



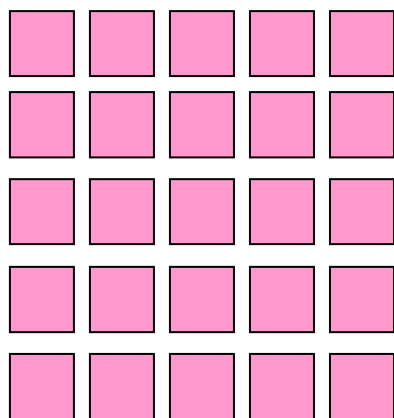
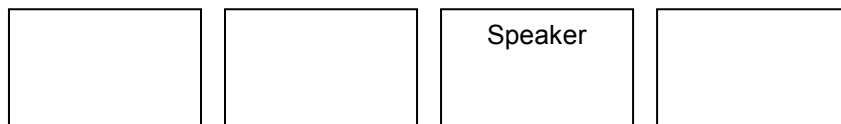
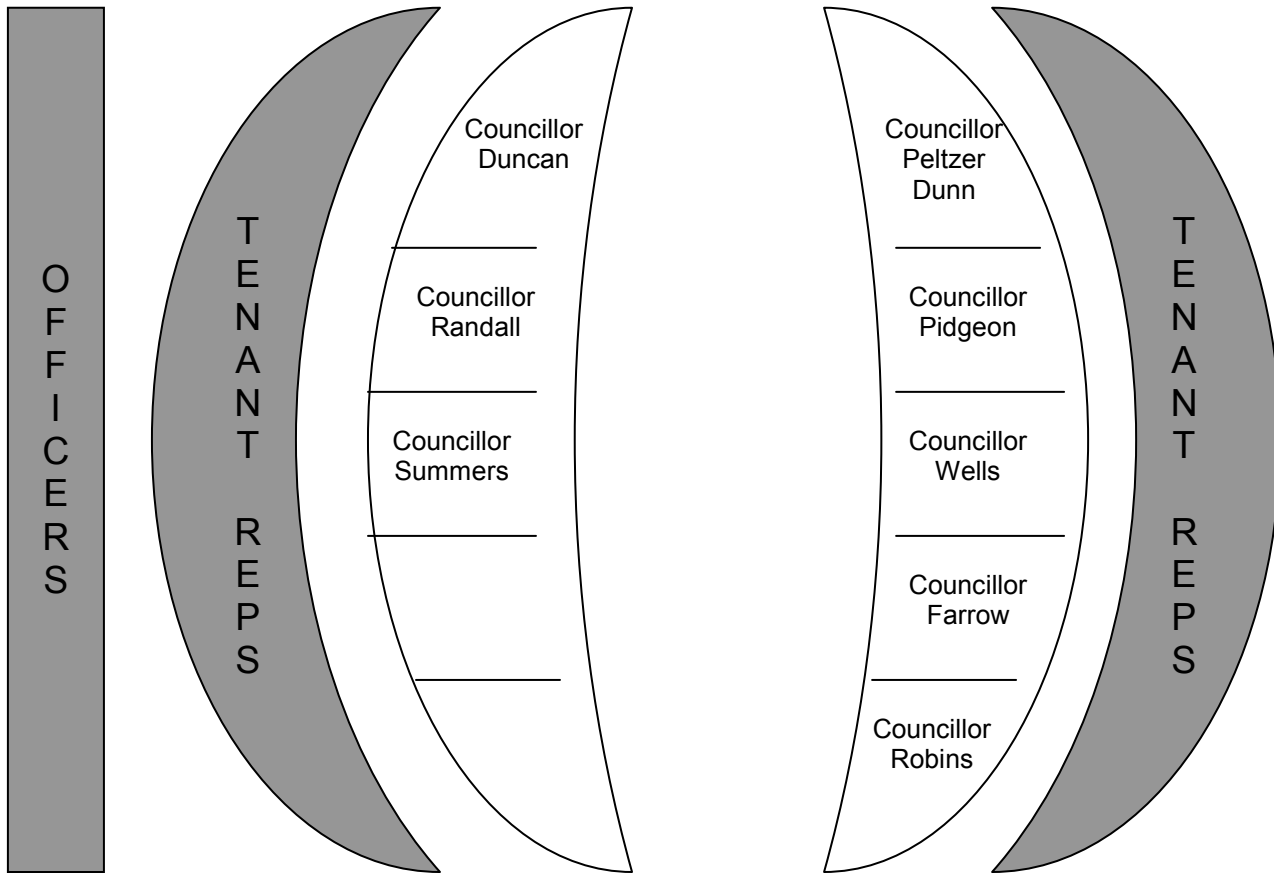
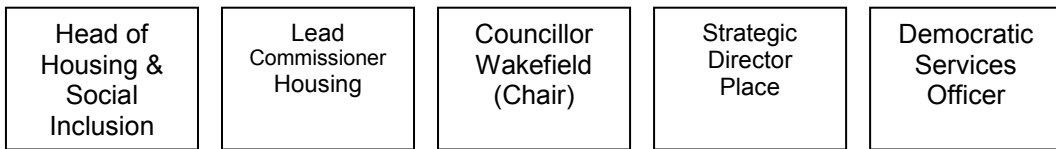
**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# Housing Management Consultative Committee

Title:	<b>Housing Management Consultative Committee</b>
Date:	<b>7 November 2011</b>
Time:	<b>3.00pm</b>
Venue:	<b>Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall</b>
Members:	<b>Councillors:</b> Wakefield (Chair), Duncan, Farrow, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Randall, Robins, Summers and Wells
Contact:	<b>Caroline De Marco</b> Democratic Services Officer 01273 291063 caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk

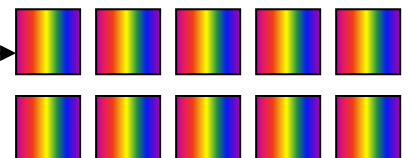
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# Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



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

John Melson, 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

## 41. 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.*

## 42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1 - 18

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2011 (copy attached).

## 43. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

## 44. CALLOVER

## 45. PETITIONS

No petitions have been received by the date of publication.

## 46. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(The closing date for receipt of public questions is 12 noon on 31 October 2011)

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

## 47. DEPUTATIONS

(The closing date for receipt of deputations is 12 noon on 31 October

2011)

No deputations have been received by the date of publication.

**48. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

No letters have been received.

**49. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

No written questions have been received.

**50. COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY 19 - 30**

Report of Head of Housing and Social Inclusion (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Becky Purnell *Tel:* 29-3022

*Ward Affected:* All Wards

**51. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REVIEW 31 - 60**

Report of Strategic Director Place (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Graham Page *Tel:* 01273 293354

*Ward Affected:* All Wards

**52. HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY 2011 61 - 70**

Report of Head of Housing and Social Inclusion (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Alan Smith *Tel:* 29-1072

*Ward Affected:* All Wards

**53. MANOR PLACE HOUSING OFFICE AND THE WHITEHAWK HUB**

Presentation by Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement.

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](http://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](mailto:caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk)) or email

[democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Date of Publication - Friday, 28 October 2011

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 42

Brighton & Hove City  
Council

### BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 26 SEPTEMBER 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Wakefield (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Jarrett, Mears, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Randall and Robins

**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), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network)

### PART ONE

#### 25. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

##### 25A Declarations of Substitute Members

25.1 Councillor Jarrett declared that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Summers. Councillor Mears declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wells.

##### 25B Declarations of Interests

25.2 Councillor Randall, 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).

**25C Exclusion of the Press and Public**

- 25.3 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.
- 25.4 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

**26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 26.1 *Elections at Area Panels* – Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 16.14. This stated that it was necessary to talk to 70 organisations. However, in Item 36 - Establishing a Tenant Scrutiny Panel – paragraph 3.8, it stated that there were 72 associations. Councillor Mears asked for clarification on how many organisations officers were communicating with. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the numbers of organisations did vary from time to time, and it would have been more accurate to say *around 70*. Councillor Mears stressed that there needed to be work carried out with tenants to ascertain exactly how many organisations there were who should be consulted. The Chair agreed to this course of action.
- 26.2 *Satisfaction Survey* – Councillor Robins referred to paragraph 24.31. He stressed that he was asking if the contractors were the right people to be asking if people were satisfied or not. He was not asking if they were paid for saying people were satisfied.
- 26.3 Ted Harman questioned the satisfaction responses. If for example, only one fifth of residents completed the survey, then the percentage only reflected the views of a minority of tenants.
- 26.4 Stewart Gover referred to paragraph 24.39. There had been a discussion at the Housing Centre about the Satisfaction Survey. It appeared that the 95% satisfaction rating came from a 25% collation. If 25% were satisfied, then there may have been double the number who were not satisfied.
- 26.5 *Fire Doors* – Jean Davis referred to paragraph 24.25. She reported that she had been visited by an officer who had stated that Mears Ltd had not been doing their job. He had promised to get back to her. She had heard nothing. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that Mark Dennison, Contract Compliance Manager had visited Jean to discuss the problem with fire doors. He would check with Mark to see what action he was taking.
- 26.6 Tom Whiting reported that there was a schedule of works planned for fire doors.
- 26.7 Heather Hayes reported that fire doors had been fitted to Elwin Court. Frail and elderly people would not be able to open the doors. They were too heavy and stiff. Some of the doors needed attention. She asked for action to be taken. The Chair asked officers to ensure action was taken.



- 26.8 Chris Kift reported that he had difficulty opening fire doors. He had raised the matter with his Occupational Therapist, who was looking into the matter. He hoped that the problem would soon be resolved.
- 26.9 *Legal Position regarding re-charging leaseholders for improvements* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 24.36 – He thanked the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion for the information he had given on this matter. However, Councillor Peltzer Dunn still felt that it was a grey area. Some improvements might weaken the council's position in asking for a re-charge (for example, providing a damp course to a property that had never had a damp course before). He considered that the leaseholder should not have to rely on appealing against the council's decision.
- 26.10 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meeting held on 5 September 2011 be agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendments.

## 27. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

### **Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes Limited (the Local Delivery Vehicle).**

- 27.1 The Chair explained that she had no communications for this meeting as it was a full agenda. However, she invited Ted Harman to speak about recent developments with the LDV.
- 27.2 Ted Harman reported that on Friday 23 September, the leases for Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes Limited were approved and signed in London. The LDV was finally open for business.
- 27.3 The Chair welcomed this good news and congratulated LDV Board members and Cllr Mears for getting the project off the ground. She recognised the work of the previous administration
- 27.4 Councillor Randall also thanked Councillor Mears for her work on this project along with councillors and tenants on the LDV Board. He thanked them all and particularly thanked the officers who had worked on the project. He hoped that the work of the LDV would be of benefit to everyone in the city.
- 27.5 Stewart Gover also thanked Councillor Mears for thinking of the project. The Board was a council inspired, arms length organisation and was not like any other RSL.
- 27.6 Tom Whiting congratulated councillors previous and present. The Board was now open for business. He had been assured that there would be a good standard of communication with Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes Ltd. The Chair agreed that she would expect that to happen.
- 27.7 Councillor Mears thanked officers but particularly wanted to thank the tenants. They had kept their nerve and seen this through. She would watch developments with interest, particularly with regard to funding. She stressed that profits should be invested in the housing stock.

**28. CALLOVER**

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

**29. PETITIONS**

- 29.1 There were none.

**30. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

- 30.1 There were none.

**31. DEPUTATIONS**

- 31.1 There were none.

**32. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

- 32.1 The Committee considered a letter from Councillor Mears in which she expressed the view that there had been a lack of openness and transparency in the attitude of the administration towards council tenants. She expressed concern about the decision to delay the elections for the area panels due to the introduction of an "innovation group". She further expressed concern about a decision to replace the Council's Homemove Magazine with a largely internet-based service for property bidding.
- 32.2 Councillor Mears referred to a recent letter sent to tenants which had caused many concerns. She considered that the matter of delaying Area Panel elections should have been raised at the Area Panel meetings. Councillor Mears considered that there were equality issues to consider. There appeared to be no choice in this matter.
- 32.3 Councillor Mears stated that it appeared tenants were being sidelined. She referred to an email sent to councillors earlier in the afternoon regarding rent reviews from 7 October. She was concerned at the way issues were being communicated.
- 32.4 Chris Kift agreed that the letter to tenants about changes to the Area Panel elections should not have been sent out. However, since that time, tenants had discussed this matter. Having carried out research, it appeared that nothing had changed. He did not think that there would be a lack of choice. Tenants had received apologies about the letter.
- 32.5 The Chair stated that she was very happy to receive any suggestions. She shared the concerns expressed. The council was a large organisation and occasionally a letter could be sent out which caused concern.
- 32.6 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the delay of the elections to Area Panels. He was very perturbed by the unilateral action taken. He had questioned the legality of this

action at the last meeting. The Senior Lawyer had advised him on the legal position after the meeting. He gave a copy of the email to the Chair.

