign-post customers to local and national resources to support them getting online if they wish to do that.

What we've done

- Residents were consulted and involved in changes made to areas of our website
- Our website has recently been developed to improve our customer service, support improved access and support channel shift, with a new landing page www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing for easier access (including use of icons), and many more transactional services and online forms available on our 'Do it now' pages, eg:
 - ✓ pay rent, leaseholder, garage, household contents insurance and other charges online
 - ✓ use the housing benefits and council tax online calculator
 - ✓ report anti-social behaviour
 - ✓ report repairs, estate issues (eg bulk rubbish), housing and housing benefit fraud
 - ✓ make Homemove choice based lettings bids
 - ✓ take part in consultations
- From August 2011 our 'Customer Online System' enables customers to eg view their rent accounts, make payments or arrangements, and access or amend their personal information
- One housing office has transferred all its paper files and many paper-based ways of working onto our computerised IDOX system - speeding up processes especially by saving 'double entering', but saving a huge amount of paper
- Free internet access at any of the city's libraries, with enhanced support available from the council's 'Council Connect' volunteers.
- Two of our households were the first to be loaned a laptop computer with internet access as part of our new 'Council Connect' service at all city libraries.
- Tenant association groups have been assisted in setting up their own social media accounts.

Actions we will take

Examples of things we'll be doing up to 2014 are:

- Capture more information on internet access, understand barriers to the internet and seek out opportunities to overcome them.
- Continue to make improvements to our website, also developing it as the first port of call for staff responding to customer queries. In this way it would ensure that advice is consistent and that information on it is kept up to date as staff will be referring to it constantly.
- Develop a series of short You Tube video clips providing information that our customers will find useful - eg on how to report anti-social behaviour, how to get involved, and rent payment options.
- Increase our use of group text messaging to keep customers notified of issues they'll be interested in.
- Look into the potential to use Digital Switchover and digital technology to access services via televisions at home.
- Use technology to record levels of avoidable contact – and use this information when reviewing and streamlining our processes.
- Explore the use of 0300 non-geographical numbers reserved for public organisations and charities – and included in landline and mobile phone free minutes.
- Develop open data principles to help make us more accountable, and shift from customers being passive recipients of information we provide, to them being able to engage with the data and use it for a range of purposes. Examples are residents associations using local data on a range of issues (not only housing) to help them work co-productively with us on setting local priorities and budget priorities; capacity building for involvement in city-wide issues; mapping a range of issues – eg EDB spend, land available for growing, and repairs information; and groups working on anti-social behaviour having access to a range of statistics.

Any changes we make will be about broadening our service offer, and therefore extending the choices all our customers have for accessing our services.

8. Transforming how we work and developing our workforce to improve customer service and access

Organisations often talk of their staff being their most valuable asset. This is particularly true here, where officers value their interactions with customers, and are the main source of service provision to them.

We recognise that good people management lies behind the creation of successful, productive, high performing and happy work environments – the exact environment we need for delivering customer excellence and positive outcomes for our customers.

Our Workforce Development Strategy (2009 – 2012) took an organisational development approach, combining management and human resource interventions to support our ambition to make Housing & Social Inclusion a great place to work - delivering service outcomes that both staff and customers can remain proud. The key themes of that strategy are:

- ❶ Recruitment, induction and retention
- ❷ Rethinking management – and strengthening management skills
- ❸ Skilled workforce - identifying skills gaps and developing staff, growing talent
- ❹ 'Big idea' - shared vision, values and sense of purpose
- ❺ Performance management - and celebrating good performance
- ❻ Agile workforce flexible to change
- ❼ Staff engagement and commitment
- ❽ Autonomy over work, with accountability
- ❾ Improved work design and team working

We are currently carrying out a big piece of work looking at how we will transform our service model and work processes to increase staff fulfilment and improve our services to residents. The workforce development strategy will be reviewed and updated in line with the outcomes of this work.

What we've done

- Got a feel from staff about some improvements they would like to see through the iMPower, CARGO, and customer journey mapping and other work.
- Held staff workshops on 'systems thinking' to provide a good overview of how we can change our thinking about service delivery to provide better outcomes for customers through more streamlined and less wasteful processes.
- Undertaken value for money reviews of our services, and developed action plans for making improvements to how we work.
- Staff workshops with specific teams to harness ideas about future service model.

Actions we will take

- Continue engaging with staff to develop and then formally consult on a proposal for service transformation.
- Set up a Customer Service Hub consisting of a front-line team who will be located together and responsible for the majority of our customer contacts by phone, email and letter. The team will also be responsible for staffing our reception points or service hubs, as well as responding to complaints. The team will strive to deal with 80% of its contacts 'right first time'.
- Devise new staff training and induction to ensure officers have the skills and abilities to provide improved and memorable customer service.

- Develop partnership working with eg Health Trainers, Community Workers, the Whitehawk Inn adult IT trainers etc, and ensure staff have increased knowledge to pass onto customers about the services across the city that support eg learning and skills development, access to work and training, life skills and healthy eating, and computer literacy.
- Carry out a series of in depth reviews, using ‘systems thinking’ or ‘lean’ principles, to design the way we work around what our customers need from us.
- Investigate the use mobile devices to support staff effectively deal with business when they carry out home visits, enabling them to deliver a more complete customer service.
- Review and update our Workforce Development Strategy.
- Carry out self assessment (eg using the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence scheme) to understand and bridge any gaps in our staff and customer focus.
- Develop internal communication, leadership and management styles, workforce development programmes, and other organisational development practices that reflect a ‘high performance working’ organisation.