- 32.7 Tom Whiting stated there had been a failure of communication but he considered that that the matter had now been sorted out to some extent.
- 32.8 Chris Kift stated that at the City Assembly last year it had been agreed that in future the Area Panels would elect city wide groups for a two year period. This would allow time for representatives to gain expertise. He could not see the delay in the elections to be a great problem. Meanwhile, elections were taking place where there were vacancies due to retirement. There had been a lot of discussion about this matter at the Area Panels as well as the City Assembly.
- 32.9 Ted Harman stressed that although the proposal had taken place last year, the policy should not have changed half way during the year.
- 32.10 Stewart Gover agreed with Ted. The matter had been discussed at the four Area Panels and been voted on at the City Assembly. The matter should now be presented to all four Area Panels for formal ratification.
- 32.11 At this point the Chair suggested that it would be helpful if the tenants could get together and put all these concerns onto one or two pages of A4.
- 32.12 Beverley Weaver stated that she had been a tenant for 10 years. There had been an election every year. At the City Assembly she had voted for elections every two years. She had not expected this to take place this November.
- 32.13 Chris Kift stressed that no-one was trying to stop the elections. They were being postponed for a three month period to enable an Innovation Group to be set up. He stressed that it was essential to encourage new people to participate in the tenants' movement.
- 32.14 The Chair stated that tenants were concerned that people were leaving the tenant movement and that there was a need for new people to become involved. There was no hidden agenda. Rumours could circulate which led to misunderstanding. She encouraged tenants to talk to the administration if they had concerns.
- 32.15 The Chair thanked Councillor Mears for presenting her letter.
- 32.16 **RESOLVED** – That the letter be noted.

### **33. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

- 33.1 There were none.

### **34. HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

- 34.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place regarding the progress made in the delivery of the Housing Services Improvement Plan and proposals

for the next phase of the programme. The improvement programme was the way that the council managed and organised work to improve services.

- 34.2 The Senior Project Manager explained that Phase One of the programme was detailed in paragraph 3.3 of the report and had been successfully completed. There would be many opportunities for residents to be involved in Phase 2 of the programme.
- 34.3 Chris Kift spoke about improvements in St James's House. The block now had a Resident Liaison Officer and an on site manager. All workmen had high visibility jackets. There was a regular newsletter and coffee mornings were organised. Everyone knew when major works would take place. Mears Ltd were getting things right.
- 34.4 Councillor Mears was please to note the key priorities set out in 3.6, which she felt followed on from the work of the previous administration. Councillor Mears had some concern at the range of projects set out in paragraph 3.7. She stressed that not everyone had access to the internet and that it was necessary to engage with all tenants in the city. With regard to the Accommodation Strategy, Councillor Mears made the point that should some of the housing offices close, it would then be necessary to be clear with tenants where they could communicate with officers. She asked if it was known how many staff would be leaving. Meanwhile Councillor Mears was concerned that the number of apprenticeships was not being achieved. It was set in the contract to look for 200 apprenticeships. There were currently 25. A clear plan needed to be brought back to HMCC.
- 34.5 The Chair thanked Councillor Mears and stated that the administration were actively encouraging apprenticeships. She asked the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion to answer the question about staff.
- 34.6 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied to explain that it was too early to tell how many staff were leaving. There was a voluntary severance scheme in progress. There would be no impact in terms of front line services. The aim was to improve services and access for tenants.
- 34.7 Councillor Randall thanked Councillor Mears for raising the matter of internet access. This matter would not be forgotten. It was a matter of concern and it would be followed up. Meanwhile, there would be apprenticeships and training through the partnership with Mears Ltd and Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes. Councillor Randall also wished to see apprenticeships extended to businesses in the city such as firms of lawyers and architects.
- 34.8 Councillor Randall stated that in future there would be more hubs in buildings such as libraries and officers would spend more time on estates rather than in offices.
- 34.9 Ted Harman made the point that although tenants were getting on well with officers on the group, there were still issues with shoddy work. Workers were letting companies and the council down. He was not happy with a door which he had fitted on Friday. He had lodged a complaint.

34.10 The Chair replied that she would be holding regular meetings with Mears Ltd and she would raise this matter. Meanwhile she made a formal proposal to add a further bullet point to 3.7 of the report, with regard to apprenticeships, learning and skills as follows:

- Provision of Apprenticeship and Training through the city partnership with Mears Ltd and Brighton and Hove Seaside Homes.

34.11 Councillor Farrow expressed concern about residents' involvement. Less than 40% of his residents had access to social media. There was a need to work with different residents. With regard to carbon reduction, he was all in favour of solar panels but noted that there were plans to fit panels in a further 1,600 properties. He asked what happened to other tenants who did not have access to cheaper electricity. That was an equality issue.

34.12 The Chair replied that solar panels and cheaper electricity would be discussed on item 39. of the agenda.

34.13 Stewart Gover referred to paragraphs 3.6, tackling inequality and 3.7 residents' involvement. Urgent section 20 work needed to be carried out and there were a whole group of residents who received massive bills.

34.14 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the progress made in Phase 1 and the preparations for Phase 2 of the Improvement Programme be noted.

(2) That the following bullet point be added to paragraph 3.7 of the report.

- Provision of Apprenticeship and Training through the city partnership with Mears Ltd and Brighton and Hove Seaside Homes.

## 35. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

35.1 The Committee considered a report of Strategic Director Place which concluded the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group's (TCMG) current round of work on the Resident Involvement Strategy and presented the revised and recommended document.

35.2 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement thanked the Tenants' Compact Monitoring Group and the wider tenant movement and participation officers for the production of the strategy. A shorter summary would be available once the strategy was endorsed. The strategy would be a live document.

35.3 The Committee received a presentation from members of the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group.

35.4 Ann Ewings spoke about Objective 1 (Provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in their housing). She stressed the importance of communication by such methods as posters and more modern methods such as Facebook, Twitter, and texting. Meanwhile in order to help more tenants to become involved in the tenants' movement it was necessary to gain their confidence and help them develop skills. The Resource Centre provided training and guidance. Ann stated that tenant only meetings were very effective and there was a need to publicise the City Assembly better.

- 35.5 Muriel Briault explained that in her area, it was necessary to have social items in a newsletter in order to engage interest. Therefore newsletters had recipes, poetry and pet stories. More serious matters could also be added. It was important to be approachable when communicating with tenants.
- 35.6 Muriel went on to present objective 2 (Develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities with residents). Tenants wanted to concentrate on locally based issues. There was a need to get more residents to put their views forward. When tenants had decided on their priorities these should be carried out. For example, tenants wanted to make sure that what they requested from the Estate Development Budget could be done. They wanted more help before bids went in. They wanted housing officers to visit people more regularly.
- 35.7 Where areas did not have an association, tenants wanted to be able to represent them so they were not left out. Tenants wanted more staff presence at local meetings and activities. There needed to be better co-ordination between different working groups.
- 35.8 Muriel stated that her wish was to get more leaseholders involved. Those that were involved wanted to make a difference in their local area. Issues in Muriel's area of Portslade included grass cutting on banks, anti social behaviour, play areas for the children and bus shelters. Muriel stressed that people in Portslade felt left out. They wanted more information about the Housing Centre, and how it could help people in Portslade. They hoped the strategy would change that by involving all the areas equally.
- 35.9 Linda Shaw presented Objective 3 (Involving residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services).
- 35.10 Linda explained that she had been involved in the tenants' movement for about 20 years. In order to get more involvement tenants and leaseholders needed to feel that consultation was genuine and not just a paper exercise. Whilst looking for new people it was necessary to keep hold of people already involved. Involving residents in the direct testing of services encouraged the maintenance of a constant level of performance.
- 35.11 Linda stressed that there needed to be a clear process for enquiries or complaints, and involvement in all aspects of budget setting. People with a financial background might want to get involved. They would need training but could be of great help. There needed to be a code of conduct that encouraged mutual respect. For example the Leaseholders Action Group had moved from confrontation to collaboration with positive results. It was important to provide more choice over the services delivered and to compare performance with other Local Authorities.
- 35.12 It was recognised that some people might be excluded from the consultation process due to language and culture. The dynamics of the estates was changing and there was a need to engage with BME residents. Tenants wanted to be more creative about how they engaged. Questions to ask were how to get more people to use the online services and social media. The more information was shared about consultation and resident involvement the more the process had credibility.

- 35.13 The Chair stated that comparing performance with other local authorities and involving tenants in all aspects of budget setting was key.
- 35.14 Faith Matyszak presented Objective 4 (Involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising performance in delivering housing services). Faith stressed that one of the issues tenants and leaseholders would like was a scrutiny panel. Tenants wanted new people sitting with more experience representatives to scrutinise work, and training to enable tenants to have the skills to scrutinise and judge performance.
- 35.15 Tenants wanted to decide on the information collected and to be able to collate their own information. They wanted to decide what to present to other tenants and leaseholders, and to present their work to the city.
- 35.16 In addition to work already carried out tenants wished to develop how performance reports were monitored, and decide how annual reports were presented. They wanted a link with the regulators' website so they were able to compare standards of achievement and compare the city with other organisations of a similar size.
- 35.17 Faith stated that in her personal experience some elderly people struggled with reading English and other languages. There needed to be a way of telling everyone what tenants were doing. For example a pictorial page in news letters.
- 35.18 Faith suggested encouraging more young people to become involved by utilising the computer. There could be a game in which young people could be asked to design a solution to housing and environmental issues and to discuss issues such as fly tipping, anti social behaviour and their neighbourhood. Faith suggested running a competition about housing by young people. A prize could be given to the winner and a donation to their club or charity.
- 35.19 The Chair thanked Ann, Muriel, Linda and Faith for their presentations. She thought the suggestion of developing a game for young people was an innovative and brilliant idea. Schools and youth clubs could have a competition to come up with an idea for a game. Faith stressed that young people needed to be encouraged.
- 35.20 Stewart Gover mentioned a visit he had made to the Crew Club. He had been very impressed and had never seen a club like it.
- 35.21 Ted Harman thought the report was good and thanked everyone for taking part.
- 35.22 Tom Whiting thanked the Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement and everyone who presented the report.
- 35.23 The Chair also thanked the Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement and the tenants who had worked on the report.
- 35.24 Councillor Randall stated that the report demonstrated that tenants were a valuable resource. There was a need for better communications and a need to include ethnic monitoring. He too thanked officers and residents involved in presenting the report.

35.25 **RESOLVED** - That the Resident Involvement Strategy be endorsed.

### 36. ESTABLISHING A TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL

- 36.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which described how, and why, a tenant scrutiny panel was being developed as a requirement for registered social landlords and outlined the proposed model and timetable for introducing it to Brighton & Hove.
- 36.2 The report followed the development of the Resident Involvement Strategy and outlined proposals for involving tenants and leaseholders in the further development and implementation of the scrutiny arrangements. Paragraph 3.10 of the report set out how tenant scrutiny could operate in Brighton & Hove. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion stated that a further report would be brought to the HMCC early next year.
- 36.3 Councillor Mears made the point that scrutiny panels scrutinised decisions that had already been taken. She supported any tenant involvement in housing but was concerned that the report did not say if the HMCC or Area Panels would continue. With the HMCC and the Area Panels tenants had the opportunity to have their say before decisions were taken. She wanted assurance that HMCC and Area Panels would continue.
- 36.4 The Chair replied that HMCC and the Area Panels would remain. In addition, there could be involvement at scrutiny level. There was no intention of watering down the current mechanism of tenant involvement.
- 36.5 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that scrutiny could take place both before and after decisions were made.
- 36.6 Councillor Mears stated she would be reassured if the minute stated that there would be no watering down or change in the structure tenants set up. She considered that it would have been helpful to have this set out in the report.
- 36.7 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 3.7, third bullet point (power to effect change). He considered this to be ultra vires. It was not for any councillor or committee to abdicate legal responsibility. This was not legally correct.
- 36.8 Tom Whiting suggested that the sentence should be changed to “power to *recommend* change”.
- 36.9 The Head of Housing & Social Inclusion accepted Councillor Peltzer Dunn’s comments. He had been quoting the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). He accepted Tom’s suggestion was more appropriate for a local authority.
- 36.10 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 4.2 and asked when the innovation group would be established. The Chair replied that the process was commencing in September 2011. The intention was to take this matter to the Area Panels in September and October.



- 36.11 Stewart Gover was pleased that the scrutiny process had been re-introduced. An important consideration would be who convened the Panel and how it was convened.
- 36.12 **RESOLVED** - the progress made towards establishing a tenant scrutiny panel, and the timetable for involving tenants in its further development, be noted.

**37. CUSTOMER ACCESS PHASE 3 - CUSTOMER SERVICE & ACCESS STRATEGY FOR HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- 37.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which updated members on the review of customer access arrangements for the Housing Management Service and presented the Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service and Access Strategy for consideration.
- 37.2 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement presented the report and asked members to comment upon the Customer Service and Access Strategy that was presented with the report as Phase 3 of the Customer Access Review.
- 37.3 Chris Kift stated that he had looked at the hub in Bartholomew House. He had found it easy to access and it was comfortable, welcoming and very cheerful. However, he had noted that there were a lot of empty spaces and people waiting to be seen by a member of staff.
- 37.4 Councillor Robins referred to recommendation (3) in relation to Victoria Road Housing Office. He asked what was meant by "best future use". The Head of Housing & Social Inclusion replied that a decision had been made at Cabinet in March 2011, under the previous administration, to market the Victoria Road Housing Office. The proposal was to re-locate the office to the newly refurbished Portslade Town Hall which was just across the car park. Staff were looking to work with residents to ensure a smooth transition to the new hub.
- 37.5 Councillor Robins stressed that this proposal would involve taking away car park spaces. He stated that there was no bus route to the office and he asked how residents could be expected to get to the office if there was no car parking.
- 37.6 The Head of Housing & Social Inclusion stated that he could not comment about the car park but accepted that Councillor Robins had made an important point. Many residents to the west of the city wanted face to face access in other areas of the city as well as Portslade. There were plans to allow these residents additional access to an office in the Hangleton & Knoll area.
- 37.7 Chris Kift made the point that not everyone had cars. There was no car parking at Lavender Street or Oxford Street. He had been able to get to the Portslade office recently. If he had been able to get there in a wheelchair, then most people would be able to get there.
- 37.8 The Chair shared Councillor Robin's concerns. The office was not on a bus route.

- 37.9 Tina Urquhart expressed concern about access to the office without a car. She had not heard about the proposal before.
- 37.10 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that the decision to market the property had been taken in March 2011. It might be a long time before the property was marketed. The report was flagging it up. The council wanted to involve tenants on refurbishment to Portslade Town Hall.
- 37.11 Councillor Mears expressed concern with the emphasis on social media in the report. She felt that the council should ensure that it communicated with residents who could not, or did not want to access the internet.
- 37.12 David Murtagh referred to the free paper sent out with the Brighton & Hove Leader. He stressed that the Leader was not delivered to certain areas of the city. However, he reported that communication with council officers had improved in Moulsecoomb.
- 37.13 Trish Barnard questioned how the proposals could be communicated to people who did not speak English. The Chair replied that the council were aware of this issue and did have access to interpreters.
- 37.14 Councillor Mears referred to the proposed move of the Manor Place Housing Office. The office was currently in a level area in the lower part of Whitehawk. She was concerned that moving the office to Whitehawk Library could cause problems. The twitten leading to the library was icy in winter and elderly people would find have difficulty accessing the office.
- 37.15 The Chair explained that she had held discussions with the bus company regarding the possibility of getting a bus re-directed to the library. She was also talking to the Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement regarding access. The aim was to find solutions to these issues.
- 37.16 Beverley Weaver stated that she was very concerned about the proposal for the Portslade office. She asked if the service would be the same after the move. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reaffirmed that issues regarding the move would be addressed. Meanwhile, the strategy would provide more time for officers to spend on the estates.
- 37.17 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the section of the strategy titled "Optimising existing channels". The figures quoted underlined the need for balanced change. It would be helpful to have a more detailed report to a future meeting.
- 37.18 Barry Kent referred to table 1, "Transaction costs for different channels." He asked how officers could put a value on communication. The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement explained that the table was not just about cost. The idea was to show that the cost of dealing with customers face to face was high. If the internet was used it would save money and officers could use the reserve to help people who needed face to face contact.
- 37.19 Councillor Pidgeon made the point that although the needs of disabled people had been discussed, he had not heard any discussion about the needs of totally blind people. He

questioned how many blind people would want to walk through a library to get to the housing centre.

- 37.20 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement stated that officers had thought about residents with a range of disabilities. She mentioned that BrowseAloud was used by people who were blind/short sighted. The technology allowed print on the screen to talk back to users.
- 37.21 Councillor Pidgeon made the point that most people went blind between the ages of 65-70. He considered that they were too old to use a computer.
- 37.22 Jean Davis mentioned that Beryl Snelling would love to come to the meetings of HMCC, but was unable to attend as there were no wheelchairs in Hove Town Hall. The Chair stated that this matter would be investigated. She felt that it should be considered in relation to the council's equalities policy. She thanked Jean for raising this matter.
- 37.23 Councillor Jarrett raised the issue of elderly people and the use of computers. He reported that Age Concern had run pilots regarding the use of computers. There had been a significant uptake, and this needed encouragement. There was a wide range of related technology used by people with sensory and visual impairments.
- 37.24 Councillor Pidgeon explained that he had had to deal with a blind person for 44 years. He stressed that not all people could cope with the technology. The Chair thanked Councillor Pidgeon for raising this issue and suggested meeting with him to discuss the issue further.
- 37.25 Chris Kift mentioned that he used to be an IT tutor. One of his students was 86 years old. He had gained basic qualifications. Another student was a war veteran who had lost his eyes. He had got on well and had received a Braille certificate.
- 37.26 The Chair thanked Chris but stressed that Councillor Pidgeon's point was that not everyone could use the internet.
- 37.27 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the Customer Service and Access Strategy be approved.
- (2) That members' comments on the strategy be noted, and that it be further noted that key areas for action within the strategy include:
- (a) 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.
- (b) Consultations with staff on staffing structure to support proposed new customer access arrangements and service improvement.
- (c) 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.

**38. ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

- 38.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which asked members to consider a review of the Allocations Policy including consultation with the city. A further report would then be brought back to HMCC and the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting with final proposals, following the consultation.
- 38.2 The current Housing Register Allocations Policy was implemented in early May 2011. Under the new policy, Care leavers were not automatically awarded priority for housing, but were assessed for housing depending on their housing need in the same way as other applicants are assessed. The Children & Young People's Trust, care leavers and their representatives had raised concerns over the new approach and, in the view of the Council's significant responsibilities as Corporate Parent, this report proposed a further review of the Allocations Policy.
- 38.3 In undertaking the review, officers wanted to use the opportunity to consult on the anticipated changes to allocations following the Localism Bill.
- 38.4 Councillor Mears stated that the Children and Young People's Trust had a duty of care to care leavers. She considered that the proposal of taking care leavers out of CYPT and into the housing allocation to be a budget shift. There was a funding issue that needed to be addressed. Tenants needed assurance and needed to be aware of the budget configuration. Councillor Mears stated that there were no financial implications detailed in the report. The report did not state what would happen to the CYPT budget. Tenants needed to totally understand what was being proposed.
- 38.5 The Lead Commissioner Housing explained that when the full consultation document was released it would include all relevant information, including financial information. Councillor Mears replied that that information should have been supplied for today's meeting.
- 38.6 Councillor Randall stressed that the current report was asking for an in principle recommendation. He hoped that the proposals would show the success rate of young people who had tenancies. The responsibility for young people would be maintained.
- 38.7 Stewart Gover considered that the Committee had no right to make any recommendations today. There was not sufficient information as to what was ring fenced and what was not ring fenced. There was no information about budgets. He commented that the reasons people were put into care could vary and that some had been involved in anti-social behaviour.
- 38.8 The Chair stated that she had worked with children who had left care, and most were very pleasant individuals who needed a chance in life.
- 38.9 Ted Harman agreed with Stewart Gover and Councillor Mears. The Committee had not heard the full facts or figures.
- 38.10 Councillor Randall stated that there were 483 children in care in the City. 43 were under the age of 1 year due to their parents being involved in substance misuse. A great number of these children came from the city's estates. The council had a duty of care.

He noted the concerns raised but stressed that a report would come back to the HMCC with all the facts and figures and recommendations.

- 38.11 The Lead Commissioner Housing stressed that the report in front of members was saying that there would be a 12 week consultation process. It was asking members to be involved in that process. During that period, members would be given a host of information. No decision would be taken today; it was simply the start of the process.
- 38.12 Councillor Mears considered it was insulting to bring a flimsy report to the HMCC. There could have been a more detailed report for consultation. Children in care, came under the responsibility of the CYPT. There was still a need to see the funding implications on the CYPT.
- 38.13 Tom Whiting suggested changing recommendation 2.1 to add “for final approval” at the end. Chris Kift concurred. After a discussion over wording it was agreed to change the recommendation to “That the HMCC consider and commend for approval to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting the undertaking of a Review of the current Allocation Policy. Following the review, proposals would be brought back to HMCC and Housing CMM for final approval”.
- 38.14 The Lead Commissioner Housing stated that there would be a 12 week consultation process. A detailed report would come back to HMCC for discussion before being submitted to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting.
- 38.15 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the undertaking of a Review of the current Allocation Policy be commended for approval to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting. Following the Review, proposals will be brought back to HMCC and Housing CMM for final approval.

**Note:** Councillor Mears asked for her name to be recorded as not agreeing to the above recommendation, as she was not happy with the process.

### **39. HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT OPTIONS - INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS TO COUNCIL OWNED HOMES**

- 39.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which reported that the Council had the opportunity to install solar PV panels onto its Council-owned residential properties. This had arisen out the Government’s Feed-in-Tariff incentive scheme. Housing Commissioning had been working with tenants, the procured Energy Managing Partner (Climate Energy) and other local authority partners to investigate and maximise home energy efficiency investment options for tenants and residents from Feed-in Tariffs (FITs). The recommendations in the report were agreed by Cabinet on 22 September 2011.
- 39.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn pointed out that there were a number of instances where there was a mix of tenants and leaseholders in a block. He asked if paragraph 1.3, bullet point 5 (allow some Council tenants to lower their fuel bills) was open to all residents of blocks. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing replied that it was the intention to share the benefit throughout the block.

- 39.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 7.2 of the report “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”. He considered that all tenants living in a block should benefit and that there was a lack of equality in this statement. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development and Private Sector Housing replied that there could be a mechanism to distribute the money more widely across the city.
- 39.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if all residents within these properties would benefit from cheaper electricity. The Lead Commissioner Housing replied that the feed in tariffs were split into two. Panels on a roof provided cheaper rates. Meanwhile, the Government guaranteed a further amount of money to the local authority to invest in the scheme. Everyone who lived in the block would get an equal share of the benefit. A discussion was taking place with the company to see if the pooled amount could be recycled and targeted to people in greatest need.
- 39.5 Councillor Robins asked if solar panels were tried and tested, and maintenance free. The Chair confirmed that it was tried and tested technology. The Lead Commissioner Housing explained that the solar panels were not maintenance free, but the government was guaranteeing the funding over 25 years. The scheme was underwritten by the government. It was an opportunity to tackle fuel poverty, especially amongst the most deprived estates and families.
- 39.6 Councillor Jarrett informed the Committee that the technology was about 50 years old. Technology was evolving and maintenance was low. Cleaning might be an issue but the panels would create a significant amount of electricity. There would be a slight degradation after 15 years. It was very stable, very reliable technology which should give long, ongoing benefit to residents.
- 39.7 Chris Kift believed that there was a need to start work on this project. Solar Panels placed on St James’s House would generate electricity all day, due to the position of the block.
- 39.8 Councillor Mears stated that she was pleased to see the administration carry on an initiative started by her administration. She was concerned at paragraph 3.2 in relation to overcladding projects. She was disappointed to see Essex Place removed from the list which she considered was a backward step.
- 39.9 **RESOLVED** - (1) That it is noted that Cabinet on the 22 September agreed the following recommendations.
- (a) 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) 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.