9. Sustainable customer service and access

There are several areas within the strategy where consideration has been given to sustainability issues. For ease of reference they are briefly outlined here:

- Increased numbers of staff located at the Housing Centre which is a very energy efficient office, and means less travel between offices for meetings etc.
- Environmental benefits of reduced travel to housing offices through excellent telephone and self-service channels.
- Ease of rent payments through other methods, potentially reducing unnecessary journeys and saving paper – eg paperless direct debit.
- Time, and therefore cost, savings of dealing with queries right first time.
- Officer use of the website for easy access to information saving paper and costs of printing policies and procedural changes.
- Increased self-serve access to internet based services will reduce our reliance on leaflets and other printed materials, with its associated cost and use of paper.
- Potentially eliminating the need for universal paper quarterly rent statements, and rent cards, as customers can view their accounts anytime they like through our Customer online system.

As we work through our transformation with staff and residents, we will be actively encouraging ideas for further improvements to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of our service.

10. Monitoring and review

The actions within this strategy will be monitored throughout the year through our Business Plans, and the strategy reviewed annually.

Appendix 1

Broad principles for changes needed to improve our customers' experience of our service

The findings from the 2009 iMPower review of customer access to tenancy management services were formed into 10 broad principles which provide a basis for the service to change and develop. The aims are to improve the experience of customers contacting the service and ensure that enquiries are resolved 'right first time'.

These principles are:

- 1 Housing management should provide an effective and efficient service that meets residents' needs
- 2 Current ways of working need to change as they are resource intensive and do not always deliver what residents want
- 3 All residents should be able to easily access the service
- 4 There should be a range of ways for residents to contact the service
- 5 Administrative functions should be organised to reduce waste and avoid duplication
- 6 Housing Officers should have a proactive role focused on providing support and tackling problems as early as possible
- 7 Housing Officers should spend less time on administration and more time with residents and taking care of their neighbourhood
- 8 Support should be targeted at those who need it most
- 9 It is possible to improve service delivery whilst reducing costs
- 10 Residents and staff should be involved in developing and delivering change and improvement

Customer Access Review - Equality Impact Assessment (Summary)

Name of review:	Housing Management Customer Access Review	Reference number:
Period of review:	Current – this EIA is continuously reviewed as work progresses within the customer access review	HM 31
Date review signed off:		
Scope of the review:	The purpose of this EIA is to assess the potential impact of introducing the key elements of the Customer Access Review on the council's tenants and leaseholders and housing management staff	
Review team:	Hilary Edgar Business Improvement Manager , Sam Smith Programme Manager, Ododo Dafe, Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement	
Relevant data and research:	Demographic data from OHMS, the main housing database Links with other projects in the Access & Customer Care work stream in the Housing Improvement Programme	
Consultation: indicate who was consulted and how they were consulted	Reports on the Customer Access Review were presented at Housing Management Consultative Committee and Area Panels (February and September 2010) Further consultation will take place as the review progresses	
Assessment of impact, outcomes and key follow up actions:	<p>Involve residents and staff in planning changes to services, share information on current access arrangements, highlighting any inequalities around these</p> <p>Provide residents with support to use new access channels through working with partners eg library service Support staff through operational and cultural changes to customer access within the service through information sharing, service planning, visits to other organisations and workforce development</p> <p>Promote the positive aspects of widening the range of access channels and times of access eg web, e-forms and contact centre will provide new and additional opportunities for residents to receive info</p> <p>Carry out review of all public literature to ensure full publicity for all access channels</p> <p>Promote the tenant checklist at start of tenancy and home visits to encourage register of residents' communication needs.</p>	

<p>Assessment of impact, outcomes and key follow up actions cont:</p>	<p>Use profile data to target specific communications about any changes to current access arrangements</p> <p>Explore installation of ‘readspeaker’ on website, which reads text and is aimed at helping not only those with visual impairment, but those who may not have English as their first language, but are able to understand spoken English</p> <p>If an automated phone service is introduced retain the ability to speak to a member of staff so residents with specialised needs eg translation, will be able to access the service they require.</p> <p>Use tenant profile information to target explanations of changes and ensure residents with disabilities are supported through the range of access channels</p> <p>Review public communications to ensure they are in plain English, and where possible are available in easy to read formats.</p> <p>Involve the Tenant Disability Network to test run any changes and suggest improvements, particularly in relation to the single point of contact</p> <p>Ensure any change of working practices and location involves a risk assessment for staff with disabilities and special needs</p> <p>Ensure any free phone numbers that are introduced are also ‘29’ numbers to reduce costs for mobile phone users</p> <p>Free up staff resources to focus on high need rather than high demand cases – tenancy management staff should be focused on understanding and providing support to the neighbourhood in which they work – by taking actions to support residents and tackle problems at an early stage they can prevent problems becoming major issues in the future</p>
<p>Name and contact details of lead officer responsible for follow-up action:</p>	<p>Hilary Edgar, Business Improvement Manager, 01273 293250</p>
<p>For full report contact:</p>	<p>Hilary Edgar, Business Improvement Manager, 01273 293250</p>