- (3) 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.
- (4) 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.

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

- 40.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion which set out the first quarter (April to June) performance report for Housing & Social Inclusion for the financial year 2011-2012. It adopted a new format for presenting information more clearly than before, and also reported on the service pledge commitments agreed for service areas.
- 40.2 The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement presented the report and highlighted some of the achievements.
- 40.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn welcomed the new way of reporting. He referred to paragraph 3.1.1 in the report. The % of rechargeable repair debt collected was 4.52%. However the target was 20%. He asked why this figure was so poor. The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement explained that debt arose when some residents moved out of properties leaving damage and unauthorised works. Officers were trying to put different measures in place to stop people who had caused damage from moving out of properties. The money was difficult to collect from people on housing benefits. Officers were trying to stop the damage happening in the first place. Meanwhile, it was stressed that the figures were for the first quarter and officers were working hard to prevent a build up of debt.
- 40.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn accepted the explanation and suggested that the figure should say "not year end".
- 40.5 Councillor Mears remarked that she could not see any reference to asbestos removal. She also noted that the report did not have detail about rent collection across the city.
- 40.6 The Chair confirmed that asbestos removal would be added to the next performance report.
- 40.7 Stewart Gover reported that performance had been discussed at a meeting with Mears Ltd this morning (26/9/11). The only matter that he argued about was the satisfaction rate. A 95% satisfaction rate was recorded from a response of 25%. It could be said that 70% were not satisfied. He had asked for this matter to be sorted out.
- 40.8 Ted Harman referred to tenant satisfaction with repairs in paragraph 3.3.0 of the report. He stressed that not all tenants were satisfied. The report did not state how many

people were surveyed. The same applied to percentage of repairs completed right first time.

40.9 The Chair suggested that raw figures should be put in an appendix in the future.

40.10 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the report and the above comments be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.27pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of



# HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 50

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7 November 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Housing and Social Inclusion</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Becky Purnell</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3022</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>becky.purnell@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing requires that social housing providers have a Neighbourhood Policy in relation their housing. The Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy (Appendix 1) relates to Brighton and Hove City Council's (the council) housing and its estates.  
<http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.19794>
- 1.2 This is an umbrella policy that brings together our policies, procedures relating to neighbourhood and estates management, local area cooperation, and anti- social behaviour. Policies, procedures and Equalities Impact Assessments and service pledges in relation to this are listed in Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the policy.
- 1.3 The aim of the policy is to create a safe, secure and well maintained environment, to develop sustainable and independent communities, and to ensure consistent and fair treatment of council housing residents.
- 1.4 This mission statement was developed by the Estates Services Monitoring Group. 'We recognise that all our housing areas are diverse and that no one size fits all. To ensure that we improve our services we will listen to residents' views to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.'

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the contents of the policy and relevant policies and procedures are noted members recommend that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Inclusion agrees the proposed Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy (Appendix 1)

### **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS**

- 3.1 The Tenants Services Authority introduced the current regulatory framework in 2010. We require a Neighbourhood Policy in order to meet the Neighbourhood and Community Standard; the aim of the standard is to encourage housing providers to contribute to the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.
- 3.2 To be agreed concurrently and sitting under this policy are the Grounds Maintenance and Adverse Weather Policies.
- 3.3 The council will work with residents to consider the best use of the communal room and spaces owned by Housing and develop policies including a use of Community Rooms Policy.
- 3.4 The council are currently running a Bulk Waste Project to look at how the council will reduce fly tipping in our Neighbourhoods and encourage recycling. This will be the subject of a future report to HMCC.
- 3.5 Local Management Agreements are a voluntary option for tenancy management as council tenants require our permission to do this. They are arrangements that give tenants and residents control over a limited range of services. The value of any contract has to be below the EU procurement limit, currently around £156,000.
- 3.6 This policy fits in with Housing and Social Inclusion's key objectives of tenancy, neighbourhood and community and resident involvement and empowerment.
- 3.7 This policy also contributes to the Housing Strategy's vision of *enabling healthy homes, healthy lives and a healthy city that reduces inequality and offers independence, choice and a high quality of life.*
- 3.8 It recognises the *Tenant Participation Compact* agreed with residents that gives tenants a range of options about how they can shape, influence and monitor housing matters and local decisions which affect them.
- 3.9 This work is part of the Housing Commission Framework and the Performance Compact for Housing & Social Inclusion agreed with the Lead Commissioner Housing (activity outcome 'Neighbourhood & Community').
- 3.10 While the policy relates only to the council's housing and its estates historically council housing has engaged with a range of neighbourhood forums with a focus on regeneration, renewal and community safety and this policy recognises the importance of partnership working to develop sustainable and independent communities and reiterates our commitment to this work.

### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The mission statement within the policy was written and agreed by the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

- 4.2 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.
- 4.3 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from front line managers during September 2011. The support for community clear up days was endorsed.
- 4.4 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the General Management Team on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011.
- 4.5 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

**5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs of drawing up this policy have been met within current budget resources within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). One objective of the policy is ‘ to ensure that Brighton & Hove City Council (the council) maintains and improves the common areas around its housing stock to increase satisfaction and enable residents to take pride in the environment where they live’. Any plans to improve common areas will be included in the Capital Programme or the Revenue Budget as appropriate

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*Date: 18/10/11*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Section 193 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 empowers the regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) to set standards as to the financial management, the nature, extent and quality of accommodation and facilities provided in connection with social housing. In pursuance of that power the TSA has set 6 standards, including a Neighbourhood and Community Standard which states that “registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.” The TSA can take enforcement action where a provider fails to meet a standard under section 193. The proposed Neighbourhood Policy will demonstrate that the Council is properly addressing the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Name Liz Woodley*

*Date: 19/10/11*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 All of the policies which sit beneath the Neighbourhood Policy are subject to Equality Impact Assessments. Housing and Social Inclusion has already undertaken various Equality Impact Assessments for existing policies (see Appendix 4 of the policy).

Reviews of the policy (Appendix 1) will be undertaken in consultation with the Estates Services Monitoring Group.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Housing is one of the key objectives in the council's sustainability strategy that 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.

Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will improve the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.

Key to this is the commitment to provide opportunities and encourage residents to become involved with caring for their neighbourhoods, for example by getting involved with estate inspections or training in and delivering the Rate Your Estate programme.

The Council have developed the service pledges *Getting Involved, Looking After Your Home, Looking After Your Neighbourhood, Dealing With Anti Social Behaviour, Managing Your Tenancy, Living in Sheltered Housing, Council Leaseholders and Garages and Car Parks* through consultation with residents about what is important to them; these are monitored and reported.

The commitment to partnership working with residents, other council departments, and external agencies enable a coordinated approach to problem solving that will provide value for money for residents, and the city.

This policy reinforces Housing and Social Inclusions' commitment to the council's Environmental Policy.

A core principle of the neighbourhood policy and the policies and procedures that sit beneath it is to have a preventative approach, be it with tree maintenance or anti social behaviour; early intervention improves the service we give our customers and saves money.

Another key principle is the commitment to promote activities that have a minimal impact on the environment, for example minimising the use of pesticides with a view to eradicating them, the use of environmentally friendly chemicals that are not tested on animals as far as practicably possible; promoting recycling; and promoting growing projects.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 This policy will reinforce Housing and Social Inclusion's commitment to reminding tenants and leaseholders of their Tenancy and Occupancy Agreements.

An improved physical environment is known to improve community safety and reduce the fear of crime.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The policy development in this area was undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

The opportunities for improved partnership working will increase knowledge of local issues, avoid duplication, and provide better value for money.

#### Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will help to prevent ill health by improving the environment where our residents live, and increasing opportunities for residents to influence and have choice about services in the neighbourhoods where they live.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 This policy contributes to the council priorities of promoting enterprise and learning, reducing crime and improving safety, improving health and well-being, strengthening communities and involving people, improving housing and affordability, and living within environmental limits and enhancing the environment- these are being reviewed at Full Council in October.

This policy also contributes to the 2020 Community Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Relevant corporate strategies and policies are outlined in Appendix 1 of the policy.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement of the regulator to have a neighbourhood policy.

- 6.2 If the council did not have a neighbourhood policy the quality of our neighbourhood and estates management could decline leading to the deterioration of the quality of our stock, an increase in anti social behaviour, reduced opportunities for residents to monitor the quality of our services, and reduced opportunities for residents to improve the quality of their lives. There would also be a risk that our partnership working on this agenda could decline.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 A neighbourhood policy is required under the regulatory requirements and this provides Housing and Social inclusion with an opportunity to highlight our commitment to developing sustainable communities and improving the environment, and to bring together our policies and procedures together into one place.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendix:**

1. Draft Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy

## **APPENDIX ONE: DRAFT COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**



### **Brighton & Hove City Council**

#### **HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES**

#### **DRAFT COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (VERSION 7)**

##### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This policy sets out the framework and measures we have developed to ensure effective and responsive estate and neighbourhood management in relation to Brighton and Hove City Council's (the council) housing and its estates.
- 1.2. We recognise that we need to do more than just improve the physical condition of our properties to bring about lasting, sustainable improvements to local communities.
- 1.3. This policy has been developed jointly by members of the Housing Cabinet Member, the Housing Management Consultative Committee, the Estates Services Monitoring Group and staff.
- 1.4. This mission statement was developed by the Estates Services Monitoring Group. 'We recognise that all our housing areas are diverse and that no one size fits all. To ensure that we improve our services we will listen to residents' views to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.'

##### **2. Aims and Objectives**

- 2.2 To ensure that the council maintains and improves the common areas on housing land around its housing stock to increase satisfaction and enable residents to take pride in the environment where they live.
- 2.3 To ensure that a structured and uniform approach to agreed neighbourhood and community standards is used to ensure the consistent and fair treatment of all residents.
- 2.4 To work in partnership with residents and other agencies to develop sustainable and independent communities and to create a safe, secure and well maintained environment. This is about the physical environment and support and advice offered to residents.
- 2.5 To ensure that estate and neighbourhood management services provide value for money and are planned, adequately resourced, effectively controlled, budgeted and resourced.

- 2.6 To ensure that our customers are involved in developing, monitoring and reviewing our estates and neighbourhood management services.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all the common areas of homes and estates owned or managed by the council.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all the tenancies and leases managed by the council.

### **4. Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance**

- 4.1 We will ensure that the estates are managed in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation including the following
- Tenancy Agreement
  - Tenant Handbook
  - Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
  - Regulatory Framework for Social Housing

### **5. Developing Sustainable Communities**

- 5.1 We recognise that estate and neighbourhood management has to be tackled in partnership because no single agency can tackle such wide ranging issues and we are committed to developing effective partnership working.
- 5.2 We work with the police, social services, health services and community and voluntary organisations to improve the quality of life of residents.
- 5.3 We will work with residents and partners to support the improvement of neighbourhoods by having an active role in various neighbourhood forums.
- 5.4 We are committed to developing the skills and knowledge of residents and residents groups to increase community involvement in the management of our estates and the number of community led projects and to increase opportunities for residents to improve their skills.
- 5.5 We will work with residents to ensure that our communal facilities are used for optimal community benefit, are places where people want to be, are safe, accessible and meet legal requirements.
- 5.6 We recognise that all our work has effects on the environment and we are committed to reducing our environmental impact wherever possible by promoting energy efficiency, biodiversity, waste prevention, recycling and environmental awareness to staff and residents.

### **6. Estates Management**

- 6.1 We ensure that the communal areas of our properties and estates are clean and safe through Housing and Social Inclusion's policies and procedures (see Appendices 2 and 3).