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 38

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Allocations Policy		
Date of Meeting:	26th September 2011		
Report of:	Geoff Raw, Strategic Director - Place Terry Parkin, Strategic Director - People		
Contact	Sylvia Peckham	Tel:	293318
Officers:	Verity Walker		290274
E-Mail:	E-mail:	Sylvia.peckham@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
		Verity.walker@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards	All		
Affected:			

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The current Housing Register Allocations Policy was approved by Housing Cabinet on 22nd March 2011 and implemented in early May 2011.
- 1.2 Under the new policy, Care leavers are not automatically awarded priority for housing, but are assessed for housing depending on their housing need in the same way as other applicants are assessed. CYPT (Children & Young Persons Trust), care leavers and their representatives have raised concerns over the new approach and, in view of the Council's significant responsibilities as Corporate Parent, this report proposes a further review of the Allocations Policy.
- 1.3 In undertaking the Review we would also like to use the opportunity to consult on the anticipated changes to Allocations following the Localism Bill. Therefore this report is to consider a review of the Allocation policy including consultation with the City. A further report will then be brought back to HMCC and Housing Cabinet with final recommendations for implementation following this Consultation

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Management Consultative Committee consider and commend for approval to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting the undertaking of a Review of the current Allocation Policy.. Following the Review, Recommendations will be brought back to HMCC and Housing CMM.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1.1 Housing & support for care leavers is a key strategic priority for Housing Commissioning encompassed in Housing Strategy, Supporting People Commissioning Strategy & Homelessness Strategy.

- 3.1.2 A Joint Protocol has been in place for some years between Housing and CYPT to assess and provide for the housing needs of Care leavers. A large proportion of Care leavers are not ready for independent accommodation and are referred into one of several supported housing projects for young people that we have developed.
- 3.1.3 When Care leavers are assessed as ready for independent accommodation either following a stay in supported accommodation or direct from Care, under the new policy they are banded according to their housing need and so could be in any of the bands A-D.
- 3.1.4 The current concern is that since the revised policy came into force, this change in banding may disadvantage care leavers and a review has been requested to consider reinstating the position under the previous Allocation Policy for Care leavers to be awarded Band A priority for Social Housing once they have been assessed as ready for independent accommodation.
- 3.1.5 It is proposed that consultation is undertaken with our partner RSLs (registered Social Landlords) in accordance with the legal requirements and also with those bodies recommended to be consulted under the Code of Guidance, namely Social Services departments, health departments, supporting people teams, Connexions partnerships, relevant voluntary sector organisations and other recognised referral bodies should be consulted. In addition, following the Council's Community Engagement Framework, we will be carrying out full consultation with all our Communities of interest and will include care leavers and their representatives.
- 3.1.6 A final Report for decision on recommended changes following consultation will be brought back to HMCC and Housing Cabinet Member Meeting. allowing for the recognised standard minimum consultation period of 12 weeks.
- 3.1.7 Pending the outcome of the Review, the Lead Commissioner Housing, in consultation with the Strategic Director People and Strategic Director Place, will consider exercising his discretion in relation to the banding for care leavers as they arise on a case by case basis. This will be reported to HMCC and Housing Cabinet as per the current policy.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 There is a legal requirement to consult with partner RSLs on major changes to an Allocation policy, and the Code of Guidance suggests that in addition Social Services departments, health departments, supporting people teams etc are consulted. To comply with the Community Engagement Framework, we will also consult with all our communities of interest, including care leavers and their representatives. This consultation will take a minimum of 12 weeks to ensure the Consultation is robust. Full details of the consultation and the responses will be contained in the final report.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications.

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report. The recommended changes as highlighted in appendix 1 will be managed within existing budgets

Finance officer Consulted: Neil J Smith Senior- Finance Officer Date: 24.06.11

5.2 Legal Implications

Under section 167 Housing Act 1996, the council as a local housing authority is required to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities and as to the procedure to be followed, in allocating housing accommodation. Local housing authorities must not allocate housing accommodation otherwise than in accordance with their allocation scheme. Although there is no specific right to housing under the European Convention on Human Rights or Human Rights Act 1998, there is within the Court system an increasing focus on Human rights issues.

The Leaving Care Act 2000 provides for specific duties to children leaving the care of local authorities. The Act provides that it is the duty of local authorities to give care leavers "assistance of any kind to the extent that his welfare requires it". It is clear in law that this includes accommodation and that, as corporate parents, the authority's responsibilities for the welfare of care leavers are high. The proposed review will specifically consider the Council's support for care leavers.

Under the Housing Act 1996 there is a legal requirement to consult with partner RSLs on major changes to an allocation policy, and the accompanying code of guidance recommends that Social Services departments, health departments, supporting people teams, Connexions partnerships, relevant voluntary sector organisations and other recognised referral bodies should be consulted. In addition, it is proposed that the review will also include consultation with care leavers and their representatives. The review of the allocations policy as set out in this report will need to be informed by the consultation responses.

Equalities must also be considered in any service provided by a public body. This consideration will be assisted by the Equalities Impact Assessment.

Legal officer Consulted:– Elizabeth Culbert 29th June 2011 #1515

5.3 Equalities Implications

Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the proposed changes to the Policy (Appendix 3).

5.4 Sustainability Implications

The proposals will ensure that better use is made of the housing stock and will contribute to sustainable housing solutions.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications

None.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications

There are risks that careleavers placed in Council flats will not be able to manage a tenancy, resulting in Anti Social behaviour and /or the tenancy failing. This can be mitigated as CYPT are required to provide on-going support to Careleavers.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications

Limited social housing stock will be used to house vulnerable young people in areas where there are high concentrations of multiple deprivation.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The alternative to the amendments would be for the policy to remain as per the current policy. This would mean that Careleavers would be assessed for housing in the same way as everyone else and not afforded high priority purely based on their status as Careleavers. They would then be assisted to obtain accommodation in the private rented market when they are ready to manage independent accommodation. This option does not address the concerns that have been raised in relation to the Council fully meeting its duties as a Corporate Parent.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations have been made so that we can review the Allocations Policy with regard to Careleavers in particular, who have been assessed as able to manage a tenancy, can be afforded the highest priority for Social housing.
- 7.2 We will also take opportunity of this Review to consult on potential changes to Allocations contained in the forthcoming Localism Bill.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 39

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Home Energy Efficiency Investment Options – Installation of Solar Panels to council owned homes		
Date of Meeting:	26th September 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Reid	Tel: 29-3060
	Email:	martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 One of the key strategic priorities outlined in the City-wide Housing Strategy 2009-14 is to improve housing quality, to make sure that residents are able to live in decent homes suitable to their needs. Our strategic goals include, reducing fuel poverty, minimising CO2 emissions and improving tenants' homes ensuring they are of high quality and well maintained. This is consistent with our ambitions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 1.2 The Housing Revenue Account Capital programme for 2011-14 includes home energy efficiency investment as a housing commissioning investment priority for possible future investment. In order to maintain our current level of performance and meet our strategic priorities we also need to explore alternative funding streams to enable the continued delivery of home energy efficiency programmes in both the private sector and council stock. Previous reports and presentations to Housing Management Consultative Committee and Housing Cabinet Member Meeting have noted the importance of continuing to work with potential partners such as energy companies to explore means of maximising investment to meet our strategic housing goals, including potential opportunities offered by the Government backed Feed in Tariff scheme.
- 1.3 The Council has the opportunity to install solar PV panels onto its Council-owned residential properties. This has arisen out of the Government's Feed-in-Tariff incentive scheme and would:
 - Significantly raise the profile of renewable energy in the city;
 - Attract a multi-million pound investment and possibly create new business and employment opportunities;
 - Create investment into city housing stock;
 - Reduce the carbon footprint;
 - Allow some Council tenants to lower their fuel bills;
 - Create an income stream into the council and subsequently further investment opportunities.

As part of this commitment Housing Commissioning have been working with tenants, our procured Energy Managing Partner (Climate Energy) and other local authority partners to investigate and maximise home energy efficiency investment options for our tenants and residents from Feed-in Tariffs (FITs).

- 1.4 A version of this report is being submitted to Cabinet for decision on 22 September. Cabinet's resolutions will be reported to the 26 September 2011 Housing Management Consultative Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Management Consultative Committee note the recommendation that Cabinet approves a capital programme budget up to a maximum of £15.0 million for Solar Photovoltaic Panels on council housing stock to be financed through unsupported borrowing in the Housing Revenue Account, which will only be drawn against subject to the approval of the Strategic Director for Place and the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to proceed with the scheme.
- 2.2 That Housing Management Consultative Committee note the recommendation that authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to approve the planning, supply, installation and maintenance of the panels via an approved framework agreement and a call off contract or contracts under an approved framework agreement.
- 2.3 That Housing Management Consultative Committee note the recommendation that Cabinet notes the outcome of the initial options appraisal undertaken by Climate Energy, indicating that there is an outline business case to support delivery of a solar photovoltaic scheme across the council housing stock and to meet strategic housing and other council priorities, including private sector housing renewal, reducing fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions.
- 2.4 That Housing Management Consultative Committee note the recommendation that Cabinet notes the procurement exercise to establish the Solar Bourne framework agreement undertaken by Eastbourne Borough Council with involvement from partners in the BEST consortium, and that the costs identified through the above procurement further support an outline business case as indicated by the initial options appraisal work.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Business Case for the installation of Solar Panels on council owned homes.

- 3.1 One of the key strategic priorities outlined in the City-wide Housing Strategy 2009-14 is to improve housing quality, to make sure that residents are able to live in decent homes suitable to their needs. Our strategic housing goals include:
 - Goal 4: Making best use of the housing stock
 - Goal 6: Work with home owners & landlords to maintain and improve the quality of their housing

- Goal 7: Reduce fuel poverty & minimise CO2
- Goal 8: High quality and well maintained council housing, improving tenants homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard

3.2 The Council has a strong background in delivering home energy efficiency improvements across both the council housing stock and the private sector. Across private sector housing the BEST programme has funded the Brighton & Hove Energy Action Partnership (BHEAP) that has delivered home energy efficiency measures to some of the most vulnerable residents in Private Sector Housing, including:

- 1461 loft insulations
- 1126 cavity wall insulation
- 1537 heating measures
- 141 solar water heating systems

Historically across the council housing stock we have invested significantly in insulation & heating. The current SAP Energy Rating of 76.4 puts us in the top quartile of performance in this indicator. In addition:

- We are investing £3.5 million in boiler & heating replacements and upgrades, installing high efficiency condensing boilers
- Last year we completed 2 insulated overcladding projects to Wiltshire House & Somerset Point and a communal solar hot water system at Hazelholt sheltered scheme, partly funded by utility company grant monies

3.3 In April 2010 the Government introduced Feed-in Tariffs (FIT) to accelerate the implementation of technologies that create on-site renewable electricity. These rates are considered generous and ultimately reward investment in renewable technologies.