- 6.2 We monitor the performance of estates based services and report this to the Estates Services Monitoring Group, the Partnership Group, the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group, and the Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- 6.3 We will display the cleaning standards in each block where we clean communal areas.
- 6.4 Residents will be able to chose what degree they get involved in monitoring and developing services on our estates though making a report, completing surveys, attending estates inspections, tenant and resident meetings, and taking part in our resident involvement framework.
- 6.5 We will encourage, train and support interested residents to take part in the “Rate Your Estate” programme.
- 6.6 We will provide support and training and help identify funding to residents groups who want to lead a project to improve the estate such as a community clear up day or a community gardening project.
- 6.7 Residents are able to prioritise spending on improvements to communal areas through the Estates Development Budget.
- 6.8 We will provide positive support and training to resident groups who want to explore setting up a Local Management Agreement.
- 6.9 We reprioritise work on our estates according to the adverse weather policy.

## **7. Enforcement of Tenancy Conditions**

- 7.1 We will encourage residents to help keep estates and communal areas clean, safe and well maintained by reminding them of their responsibilities when they sign their tenancy agreement, in the Tenant Handbook, newsletters, estate visits and on the website, and where necessary taking action to enforce the terms of their tenancy and leaseholder agreements.

## **8. Resources**

The effective delivery of this Policy is dependant upon

- 8.1 Good quality design and construction of developments.
- 8.2 A responsive and effective reactive repairs service.
- 8.3 Planned Maintenance Programme including provision for cyclical and major repairs.
- 8.4 Regular inspections by staff to quickly identify issues and take appropriate and preventative or remedial action.
- 8.5 The effective provision of ground maintenance services.

- 8.6 The effective provision of communal cleaning services.
- 8.7 Tenants' and leaseholders adherence to their tenancy and occupancy agreements.
- 8.8 The council will closely monitor the impact and quality of the services it provides, either directly or through agents, including the use of surveys and other means to record resident satisfaction.
- 8.9 Residents also have a key role to play in helping the council to monitor the provision of services and copies of service specifications will be made available to residents on request.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

- 9.1 We will monitor and review this policy in conjunction with residents to ensure its effectiveness and relevance to the council's stated aims and objectives.
- 9.2 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion has overall responsibility for the on-going monitoring of the policy through the work of frontline staff, particularly those engaged in resident involvement directly. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Strategic Director of Place.
- 9.3 In implementing this policy staff will refer to corporate strategies and policies and Housing and Social Inclusion policies and procedures and service pledges outlined in Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. These are subject to their own review processes.

## **APPENDIX 1: Corporate Strategies and Policies**

- 1.1 Complaints Policy
- 1.2 Community Engagement Framework
- 1.3 Environmental Policy
- 1.4 Equalities and Inclusion Policy
- 1.5 Data Protection
- 1.6 Health and Safety
- 1.7 Housing Strategy
- 1.8 Safeguarding Children and Adults Policies and Procedures
- 1.9 Social Enterprise Strategy
- 1.10 Social Inclusion Strategy
- 1.11 Sustainable Community Strategy
- 1.12 Reducing Inequalities Review
- 1.13 State of the City Report 2011

## **APPENDIX 2: Housing and Social Inclusion Policies**

- 2.1 Adverse Weather - to be agreed with this policy
- 2.2 Allocations
- 2.3 Estates Inspection
- 2.4 Empty Homes Management
- 2.5 Grounds Maintenance - to be agreed with this policy

- 2.6 Recharges
- 2.7 Repairs and Maintenance
- 2.8 Rent and Service Charges
- 2.9 Tenancy and Occupancy Agreements
- 2.10 Use of Community Assets- to be developed
- 2.11 Tenant Participation Compact

### **APPENDIX 3: Housing and Social Inclusion Procedures**

A range of Housing and Social Inclusion procedures support this Policy document to ensure a consistent and effective approach to service delivery. These include:

- 3.1 Abandoned Vehicles
- 3.2 Access to and Sale of HRA land
- 3.3 Animals and Animal Welfare
- 3.4 Anti-Social Behaviour
- 3.5 Demoted Tenancies
- 3.6 Estates Development Budget
- 3.7 Estates Inspections
- 3.8 Estates Monitoring
- 3.9 Fire Safety
- 3.10 Garages and Car Parking Spaces
- 3.11 Garden Standards
- 3.12 Grounds Maintenance and Trees
- 3.13 Hard standings or Driveways
- 3.14 Improvement Works to Council Manages Properties
- 3.15 Information Exchange for Improving Crime and Disorder
- 3.16 Parking on HRA land
- 3.17 Play Areas
- 3.18 Property Inspections
- 3.19 Racist Incidents and Racial Harassment
- 3.20 Repairs and Maintenance
- 3.21 Tenant Meeting Room Facilities
- 3.22 Storage of Mobility Scooters – to be developed

### **APPENDIX 4: Relevant Equality Impact Assessments**

- 4.1 ASB
- 4.2 Estate Inspections
- 4.3 Estates Service
- 4.4 Grounds Maintenance
- 4.5 Housing Management Customer Access Review
- 4.6 Housing Management Service Improvement Plan
- 4.7 Housing Repairs, Refurbishment and Improvement Strategic Partnership
- 4.8 HRA Budget
- 4.9 Laundry Facilities
- 4.10 Mobility Scooters
- 4.11 Mystery Shopping
- 4.12 Resident Involvement
- 4.13 Revised Tenancy Agreement
- 4.14 Right to Buy and Leasehold Team
- 4.15 Sheltered

- 4.16 Tenancy Management Tenant Handbook
- 4.17 Tenant Services Authority Work Programme

### **APPENDIX 5: Council Housing Service Pledges**

Please note that these service pledges were developed with our customers to ensure that our services meet local needs. These will be reviewed on a regular basis. Full details of the service pledges are available on our website.

- 5.1 Getting Involved
- 5.2 Looking After Your Home
- 5.3 Looking After Your Neighbourhood
- 5.4 Dealing With Anti Social Behaviour
- 5.5 Managing Your Tenancy
- 5.6 Living in Sheltered Housing
- 5.7 Council Leaseholders
- 5.8 Garages and Car Parks

**Policy Review Date:** .....

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

- 1. None

### **Background Documents**

- 1. None

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 51

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Grounds Maintenance Review</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7 November 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director of Place</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Graham Page</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 293354
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Graham.page@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Forward Plan No: HSG 14247</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Social Housing Regulatory Framework has set National Standards for Social Landlords to have policies that outline how neighbourhoods will be looked after. The Grounds Maintenance Policy is one of a range of policies that will sit beneath the Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- 1.2 The new Corporate Plan has set priorities around reducing inequality, creating sustainable communities and increasing community empowerment. These are central themes of the Grounds Maintenance Policy.
- 1.3 The report sets out the key service improvements that have come out of the Grounds Maintenance review following partnership working with residents.
- 1.4 The Grounds Maintenance Policy (appendix 1) has been developed using the key themes that residents raised in the pilot areas about how the grounds maintenance service should be delivered. This policy is one of a range of Neighbourhood Policies which set out how Housing and Social Inclusion seeks to work with residents to look after our housing estates and land which are the responsibility of the Housing Revenue Account
- 1.5 We have reviewed 250 housing sites with City Parks and recalculated the Bill of Quantities. This has enabled us to ensure that residents will be paying for the service that they receive. There will be a slight decrease in the overall cost of around £10000.
- 1.6 It is also proposed that the Health and Safety Maintenance of Trees is included within the Bill of Quantities and relevant service charges and recharges are made to residents rather than the current situation where these are paid for from the wider Housing Revenue Account and thus subsidised by residents who do not have trees.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- .2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee members support the Grounds Maintenance Policy which has been developed by the Estate Services Monitoring Group (ESMG) and recommend that the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees to the new policy.
- 2.2 That members support a rolling programme of site by site grounds maintenance reviews and recommend its approval by the Cabinet member for Housing.
- 2.3 That HMCC Members support the continuation of current arrangements with City Parks for grounds maintenance services and recommend to the Cabinet Member for Housing the continuation of these arrangements.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 Five pilot areas were identified across the City which were all very different to reflect the diversity of our housing sites. These pilots were used to explore what improvements residents wanted to see from the service
- 3.2 Due to the complexity and numbers of residents involved in the pilot areas, the areas were split into phases. Phase 1 was completed in October 2010, and phase 2 in November 2010 with phase 3 completed in December 2010. The five pilot locations were;

Wickhurst Rise Maisonettes	Mile Oak Portslade	West Area	Phase 1
Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge	Upper Hollingdean Road	North Area	Phase 1
Fitch Drive, Ryelands Drive and Thorndean Road	Bevendean and Bates Estate	East Area	Phase 2
Elwyn Jones Court (sheltered scheme)	Carden Avenue Patcham	North Area	Phase 2
Essex Street, Hampshire Court and Wiltshire House	Eastern Road area	Central Area	Phase 3

- 3.3 Residents in the pilot areas were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire that presented a 'menu of services' (appendix 2). The group were keen to include questions on food growing and increasing biodiversity and conservation. Residents were given feedback on the pilot outcomes and the opportunity to attend resident forums' and put questions to officers
- 3.4 Walkabouts were undertaken allowing the opportunity for residents to scrutinise the standards of the grounds maintenance. On some sites, officers have

acknowledged that the standards needed to be improved and an action plan was agreed and put in place. On other occasions, resident's expectations were found to exceed what should be achieved under the service contract.

- 3.5 All pilots were evaluated but it proved difficult to establish any real consensus among residents about the grounds maintenance service. Residents had varying views of the grounds maintenance service depending on their experience of the service they received and what their expectations were.

Pilot Area	Issue identified by Tenants	Proposed Solutions
Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge	Low satisfaction with shrub bed maintenance, shrubs have died	Residents encouraged to make bids through EDB when replanting is required
	Sycamores undermining boundary wall	Felled for Health & Safety reasons
	Residents interested in promoting wildlife and conservation	Trees pruned by arboriculture team, wildlife area set up in wooded area within the grounds (with support from Sussex Wildlife Trust)
Wickhurst Rise	Grounds reasonably looked after, but trees and shrubs lacked interest	Resident EDB bid for raised beds for vegetable growing and fruit trees on grass bank
	Dog fouling a problem	Local event in Sept 2011 with Animal Welfare Officer to raise awareness
Bates Estate	Shrub beds below standard. Housing site plans out of date	Revised site plans produced
Fitch Drive	Difficult to maintain due to steep banks	Community Payback Team cleared area of rubbish and fly tipping with the support of the estates service  City Parks side flailed the bank of brambles from the car park, leaving the top part for wildlife  Maintaining steep bank remains difficult for health and safety reasons
Elwyn Jones Court	Resident dissatisfaction with planting	Community Payback team cleared site and City Parks replanted with flowering plants  Sussex Wildlife Trust gave advice to residents on planting and attracting butterflies and other wildlife

		Improvement marked by Garden Party in July 2011, opened by the Chief Executive
Hampshire Court	Successful community gardening club that has won 'City in Bloom' competition in previous years. Confusion over which beds are maintained by residents and which by the council	Resolved through meeting with Chair of resident association
	ESMG and residents on the pilot areas want the Council to consider wildlife and biodiversity when planting wildflowers and shrub planting is suitable for wildlife	Grounds Maintenance Service pledge established

### Project outcomes that will shape service improvements

3.6 The 250 site paper plans were checked by Housing and City Parks staff and 75 were found to have discrepancies. These particular sites were re-measured and the Bill of Quantities adjusted to calculate the revised cost of the grounds maintenance service. The adjustments also ensure that residents will not be charged for areas that they are maintaining themselves. They have now been put on an electronic database which can more easily be updated. This means that we can review the way each site is maintained with residents and make changes to the Bill of Quantities and service charges accordingly. We are hoping to make this system available on the website so that residents can see what to expect in relation to the maintenance of their communal areas.

3.7 We have produced a revised specification for the grounds maintenance service developed with City Parks using pilot locations to test and cost out the service improvements.

As a result of the review the following service improvements have been implemented:

- Staff in Housing and City Parks have received additional training for example in Tree assessment and Shrub Maintenance.
- Formal joint working arrangements between Housing Estates Service and City Parks has improved. An example of this is the extension of litter picks carried out by the Estates service to include shrub beds and car parking areas.
- Following trials with City Parks and Estate Services we have established that we only need to spray once on most sites in order to control weeds on hard surfaces. This treatment is followed some weeks later by Estate Services staff who remove dead weeds and sweep away the soil from hard surfaces. This is an informal arrangement at present which we



intend to formalise with a programmed schedule of works. Housing Officers will be briefed so that a reactive spray only occurs if necessary.

- Consideration is being given to using the Highways department weed spraying vehicles to treat our garage and car parking sites. Further work is required on the maintenance of car parks and garages sites and this will be the subject of a future report.
- Active involvement of residents in promoting wildlife and conservation is being supported. Residents have responded positively by engaging with Sussex Wildlife Trust through the Access to Nature Project Officer.

- 3.8 The possibility of giving tenants greater control of certain grounds maintenance tasks (such as grass cutting) is being piloted with Wellington Road Estate. Work is taking place with Health & Safety and Insurance teams to ensure risk assessments, training and insurance cover is in place. If residents agree to the proposal, this will be piloted and will form the template for a Local Management Agreement. This could be extended to other areas if residents show an interest.
- 3.9 The Project has provided an excellent example of joint working between different Council Departments, residents, Community Payback and the Voluntary Sector to provide a Value for Money service that residents want. Under the direction of the Chair of the Bristol Estate, the Community Payback Team have been involved in painting public ways, marking steps, painting handrails and cutting back bushes that has improved the appearance and feel of the estate

### **Maintenance of trees on housing sites**

- 3.10 The maintenance of trees on Housing Sites is not currently included in the grounds maintenance bill of quantities. City Parks Arboriculture team manage health & safety tree work. Last year, housing staff were given training to enable them to identify potential health and safety problems with trees and working with residents identified a number of long term tree problems which have now been addressed. The budget for tree maintenance was £21,260 for 2011-12 but has been increased to £40,920 for this year only to allow for these extra tree works.
- 3.11 Currently tree maintenance for communal areas and for individual gardens is paid from the HRA and is therefore being subsidised by residents who do not have trees in their gardens or communal areas. A fairer way of covering this cost might be for the costs to be included in the grounds maintenance service charge for communal areas and to be directly recharged to council tenants who have trees in their private gardens.
- 3.12 Any new planting or maintenance of trees that is not health and safety related will continue to need to be funded through the Estates Development Budget
- 3.13 The grounds maintenance services for housing land are currently provided by the Council's in-house service, City Parks, under a service level agreement. The arrangements have worked well and the Service Level Agreements are designed to deliver value for money, including improvements in the quality of service through reviews of the type set out in this report. It is therefore recommended that the current arrangements continue in place.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Resident involvement has been crucial in reviewing the Grounds Maintenance Service which was last looked at in 2004 as part of the wider citywide contract.
- 4.2 The review was undertaken and the policy developed in partnership with Estate Services Monitoring Group, Housing and Social Inclusion and City Parks. Collectively we explored residents concerns and identified what are the core issues with the service.
- 4.3 Initially, the Estate Services Monitoring Group focused on the three key aspects of the Social Housing Regulatory Framework National Standards, namely;
- Emphasis on outcomes- what are resident's priorities for the grounds maintenance service
  - Initial assessment of strengths and weakness of the service
  - Score the service and identify parts of the service and geographical areas which should be prioritised for improvement
- 4.4 The group initially developed a Grounds Maintenance Action Plan to explore residents concerns, identify the core issues and consider recommendations. This included setting up 5 pilot areas

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The changes to budgets for grounds maintenance and tree maintenance to reflect the new bill of quantities will be included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget report which will report in February 2012. The estimated budget savings as a result of the changes outlined in this report are £7,000,

As a result of the changes to the detailed bill of quantities and an inflationary increase, new service charges for grounds maintenance will be calculated and applied from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012. Any changes will be included within the (HRA) Budget report as mentioned above. At this time a weekly charge for tree maintenance (for trees on communal land) will be added to the charge if agreed by this committee. The grounds maintenance service charges currently range from 4p per week to £2.45. Without the effects of inflation, most charges will stay the same or reduce slightly as a result of the changes outlined in this report. Any individual increases to charges will be due to increased levels of service receivable, agreed by residents.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*Date: 17/10/11*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The proposals in this report are consistent with legal requirements and within the powers of the Cabinet Member for Housing under the Council's constitution. There are no adverse Human Rights implications arising from the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis Date: 25.11.2011*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An EIA has been completed and is (appendix 3) to the report. Key outcomes were to achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service delivers where they live. Being more responsive to resident requirements and letting them know what they are getting from the service. Elwyn Jones Court is an example where landscaping was not suitable for residents and flowerbeds were replanted with the plants they wanted.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 ESGM members were keen for residents to be given the opportunity to consider increasing bio diversity and food growing on housing land. Although food growing has not been something that residents have shown an interest in on the pilot sites, residents have shown keen interest in increasing bio diversity. On a number of sites schemes have been introduced, such as conservation areas and wildflower planting facilitated by Sussex Wildlife Trust engaging with Community Groups. Recognised the value of scrub for wildlife and altered shrub bed maintenance to reflect this.

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 It is well documented that the real and perceived safety and well being of residents is improved when the area where they live is looked after. This reduces fly tipping, vandalism and criminal damage. Encouraging residents to participate in grounds maintenance empowers them to take an interest and make improvements. Related services are more integrated on our estates so the council can respond to what residents want.

### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Opportunity for good partnership working across council departments with the voluntary sector and residents being involved. The review has provided a good opportunity to pilot a Local Management Agreement. Risks have been reduced by having more up to date electronic mapping and specification that can be easily monitored and adapted. A major step in managing trees to decrease the risk has been taken. Not able to have all trees inspected, but a basic level of training has been given to officers and some residents to identify those trees that pose a potential risk. Taken the opportunity to add value by supporting residents and facilitating them to make changes to their estate for the better.

### Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Promoting opportunities for residents to get involved in gardening or growing their own food. Promoting opportunities for community working which can reduce social isolation. Ensuring areas are well maintained reduces the risk of vermin and associated risks. Only a few housing sites on the pilot area were affected by fly tipping. Some sites that had problems have been solved, but on others made people aware so that it can be dealt with by the agencies concerned. The introduction of quarterly estate inspections, cleaning teams on sites with blocks of flats and officers being out on the estate has helped to identify and tackle problem areas.

### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Revised grounds maintenance specification will provide a more consistent service across the city. The proposals clearly links to priorities in the Corporate Plan to tackle inequalities by involving residents, communities and voluntary groups in everything we do i.e. growing projects. Make Brighton & Hove Britain's greenest City by using sustainable products and methodology to improve the biodiversity of our neighbourhoods. Engage with residents and be more transparent about the service by providing choices and by recognising that 'one size does not fit all'

## **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The Project officer is a member of the HouseMark Performance Improvement and some preliminary investigations have been undertaken to benchmark grounds maintenance service against other local authorities. However, this is proving difficult as authorities do not provide, measure or cost services consistently. As we have developed close links with Crawley BC by reciprocating resident inspections of our estates we will utilise this opportunity to look at benchmarking our grounds maintenance and estate service against theirs
- 6.2 Residents to take over the management of all Grounds Maintenance on housing sites. Residents have not expressed interest so far. Local Management Agreement is piloting this approach. Could be considered for the future if resident want this.
- 6.3 Contracting out to another organisation. Residents have not expressed an interest in this option, but could in the future. The advantages of keeping it 'in house' are the economies of scale, consistency and continuity of service across council owned land. City Parks as a whole has been subject to its own tendering process.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The arrangements for City Parks to maintain housing land is working well and as a result of this review officers are satisfied that this option provides the best Value for Money for residents and the council.

- 7.2 An ongoing programme of grounds maintenance review allows residents to be involved in decisions about their local environment and the extent to which they want to be involved or pay a service charge for this service to be provided.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Grounds Maintenance Policy
2. Grounds Maintenance Questionnaire
3. Equalities Impact Assessment

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. Decent Homes, Decent Spaces
2. Cleaner, Safer Greener Communities agenda
3. Bill of Quantities and Specification



## Appendix 1



### **Brighton & Hove City Council**

#### HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

#### **COUNCIL HOUSING - GROUNDS MAINTENANCE POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Social Housing Regulatory Framework has set National Standards for Social Landlords to have policies that outline how neighbourhoods will be looked after. The Grounds Maintenance Policy is one of a range of policies that will sit beneath the Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- 1.2 The Grounds Maintenance Policy has been developed using the key themes that residents raised in the pilot areas about how the grounds maintenance service should be delivered. This policy is one of a range of Neighbourhood Policies which set out how Housing and Social Inclusion seeks to work with residents to look after our housing estates and land which is the responsibility of the Housing Revenue Account
- 1.3 Grounds Maintenance Contract is undertaken by CityParks on Housing Land. The contract includes basic maintenance of grass, shrubs and hedges. Alterations to the grounds of housing sites are made in consultation with Housing Officers and residents. Addition of new features or replanting of beds is separately funded by housing or residents.
- 1.4 In some situations partners or residents are able to enhance the service provided. By improving joint working with our key partners we have been able to facilitate improvements to housing sites. Our partners include Sussex Wildlife Trust, Community Payback Team and Harvest. Although residents chose not to use Harvest in the pilots they are available to give support to residents interested in growing their own food.
- 1.5 The Ground Maintenance Policy has been developed in line with Tenant Services Authority guidelines. Resident involvement has been crucial in the development of this policy.
- 1.6 Council officers including staff from CityParks, CityClean, Estate Services and Tenancy Management staff will all work together to provide a suitable environment for residents to live in.

### **2. Grounds Maintenance Service**

- 2.1 Resident Involvement  
Through a rolling programme we aim to consult residents on the grounds maintenance service they receive. We have done this successfully on five pilot housing areas across the City. The level of resident interest will vary and where there is clear consensus of what residents' want we will aim to provide this where practicably possible
- 2.2 Service Charges  
We will ensure that services charges reflect the service that residents actually receive. Neighbourhood teams are responsible for ensuring that any changes to Housing site plans are recorded on the electronic database. The information will be provided to residents in an

easily understandable format so they can understand what they are paying for. We aim to make this information available to all residents via our website as soon as is practicably possible

### 2.3 Flexibility

We will endeavour to be as flexible and responsive as possible and work with residents to resolve any issues or concerns. As far as possible we will facilitate residents who wish to maintain their own grounds but only where a full consultation has been carried out with all residents potentially affected.

### 2.4 Diversity

We recognise that our estates are diverse and that no 'one size fits all'. To ensure we improve our services we will listen to residents to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.

### 2.5 Environmental & Sustainability

The Grounds Maintenance Service will minimise any adverse environmental effects. The environmental effect of removing shrubs or scrub areas will always be considered along side other factors, prior to an agreement to remove them. It is recognised that scrub banks are good for wildlife and need to be preserved to encourage bio-diversity for wildlife. We will encourage residents to give added environmental value to where they live. And will either directly assist them or put them in contact with partner organisations.

We will minimise the use of pesticides and encourage organic methods of gardening as far as is practicably possible.

### 2.6 Service Standards

We aim to make it clear what grounds maintenance service each site will receive and who to contact to report problems. This could be achieved in two ways by having the Housing Officer as the point of contact and providing residents with more information about the grounds maintenance service where they live. The Neighbourhood Policy document will encompass grounds maintenance and highlight any significant standard failings.

### 2.7 Health & Safety

Operative working on site will work within to Health & Safety procedures to ensure the well being of residents and operatives alike. Some sites have steep banks and gradients that cannot be maintained due to health & safety considerations.

### 2.8 Economic

Housing aim to provide a value for money service through better integration with CityParks and Estate Service Teams. If residents want to spend more money and give 'additionality' to an area where they live we will work with partners to meet that local need.

### 2.9 Bio-sphere

The grounds maintenance service will adopt a 'green approach' to make Brighton & Hove the 'greenest city in Britain'. Conservation and wildflower planting will be encouraged where it occurs naturally, such as on chalky banks

### 2.10 Food Growing projects

Where residents wish to participate in a food growing project we will aim to facilitate this. Although interest among residents for food growing projects is limited at the moment, we will continue highlight this as an option for residents to work with our food growing partners.



### **3. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

- 3.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Housing when consulting and reviewing grounds maintenance services.
- 3.2 The council is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty. The council will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Equalities Legislation and Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom we work, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

### **4. This Policy should be read in conjunction with**

- Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- Housing and Social Inclusion Business Continuity Plans
- Equality Impact Assessment

### **5. Reviews**

- 5.1 The Business Improvement Manager Tenancy Management will review the policy every three years (from the date of approval) to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulation that impacts on the obligations of the council, changes to council business practices or in the light of management system audits.

### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 This policy has been subject to an EIA screening and was carried out by the Projects Officer who reviewed the Grounds Maintenance Service. This is to achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service is and where they want it to be to meet their aspirations. Further data will be collected upon implementation of this policy, and a further screening will take place after twelve months of operation.





# Grounds Maintenance Service Standards Phase Three

**Phase three applies to Essex Street flats, Hampshire Court and Wiltshire House**

Where you live has been chosen as one of our 'pilot areas' on our Housing estates to look at the quality of the grounds maintenance service we provide.

This is your opportunity to tell us about the current service and how the service could be improved.

**Please read the instruction for each question before answering.**

**Please leave blank any questions that you do not wish to answer or do not have an answer for.**

## Grounds Maintenance Survey 3

### Location

**Where do you live?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Essex Street flats .....

Hampshire Court .....

Wiltshire House .....

### One

**1. Overall how satisfied are you with the service?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Very Satisfied .....

Satisfied .....

Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied .....

Dissatisfied .....

Very Dissatisfied .....

**2. How would you rate this service out of 10?**

*(please tick one answer)*

1 ....  2 ....  3 ....  4 ....  5 ....  6 ....  7 ....  8 ....  9 ....  10 ....

**3. What could we do to make it a ten?**

## Two

### 4. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of the Grounds Maintenance service?

(please tick one answer for each question)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<b>The standard of grass cutting.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to shrub bed and flowerbeds.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to paths, car parking spaces and garage areas.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to trees.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to steep bank maintenance.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to litter.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 5. Are you able to gain access to the communal garden areas?

(please tick one answer)

Yes .....  No .....  Don't have one .....

**If you have a communal garden what do you use the area for?**

### 6. Do you know how much you pay for the grounds maintenance service?

(please tick one answer)

Yes .....  No .....

**7. Are you satisfied the service charge you pay towards grounds maintenance represents good value for money?**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Very Satisfied .....
- Satisfied .....
- Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied .....
- Dissatisfied .....
- Very Dissatisfied .....

**Three**

**8. Which of the following "enhanced services" listed below would you be interested in receiving in the future?**

*(please tick one answer for each question)*

	Yes	No	Possibly
<b>Boxed mown grassed area</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Raised flower beds</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Vegetable garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Herb garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Sensory garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Ornamental garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Composting area</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. Do you want the communal grounds to encourage wildlife and be better for conservation?**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Yes .....  No .....  Don't Know .....

**Any comments?**

**10. Would you like to become involved in the grounds maintenance service standards pilot?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....  Don't Know .....

**If so, what would you like to do?**

**11. Would you like to be a trained assessor to work with us to monitor the standard of the communal gardening and cleaning services?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....  Don't Know .....

**Would you like more information?**

Yes, I would like more information .....

**12. How would you prefer to receive information about the grounds maintenance service? (please tick all that apply)**

*(please tick all that apply)*

E-mail .....

Telephone .....

Letter .....

Website .....

Text .....

Private Meeting .....

I don't want to receive this information .....

**13. Would you be happy for us to contact you to discuss any points you have raised in the questionnaire?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....

**Please provide preferred contact details:**

**Monitoring Information**

The City Council provides a wide range of services that affect the daily lives of The city's service users. We are determined to make Council services responsive to the needs of all members of our community.

This means we must take account of the different needs and requirements of people from a variety of backgrounds. We want to make sure that Council policies and practices do not directly or indirectly discriminate against people on the basis of colour, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief or disability.

In order to turn these commitments into action we must have accurate information on the composition of our service. Therefore, may we have your consent to collect this information from you?

The records collected will be kept confidential and will only be used to enable the Council to monitor the delivery of its services.

Thank you for your cooperation.

**Gender:**

*(please tick one answer)*

Male .....  Female .....

**Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....



**What age are you?**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Under 18 .....
- 18-24 .....
- 25-34 .....
- 35-44 .....
- 45-54 .....
- 55-64 .....
- 65-74 .....
- 75+ .....

**I would describe my ethnic origin as:**

*(please tick one answer)*

- White - British .....
- White - Irish .....
- White - Gypsy .....
- White - Traveller .....
- White - Polish .....
- White - Portuguese .....
- White - Other Background .....
- Mixed - White & Black - Caribbean .....
- Mixed - White & Black - African .....
- Mixed - White & Asian .....
- Mixed - Asian & Black - Caribbean .....
- Mixed - Asian & Black - African .....
- Mixed - Other Background .....
- Asian or Asian British - Indian .....
- Asian or Asian British - Pakistani .....
- Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi .....
- Asian or Asian British - Other Background .....
- Black or Black British - Caribbean .....
- Black or Black British - African .....
- Black or Black British - Sudanese .....
- Black or Black British - Other Background .....
- Chinese .....
- Turkish .....
- Arab .....
- Japanese .....
- Other Background .....
- Don't Know .....

**If there is an ethnic category that is not included here that you think should be, please tell us what it is:**

**Please select the option which best describes your sexual orientation**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Heterosexual .....
- Bisexual .....
- Gay .....
- Lesbian .....
- Other .....
- I do not wish to disclose this* .....

**If other, please state:**

**Please indicate your religion or belief**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Atheist .....
- Buddhist .....
- Christian .....
- Hindu .....
- Jain .....
- Jewish .....
- Muslim .....
- Pagan .....
- Sikh .....
- Other (please state below)* .....
- Other philosophical belief (please state below)* .....
- I have no particular faith* .....
- I do not wish to disclose this* .....

**Other, please state:**

**Other philosophical belief, please state:**

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long term limiting condition?**  
(please tick one answer)

Yes .....  No .....

**Please state the type of impairment which applies to you. People may have more than one type of impairment, in which case you may indicate more than one. If none of the categories apply, please mark 'other'.**  
(please tick all that apply)

Physical Impairment .....

Sensory Impairment .....

Mental Health Condition .....

Learning Disability/Difficulty .....

Long-standing illness .....

Other .....

**Other, please state:**

**Are you a carer?**

(please tick one answer)

Yes .....  No .....  I do not wish to disclose this ...

**If yes, do you care for...?**

*(please tick all that apply)*

*Parent* .....

*Child* .....

*Other family member* .....

*Partner / Spouse* .....

*Friend* .....

*Other* .....

**Other, please state:**



### Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment Publication Template: Grounds Maintenance

<b>Name of review:</b>	Grounds Maintenance (HM34)
<b>Period of review:</b>	January 2010 – April 2011
<b>Date review signed off by GMT:</b>	21 October 2010
<b>Scope of the review:</b>	<p>This review will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the level of services residents would like,</li> <li>• Benchmark with other housing providers and compare how other housing organisations provide their service and achieve value for money.</li> <li>• Prepare a specification for future service delivery of our grounds maintenance.</li> <li>• Make proposals for performance management which involve residents and work with City Parks to look at innovative ways of maintaining grounds.</li> </ul> <p>The paper 'Decent Homes, Decent Spaces' recognises that well designed, well managed green spaces within housing developments are crucial to contributing to people's quality of life and make neighbourhoods liveable. Similarly, the Cleaner/safer Greener Communities agenda is about providing quality spaces in which residents want to live.</p> <p>We aim to become a three star authority so must meet the requirements of KLOE 6 which asks 'are estate grounds and other communal areas kept clean, tidy and attractive by working closely with service users, other departments and external agencies?'</p> <p>Formal estate inspections were introduced following the Audit Commission inspection in 2005. Although in place now for a number of years and working well, the ESMG is taking this opportunity to develop the grounds maintenance and cleaning service by directly involving residents in setting standards and monitoring performance.</p> <p>We currently have an in-house contract for the provision of grounds maintenance by City Parks. This contract has been in place since 2004 but has not been revised since it was awarded to the in-house team.</p>

<p><b>Review team:</b></p>	<p>Graham Page &amp; Estates Service Monitoring Group (ESMG).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team has access to demographic data on its clients. LGBT Housing Strategy, BME Housing Strategy consultation and Older Persons Housing Strategy and consultations used.</li> <li>• Clients of Concern database</li> <li>• Equalities monitoring is carried out but not on a consistent basis. This is being addressed via tenancy visits over the next two years.</li> <li>• Results of selected residents' survey.</li> <li>• Estate Inspection quarterly data.</li> <li>• Estate Services inspection data.</li> <li>• Decent Homes, Decent Spaces – published by Neighbourhood Greens</li> <li>• Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities agenda</li> <li>• Leaseholder Satisfaction Surveys for 2007 &amp; 2010</li> <li>• Grounds Maintenance Report October 2008 presented to Housing Management GMT</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relevant data and research:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autumn 2008 – A group of staff were selected to identify the problems with the grounds maintenance service and identify solutions which formed the basis of the report that went to GMT in October 2008. The content of that report provides useful information for the ESGM to draw on when reviewing the current grounds maintenance service.</li> <li>• Leaseholder Satisfaction Surveys for 2007 &amp; 2010.</li> <li>• Local – ESGM and subsequent consultation with residents, councillors, stakeholders and Area Panels</li> <li>• Area Panels will receive regular updates and progress reports that will be shared with their residents</li> <li>• Residents will be consulted locally about the grounds maintenance service and any changes that may follow</li> <li>• Results from Grounds Maintenance inspections will be brought to quarterly steering group consisting of residents, councillors and officers to consider service concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultation:</b> indicate who was consulted and how they were consulted</p>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress reports on the Grounds Maintenance Review will be sent for consultation at Housing Management Consultative Committee. Decisions will be made by the Cabinet Member for Housing about any service improvements that are recommended in the reports.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment of impact, outcomes and key follow-up actions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service is and where they want it to be to meet their aspirations.</li> <li>Prepare specification for future delivery of our grounds maintenance service</li> <li>Publicise results on notice boards for all grounds maintenance inspections</li> <li>Equalities training/hate crime and DV awareness training for staff when specification revised</li> <li>Encourage residents outside of the tenant movement to get involved in monitoring the service by becoming a resident assessor.</li> <li>Establish 'pilot areas' across the city to explore and demonstrate what could be achieved by way of operating local standards agreed with residents in a particular location</li> </ul>
<p><b>Name and contact details of lead officer responsible for follow-up action:</b></p>	<p>Graham Page, Housing Manager, 293354</p>
<p><b>For full report contact:</b></p>	<p>Graham Page, Housing Manager, 293354</p>



# HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 52

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing &amp; Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7 November 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Housing and Social Inclusion</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Alan Smith</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 29-1072
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>alan.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1 SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing requires that social housing providers have a Neighbourhood Policy, the Adverse Weather Policy (Appendix 1) sits under the Neighbourhood Policy and contributes to the neighbourhood and community standards outlined in the policy, and the Annual Report To Council Tenants and Leaseholders.
- 1.2 The aim of the policy is to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Housing and Social Inclusion on housing land during severe weather conditions effecting employees, tenants, leaseholders contractors and members of the public. The document sets out the minimum standards of service which will be provided and defines the required responsibilities. This policy also forms a part of the corporate plan and sets out the provisions in the event of extreme weather.
- 1.3 The aim of the policy is to create a safe and well maintained environment, to develop sustainable and independent communities, and to ensure consistent and fair treatment of council housing residents
- 1.4 This policy has been developed to work in partnership with fellow department plans, including: The Corporate Service Winter Plan, Civil Contingency and Adult Social Care and Health Plans, all of which address the risk of adverse weather.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011 for publication and implementation.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 How we deal with adverse weather and in particular snow and ice has been raised at a number of residents' forums including Tenant and Residents' Associations, The Sheltered Housing Action Group and the Area Panels.