3.4 The Government will guarantee the Feed-in-Tariffs (set out in current legislation) for 25 years. The current, generous, tariff levels are only guaranteed at the present level for the 25 year period if panels are installed and operational by April 2012. Panels installed after that date will still benefit but at a reduced level.

3.5 It should be noted that the government is currently carrying out an early review of the Feed in Tariff scheme due to the large scale solar installations that weren't anticipated under the FITs scheme, there is concern this could mean that money meant for people who want to produce their own green electricity has the potential to be directed towards large scale commercial solar projects. The government's comprehensive FITs review will assess all aspects of the scheme including tariff levels, administration and eligibility of technologies and will be completed by the end of the year, with tariffs remaining unchanged until April 2012 (unless the review reveals a need for greater urgency).

3.6 The proposal can help tackle fuel poverty in the following ways:

- Reducing residents' electricity bills as they can use electricity that is being generated by the panels, either free of charge or at a reduced rate
- Through re-investment of FIT income in other energy efficiency measures
- Creating an investment stream for further renewable energy technologies that in turn may create further investment opportunities i.e. the governments Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

- 3.7 The proposal will help the City to reduce its carbon footprint, through the use of renewable energy to meet some of the city's electricity needs. Surplus electricity generated is fed back to the national grid thereby helping to reduce the need for electricity production from fossil fuels.

Initial options appraisal by Climate Energy

- 3.8 Our existing energy efficiency managing partner, Climate Energy, have carried out an extensive options appraisal to identify the potential benefits of a solar PV scheme across the council housing stock. The appraisal has been based on a survey of suitable roof space that has identified approximately 1,600 dwellings as being suitable based on a number of factors including orientation, roof pitch and the risk of 'overshadowing'.
- 3.9 The options appraisal has identified that such a solar PV scheme has the potential to provide lifetime carbon dioxide savings of over 48,000 tonnes.
- 3.10 There are a number of different ways that a solar PV FIT scheme can be delivered: fully owned and funded by the council (either within current structures or via a special purpose vehicle); externally owned and funded (sometimes referred to as 'rent a roof'); or a shared equity approach in partnership with an external investor.
- 3.11 The options appraisal and the information provided from the procurement exercise have indicated that the greatest benefits to the city could be achieved through a fully owned and funded model. This model would provide the same benefits in terms of CO₂ savings and potential reductions in energy costs to residents but also has the potential to provide the council with an additional income stream from the Feed in Tariff payments.
- 3.12 In addition to the potential income that can be generated, there are other significant benefits to the Council of opting for the self-funding route:
- There will be complete control over investments
 - There will be greater opportunity to create local employment opportunities (including apprenticeships)
 - There will be an opportunity to recycle money back into the community
 - The fuel-poor can be assisted
 - The Council can play an important role in developing the local renewable energy economy, and support Brighton & Hove businesses
 - The scheme sets up a platform for other low-carbon technologies and further opportunities presented by both the Renewable Heat Incentive and the governments 'Green Deal'
- 3.13 Market testing by Climate Energy, carried out as part of the options appraisal, indicated that the capital costs of a fully funded and operated solar PV scheme of this size would be in the region of £15 million.

Solarbourne Framework Agreement

- 3.14 Subsequent to the initial options appraisal Brighton & Hove have participated in a procurement exercise, led by Eastbourne Borough Council to establish the Solarbourne

framework agreement for the procurement of supply, installation and maintenance of solar PV panels in order to establish actual costs, to inform economies of scale and further consideration of the business case and appropriate funding model.

- 3.15 The financial modelling carried out to date cannot in itself guarantee capital costs and potential surplus but provides an indication of the likely range of capital costs and surplus achievable. This information will be used in the planning and implementation of a detailed programme of work including in deciding the number and type of installations that can, and should, be delivered in this financial year and the next. Project management of the programme of works including updating the financial modelling based on actual installations will enable risks to be managed effectively. Sufficient costs have been included in the financial modelling to provide for the project management function.
- 3.16 Financial information provided through the Solarbourne tender exercise confirmed that the capital costs of the scheme across all suitable roofs would be in the region of £14-16 million, dependent on the supplier used from the framework. The supplier may be selected through a mini-competition exercise and there is potential for capital costs and therefore potential surplus to improve through this process.
- 3.17 Brighton and Hove are not committed to accessing the Solarbourne Framework and have been exploring options for accessing other similar frameworks to ensure that the potential scheme benefits are maximised. Legal and Procurement advice has been taken on existing framework agreements available. Officers continue to evaluate these options to ensure that the benefits are maximised for the council and local residents and will then proceed either through a mini competition with Solarbourne or other approved framework, such as that below.
- 3.18 The non-housing solar PV implementation programme is progressing, having received Cabinet approval in June. The list of approximately 40 sites identified for the installations based on specific technical criteria has been reviewed and refined due to Planning and Listed Building application requirements. Existing national and regional procurement frameworks for solar PV installations have been evaluated and the national Pro5 Microgeneration Technologies framework contract has been chosen as the most appropriate procurement route. This framework is readily accessible with 13 providers for the South East region. In order to find a value for money contractor to meet specific needs further specifications for a mini competition under the Framework are being established. Local labour, apprenticeships, suppliers, timing and capacity issues will be addressed through the mini competition process. The works will be undertaken in two lots and with the aim of being in a position to appoint the suppliers in November 2011. With approximately one month mobilisation installations are expected to start on site early next year and be complete by the end of March 2012 to take advantage of the current Feed in Tariff rates. We continue to work closely with colleagues in Property and Design to ensure learning and experience is shared for the benefit of both housing and non-housing opportunities.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with council tenants through Cabinet Members Energy Efficiency Working Group. Presentations were given and options discussed at meetings on the 1st November 2010, 10th January, 21 February 2011 & 4th April 2011. Feedback from the group has been generally positive.