- 3.2 The council has developed a Highways Adverse Winter Service Plan in January 2010 in response to a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny and this policy and we are working in partnership with Highways to provide a complementary service on Housing land.
- 3.3 The policy recognises that severe weather can be defined as extreme conditions that may have a direct impact upon a person's health, safety and well being, and outlines the process for undertaking a risk assessment and action plan in such conditions
- 3.4 With residents and leaseholders an online map will be available on the Brighton and Hove City Council website with the location of grit bins and snow clearing equipment. The possible use of additional resource of estates services across the city; this involves staff time being reprioritised.
- 3.5 This policy outlines our commitment to providing the materials and resources to enable residents to participate in the care of their neighbourhoods in adverse weather.
- 3.6 As part of this review, a number of further service improvements have been identified. These include the need for improved planning, mobilisation and management of the estates service resource for the deployment in the event of adverse weather conditions.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011
- 4.2 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the General Management Team on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011.
- 4.3 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications:**

Costs associated with the publication and implementation of this policy will be met within existing Housing Revenue Account Budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant*

*Date: 12 October 2011*

##### **5.2 Legal Implications:**

The Occupiers Liability Act 1957 imposes upon the occupier of land a common law duty of care. The occupier must take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reasonable to see that a visitor will be reasonably safe in using the premises for the purposes for which he is invited or permitted by the occupier to be there. In the context of housing land, the Council is the occupier of the common parts of buildings and all housing owned land. The Adverse Weather Policy will assist the Council in discharging that duty.

*Legal Officer Consulted: Liz Woodley*

*Date: 19 October 2011*

### 5.3 Equalities Implications:

Housing and Social Inclusion has completed an Equality Impact Assessment relevant to the policy and attached for HMCC to view.

The consultation group for EIA for this policy is being agreed at GMT on 6<sup>th</sup> October

### 5.4 Sustainability Implications:

Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will improve the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.

This policy reinforces Housing and Social Inclusions' commitment to the council's Environmental Policy.

This policy will provide opportunities for residents to be involved in the care of their neighbourhoods and help develop more sustainable communities.

### 5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Potential for the theft of grit, this has the possibility to impact on our reaction in the event of cold weather conditions. Vandalism is also a potential criminal action which could also impact on our service level.

### 5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The policy development in this area was undertaken with due regard to the appropriate risk assessment requirement, a risk assessment is included as a supporting document.

We will endeavor to encourage staff and residents who are willing and able to work together to grit where this is safe to do so. This would facilitate the "Salt, Sweep & Shovel" initiative that the Highways department promotes.

The only risk at present that can be identified is the ability to reach bin locations to re-stock if conditions are extreme.

From lessons learned from past experience, we will try to, where practical and safe, carry out requests for assistance with access and regress problems, in all types of weather. This stance could potentially help maintain the local economy by enabling access to amenities.

In the event of severe snow and ice, the resource at hand could also impact on the cleaning service that the Estates department provide, staff would be asked to take on additional tasks dependable on the situation and conditions.

### 5.7 Public Health Implications:

There are strong links between improving housing and reducing health inequalities. The policy will reduce the isolation of our most vulnerable residents and improve well being in adverse weather conditions.

## 5.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

This policy contributes to the council priorities of improving safety, and improving health and council tenants and leaseholders. However it aims to compliment the City wide Winter Service Plan and Adult Social care and Health Plans which support vulnerable people in times of adverse well being .This policy applies to Management of Council Housing Land and support provided to tenants and leaseholders.

## 6. **EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 The consequences of no action could potentially have lasting repercussions with a particular focus on the vulnerable with the potential of isolation and risk to health and well being
- 6.2 We could explore further developing the partnership with the community payback service and request that they redirect their service during adverse weather.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

- 1. Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

- 1. Housing & Social Inclusion Neighbourhood Policy
- 2. Adverse Weather Risk Assessment 20113.
- 3. Equalities Impact Assessment (Upon completion for HMCC review)
- 4. Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan



## Brighton & Hove City Council

### HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

#### COUNCIL HOUSING ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Estates Services during severe weather conditions affecting employees, tenants, contractors and members of the public. The document sets out the minimum standards of service which will be provided and defines the required responsibilities.

1.2 It is the responsibility of the council to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage on or around an entrance to a block of flats is not endangered by snow or ice. However, in some circumstances, dependent upon the risk to staff or residents the organisation may incorporate public areas within this policy.

1.3 For the purpose of this policy, severe weather can be defined as extreme conditions that may have a direct impact upon a person's health, safety and well being.

## 2. The extent of 'duty of care'

2.1 This will depend upon a number of factors, including the type of property and the people likely to be affected, e.g. much greater care would be required around a sheltered scheme where tenants may be more unsteady on their feet and where they would be expected to use the common areas. Key matters to be considered include

- The high risk areas
- When action is to be taken (preventative and reactive)

2.3 Whilst our duties are enshrined in law (statutory and common) it is important to note that our response will be proportionate and using sensible risk management – see relevant departmental risk assessments for guidance.

2.4 We will take an objective view of issues, such as where the responsibility for clearing snow, ice begins and ends, and how far we should go in terms of gritting and clearing. There is often no straightforward answer to these questions but the controls put in place will reflect the degree of risk identified.

2.5 This policy meets the council's following corporate objectives

- Promoting public, partnership and community engagement
- Delivering improved customer service
- Supporting the delivery of the City Outcomes/Priorities

### **3. Access and Communication**

3.1 The council is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone. We will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for us or use our services.

3.2 The organisation recognises the need to safely maintain services during adverse weather conditions, whilst properly discharging its duty of care to employees. We have a new and updated winter information map; this shows the locations of our Estates Service grit bins. This can be used in conjunction to the Highways winter information map. All this information can be found on the council's easy to navigate website.

### **4. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

4.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Estates Services during severe weather

4.2 The council is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favorably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty. The council will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Equalities Legislation and Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom we work, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

### **5. This Policy should be read in conjunction with**

- Corporate Policy for Staff on Adverse Weather
- The Health & Safety Policy
- The Estates Service Pledge
- Highways Winter Maintenance Service (available on BHCC website)
- Housing and Social Inclusion Business Continuity Plans
- Estates Service Adverse Weather Risk Assessment

### **6. Policy**

6.1 The council will carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of severe weather effects to help identify and prioritise risk areas. The risk assessment will include

- Areas that are most likely to be affected (e.g. walkways, building entrances, sloped areas etc.)
- Persons likely to be affected and how (our duty of care increases in areas likely to be used by elderly, children and other vulnerable persons)
- The risk factors and reasonable precautions. It is unreasonable to hold the council responsible for all weather conditions but certain hazards are foreseeable such as adverse weather forecast days in advance and autumn/winter months providing generally wetter/icier weather
- The process involved and the responsible persons for implementing the remedial works (i.e. gritting/clearing). The council will facilitate the services of the Neighborhood Response Team to carry out gritting services as per agreed specification. Every effort will be made to deliver the service in accordance with the specification at agreed locations. However, no guarantees of service can be given to residents if the adverse weather conditions present a high risk to employees or contractors.



6.2 In accordance with section 2 of this policy, the council will, so far as is reasonably practicable, maintain safe access to and from our premises. As such snow clearing and/or gritting will be carried out for the following premises

- Sheltered Schemes
- Housing Estates
- Housing Offices

6.3 Providing areas that are not common and where tenancy agreements make the tenant specifically responsible for outside areas within the boundary of their home, there is no duty for the council to clear them.

## **7. Extreme cold Snow and Ice**

7.1 We have 102 grit bins which are kept stocked with grit for use by residents and staff on housing owned land during periods of snow and ice. These are located at priority locations across the housing stock and an online map is available on the Brighton & Hove City Council website. Housing and Social Inclusion are not able to supply grit for use on public highways and any land which is not owned by housing. This includes public highways and the associated pavements.

7.2 Pavement clearance is a lengthy labour-intensive task by hand spreading, so operationally and practically this work requires a high level of resources. To help combat this issue all tenant and resident representatives have been supplied upon request with snow shovels to aid with clearance. Therefore the Duty Manager must decide on priorities and when the snow may be likely to clear naturally due to improved weather conditions. In heavy and continual snowfall, clearance may need to wait until it stops because all efforts would be immediately covered over again.

7.3 Grit bins will be kept locked in the summer months and unlocked during winter so that residents can access the grit easily during the winter. A guidance panel is fitted to each bin with all the relevant information that the user may require, for example, specific location, contact details for re-stocking and guidance for the use of the grit.

7.4 There is a limit to the number of grit bins we can supply as we are limited on the amount of grit we can store and the number of bins that we can realistically replenish.

7.5 Priority will be given at all times to areas of greatest risk, as identified by the risk assessment outlined in section 2. The council will adopt a preventative approach wherever possible. Using met office forecasts and information from our Civil Contingencies Department will enable us to grit when snow and ice is forecast.

7.6 We would generally regard the areas of greatest risk as being

- Geographically challenged buildings
- Sheltered Schemes
- Hilly Areas
- Areas where high densities of older people

7.7 In icy/snowy periods we will redirect Estates staff to gritting and restocking grit supplies. However it should be recognised that it will not be possible for housing staff to grit all areas of housing land due to staff numbers, the need to keep the rest of the service operational and because in times of snow and ice we may not be able to access all areas of the city. We will however try to maximise our capacity to grit as much housing land as possible by:

- Keeping grit supplies in cleaners store rooms in blocks of flats

- Arranging for staff to grit near to their home if they live near housing land that they are able to safely access
- Encourage staff and residents who are willing and able to work together to grit, where this is safe to do so. This would facilitate the “Salt, Sweep & Shovel” initiative that the Highways department promotes.
- Facilitate the Community Payback Team to grit

## **8. Taking Care of Vulnerable Residents**

8.1 Housing Management and Sheltered Service staff will try to proactively contact tenants known to be vulnerable in circumstances of extreme weather and check what assistance they need. This could include the provision of an electric heater if there is a heating breakdown, advising tenants to keep battery powered torches if there is an electrical failure, delivery of shopping in extreme situations, and the possible provision of temporary accommodation if a major problem was to occur.

## **9. Flooding**

9.1 The Environment Agency’s Flood Warning service aims to reduce risk to life, distress to people and damage to property caused by flooding by providing accurate, timely flood warnings. To provide this service in an area it must be technically feasible and the costs against the benefits must be justified.

9.2 The service is provided to residents within the floodplains of rivers, estuaries and coasts in England and Wales; to the media and partner organisations. Where the water levels in rivers rise rapidly due to heavy rain or melting snow, there may not be enough time to issue specific warnings. In these cases, a general warning will be issued to a large geographical area.

9.3 In the event of severe flooding we will assist with any emergency accommodation that is required. This would form part of the major incident contingency plan that housing has developed. The Estates Service will work with the Corporate Emergency Planning Unit to provide resources in line with the Corporate Major Incident Plans, along with associate council partnerships will endeavor to provide flood defences or clear up facilities in the event of this potential risk.

## **10. Extreme Heat**

10.1 A Heat-Health Watch system operates in England and Wales from 1 June to 15 September each year. During this time social and healthcare services will ensure that all awareness and background preparedness work is ongoing.

10.2 The Heat-Health Watch system comprises four levels of response based upon threshold maximum daytime and minimum night-time temperatures. These thresholds vary by region, but an average threshold temperature is 30 °C by day and 15 °C overnight.

10.3 The distribution of water if the water supply is disrupted and the local authority requires our assistance. We can also liaise on the tenant’s behalf with social care services and voluntary groups if they need additional help during this period with day to day activities. Every reasonable effort will be made to help out the local community within the resource at our disposal.

## **11. Sustainability**

11.1 All our grit is sourced as locally as possible. This can be affected by demand levels during cold conditions. We have learnt lessons from previous years and we are now forward planning and building up our stocks from late August to ensure the maximum level required, this also helps reduce the need for repeat deliveries and the impact of potential congestion on the local highway infrastructure in times of severe cold weather.

11.2 Insulating your home is often an easy job which is cost-effective and keeps your house warmer in the colder months. You might even be eligible for insulation grants and discounts. Better standards of Insulation of homes to improve heat retention, reduce fuel poverty and increase the health and wellbeing of residents.

## **12. Performances and Resident Involvement**

12.1 Following Extended Periods of Snow and Ice or other adverse weather the Estates Services Business Manager will review the performance of the Estates Service with Estates Services Monitoring Group to determine if the service is meeting the needs and aspirations of residents or if any improvements can be made. .

## **13. Reviews**

13.1 The Estates Services Business Manager will review the policy every three years (from the date of approval) to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulation that impacts on the obligations of the council, changes to council business practices or in the light of management system audits.

## **14. Equality Impact Assessment**

14.1 This policy has been subject to an EIA screening and carried out by the Estates Service Projects Manager. This is to help identify any adverse impact on the local communities. Further data will be collected upon implementation of this policy, and a further screening will take place after twelve months of operation.