4.2 Presentations and discussions have also taken place at Area Panel tenant participation meetings on the following dates;

- North & East Area Panel – 17th November 2010
- East Area Panel – 22nd November 2010
- West Area Panel – 23rd November 2010
- Central Area Panel – 25th November 2010

Feedback has been positive, with residents keen to understand which buildings may be suitable.

4.3 Presentations have also been delivered to members, tenant reps and others through previous HMCC meetings, specifically 8th November, 13th December 2010 and 13th June 2011.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Financial modelling has taken place using the information provided from the Solarbourne procurement exercise. The potential net present value (NPV) surplus, based on the assumption that the majority of units will be installed after 1 April 2012 and therefore utilising the post April 2012 Feed in Tariff (FITs) rates, is in the region of £9 million for 1,600 properties. (Note that the NPV surplus is after repayment of borrowing).
- 5.2 The potential surplus will be dependent on a number of variables including the original capital outlay, when installations are completed, the performance of the panels and the actual 'yield' created. Figures in the financial modelling have been calculated allowing for reasonable and foreseeable contingencies in project delivery and ongoing management.
- 5.3 Any changes to the FIT rate will be modelled as part of a mini competition/tender process to ensure that the scheme provides a positive NPV return for the scheme to proceed.
- 5.4 The Capital funding of the Solar Panel scheme will be met through unsupported borrowing through the Housing Revenue Account, which will be repaid from the annual surpluses that the scheme provides. Self financing of the Housing Revenue Account will be implemented from 1 April 2012 and the borrowing of £15 million will be within the borrowing ceiling limit that will be introduced as part of self financing.
- 5.5 The Solar Panel scheme budget will be included in the HRA Capital Programme budget for the appropriate year and the unsupported borrowing will be built into next years HRA Budget Strategy.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen

Date: 25/08/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.6 The Councils procurement through any framework agreement must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. The Council is entitled to access any suitable framework agreement(s) which have been set up with contractors to provide for the planning, supply, installation and maintenance of Solar PV panels on council housing stock, (including but not limited to the Solarbourne framework once it has been concluded and the Council has signed the access agreement with EBC). Without the delegation of authority recommended in paragraph 2.2, contracts called off from any framework could require separate approval under Contract Standing Orders, depending on the value of the call off contract.
- 5.7 The statutory framework for the Feed-in Tariff scheme is provided by sections 41-43 of the Energy Act 2008 and associated regulations.
- 5.8 As the owner and landlord of properties let on secure tenancies, the Council is empowered to install Solar Photovoltaic Panels. The installation of the panels must be undertaken with due regard to tenants' rights under the Human Rights Act to respect for private and family life and protection of property.

Lawyer Consulted:

*Isabella Hallsworth
Liz Woodley*

Date: 25/08/11

Date: 31/08/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.9 A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out at pre project delivery stage. At present we do not foresee significant equalities implications. Outcomes of the EIA and subsequent actions will be monitored and managed through the project management stage.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.10 The proposals outlined above would bring significant sustainability benefits in terms of climate change and energy use and promoting sustainable communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.11 There are no significant crime and disorder implications foreseen

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.12 Risks and opportunity played a significant part of the Solarbourne procurement process and the design of the specification for both equipment and installation programme. The ongoing management of risk and opportunity implications will be fully assessed and where necessary mitigated through the project delivery stage.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.13 The proposal has the potential to address fuel poverty and consequently the health implications of living in a cold home. The scheme, through the reduction in CO2 emissions, will also contribute to the objective of creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.14 The proposals support the council priorities:

- Tackling inequalities
- Making Brighton & Hove the most sustainable city in the UK

And the corporate priorities;

- Protect the environment while growing the economy
- Better use of public money
- Reduce inequality by increasing opportunity

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The Council has worked with partners in the current BEST consortium to establish the Solarbourne framework agreement for the provision of the planning, supply installation and maintenance of solar PV panels in order to establish actual costs and to take advantage of any potential for creating economies of scale. The outcome of this procurement process, led by Eastbourne Borough Council, allows further consideration of the business case and appropriate funding model. The actual costs identified in the framework agreement support the business case developed as part of the initial options appraisal by Climate Energy. Both the framework agreement and the options appraisal indicate that the greatest benefits to the city could be achieved through a fully owned and funded model.
- 6.2 Solar PV installation companies, together with the backing of private investment companies, are willing to pay the capital costs to install solar PV panels onto the roofs of homes if, in return, they receive the Feed In Tariff (FIT) incentive over a 25-year period. It may be possible for the Council to generate additional receipts, by some form of “profit share” or roof rental agreement. This would be in addition to an element of free or cheap electricity and the CO2 savings such a scheme would generate. There are potential additional benefits in this option including; no or less capital borrowing required and reduced or shared risk related to delivering the installation and ongoing maintenance and monitoring of solar PV installations. However this model would be unlikely to deliver the same benefits outlined in the report, and the income would be significantly less than that achievable through a fully funded and operated model. The Solarbourne framework agreement includes an option for the ‘rent a roof’ scheme. However only one supplier is on the framework and the information available to us at this stage is not sufficient to calculate what the expected return would be.
- 6.3 Indications from the initial options appraisal, by Climate Energy, suggest that on balance a fully owned and operated scheme has the potential to provide significantly greater benefits to the city as a whole and that risks associated with this model can be adequately mitigated through in-house and procured expertise. These initial indications have been backed up through the Solarbourne framework agreement procurement exercise. A fully funded and owned model of delivering a solar PV scheme has the potential to create significant income, generated by the Feed in Tariff payment, to the council over a 25 year period. A fully owned and funded model gives the council greater influence over delivering the benefits outlined in this report.

6.4 The focus of work to date has been on the procurement of the Solarbourne framework agreement to inform a business case for proceeding with the installation of solar PV on council housing. We are not committed to accessing this framework and have explored options for accessing other frameworks to provide further opportunities and as a contingency if issues arise that prevent the council from maximising potential benefits through the Solarbourne framework agreement. Legal and procurement advice has been taken on other existing framework agreements for supply and install of solar PV which are accessible by the council and meet our needs. Officers continue to assess these options to ensure benefits are maximised for the council and local residents.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Approval is required now to realise the benefits of the Feed in Tariff scheme and to take advantage of any opportunity this offers the Council to gain investment and energy savings before the Feed in Tariff is reviewed in April 2012.

7.2 Approval is required now to realise the benefits of CO2 reductions and the provision of free or cheap electricity to tenants who may be living in, or at risk of, fuel poverty.

7.3 To realise and maximise the additional benefits outlined in this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 40

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Housing & Social Inclusion Performance Report (Quarter 1)		
Date of Meeting:	26 September 2011		
Report of:	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafé	Tel: 293201
	Email:	ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:







- 1.1 This is the first quarter (April to June) performance report for Housing & Social Inclusion for the financial year 2010 - 2011. It adopts a new format for presenting information more clearly than before, and also reports on the service pledge commitments agreed for service areas.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:





- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee comments on the content and the new format of the report, and suggests any further changes it may like to see.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1.0 For applicable service areas the 'RAG' rating system of red, amber and green traffic light symbols is used to provide a clear, at a glance, indication of performance. For some areas, the targets already set for the year do not easily lend themselves to this rating system, and work will be done throughout the year to develop targets in line with 'RAG' rating for next year.
- 3.2.0 Trend arrows are also used to provide at a glance indication of whether the performance is poorer, remained the same, or has improved since the last reporting period.
- 3.1 **Key to symbols used within the report**
See table below

STATUS		TREND	
Performance is below target (Red)		Poorer than previous reporting period	
An area close to achieving target, but in need of improvement (Amber)		Same as previous reporting period	
Performance is on or above target (Green)		Improvement on previous reporting period	



3.1.1 Rent collection and current arrears

Rent collection and current arrears				
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SERVICE PLEDGE	TREND	TARGET	ACTUAL
% of rent collected as a proportion of the rent due each year	Y		98.86%	98.71%
% of tenants with more than seven weeks rent arrears	Y	New measure	3.72%	2.96%
% of secure council tenants served a NoSP for rent arrears	Y	New measure	22.39%	6.31%
% of households evicted because of rent arrears	N		Less than 0.29%	0.02%
Number of households evicted because of rent arrears	Y	New measure	Less than 35	3
Percentage of rent loss due to empty properties <small>This figure includes properties set aside for Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes. Once it is set up, we will revise the target.</small>	N		1.9%	1.99%
Total former tenant arrears	N		£447,641	£575,223
% of rechargeable repair debt collected	Y	New measure	20%	4.52%
% collection rate of leaseholders' recoverable arrears (this is an end of year figure)	N	Not year end	95%	Not year end

NB: As these targets are for year end (rather than for each quarter), no traffic lights will be applied until the end of year report

3.2.0 Empty home turnaround time

3.2.1 There are no service pledge commitments relating to this specific area of work.

Empty home turnaround time					
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SERVICE PLEDGE	TREND	TARGET	ACTUAL	STATUS
Average re-let times in days (all properties)	N		21	17	









3.3.0 Property & Investment

Carrying out repairs to your home					
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SERVICE PLEDGE	TREND	TARGET	ACTUAL	STATUS
Emergency repairs completed in time	Y	↓	98%	97.19%	A
1,566 repairs completed. The shortfall of 0.81% below target equals 13 repairs. The Core Group has taken action in this area, and performance has increased to 99.1% in June.					
Urgent repairs completed in time	Y	↓	98%	93.28%	R
2,323 repairs completed. The shortfall of 4.72% below target equals 110 repairs. Again the Core Group has taken action in this area and performance has increased to 99.8% in June.					
Routine repairs completed in time	Y	↑	97%	97.60%	G
Total 5,089 repairs completed					
Average time to complete routine repairs	Y	↑	15 days	11 days	G
Percentage of appointments kept	N	↓	95%	95.02%	G
Tenant satisfaction with repairs	N	↑	95%	95.93%	G
Percentage of responsive repairs passing post-inspection	Y	↑	95%	97.33%	G
Percentage of repairs completed right first time	Y	↑	94%	98.34%	G
Home improvements					
Percentage of homes that are decent	N	↑	76.7%	76.10%	A
Energy efficiency rating of homes (SAP)	N	↑	71	70.60	A
Percentage of planned works passing post-inspection	Y	n/a	95%	98.78%	G
Stock with up to date gas safety certificates	Y	↓	100%	99.68%	R
A total of 10,625 properties require safety certificates. The shortfall of 0.32% below target equals 34 properties of which 31 have been referred to the local housing offices to seek access through the gas access procedures.					
Empty homes					
Percentage of empty properties passing post-inspection	Y	↑	98%	99.29%	G

3.4.0 Car parks and garages

Methods of reporting on performance data and service pledges relating to car parks and garages are still being developed and will be incorporated into future reports.

3.5.0 Estates service

Estates service					
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SERVICE		TREND	TARGET	ACTUAL	STATUS
PLEDGE					
Percentage passing quality inspections of our cleaning service 368 quality checks in Q1	Y	↑	96%	98.7%	
Percentage passing quality inspections of our minor repairs service 470 quality checks in Q1	Y	↑	96%	97.3%	
Reduction in fly tipping which has to be removed from common areas Removal work is continuing but an initiative is being developed with CityClean and progress in this matter will be reported on later in the year	Y	New measure	n/a	n/a	n/a
Reduction in graffiti reported	Y	↑	n/a	32	
Customer satisfaction eg with cleanliness of the blocks 'rate your estate' satisfaction 'Rate your estate' has not been fully rolled out across the city so this will also be reported on later in the year.	Y	New measure	n/a	n/a	n/a
Completion of cleaning tasks The shortfall of 0.8% on the target represents approx. 7 out of 924 tasks per week.	N	↔	98.5%	97.3%	
Emergency removal of bulk waste that met the target time	N	↔	100%	100%	
Routine removal of bulk waste that met the target time	N	↑	96%	98%	
Emergency removal of graffiti that met the target time	N	↔	100%	100%	
Routine removal of graffiti that met the target time	N	↓	96%	100%	

3.6.0 Anti-social behaviour (ASB)









3.6.1 The service pledges relating to ASB concern areas of work that do not easily lend themselves to target setting, eg the number of new cases or the number of cases resolved. The details below on each service pledge are therefore for information only.

3.6.2 Our activity against the ASB service pledges are as follows:

- **Number of new ASB cases - 18**
- **Number of enforcement and support actions taken - 808**
- **Number of closed cases that were resolved - 28**

- **Customer satisfaction** - during the first quarter, of the victims and witnesses interviewed, 93% were either very or fairly satisfied with the way their case was dealt with.

3.7.0 Sheltered housing

Support plans, daily call service and social activities					
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	SERVICE PLEDGE	TREND	TARGET	ACTUAL	STATUS
% of people with an up to date support plan Although it is not unusual for a scheme to have 1 or 2 people without an up to date plan (due to sickness or holidays) at one scheme performance has been below average due to a Scheme Manager vacancy. However we are taking steps to bring all plans up to date.	Y		100%	94%	
% of people who decline a support plan The number of declined support plans remains at 2%, and represents 22 people. Some residents have stated a personal preference not to have a structured support plan. However, assistance can still be given by the Scheme Manager on an informal basis.	N		0%	2%	
% of new residents with a support plan completed within 21 days The performance was slightly below the last quarter (90% compared to 94%) but still higher than the average for the previous year (80%).	Y		100%	90%	
Call each resident personally (as agreed with the resident)	Y	New measure	100%	100%	
To provide at least one social activity per week (in 21 of our 24 schemes)	Y	New measure	100%	100%	

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 As suggested in the last Performance Report a change in presentation of this report is now presented.
- 4.2 There is an increasing emphasis on the agreed Service Pledges to customers. These arose following consultation with service users and are also reflected in the Annual Report to Tenants, as required by the Tenant Services Authority. We will continue to take feedback from Members and residents as this style of reporting, and the topics it reflects, develops in the coming months.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Most performance measures discussed in this report have financial implications and these are considered within the monthly financial monitoring reports. For example, any improvement in turnaround times or a reduction in rent arrears increases the amount of rent collected. Improvements in performance will, in general, lead to more resources being available for tenants' services in the future

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks Date: 30/08/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are legal implications attached to most of the performance measures mentioned in this report. For example, section 83 of the Housing Act 1985 provides that possession proceedings cannot be brought against secure tenants for non-payment of rent unless a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) has been served. (Paragraph 3.1.1) However, none of them are so significant that they need to be drawn especially to the Committee's attention.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Date: 12/09/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Where appropriate, equalities implications are included within the body of the report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Where appropriate, sustainability implications are included within the body of the report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no direct crime and disorder implications

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no direct risk and opportunity management implications arising from this report

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are no direct public health implications arising from this report

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 There are no direct corporate or city wide implications arising from this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

