

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 30
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Housing Management Performance Report
Date of Meeting: 22 July 2008
Report of: Director of Adult Social Care & Housing
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Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report provides analysis of the performance of the Housing Management Division during 2007/08 and on general policy initiatives underway to improve performance within Housing Management.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting note the contents of this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1 There follows a series of reports on specific areas of performance.

3.1.1 Rent Collection and Current Arrears

- 3.1.2 This section of the report provides information pertaining to four statutory performance indicators relating to the collection of Housing Revenue Account rent. The four indicators are known as BVPI66a, BVPI66b, BVPI66c and BVPI66d respectively and concern:

- The proportion of rent collected during the year that was actually due (or charged) during the year.
- The percentage of tenants with more than 7 weeks rent arrears
- The percentage of tenants in arrears who have had a Notice of Seeking Possession Served on them during the year
- The percentage of tenants who have been evicted as a result of rent arrears

BVPI 66a. Proportion of rent arrears collected

BVPI 66a	
Brighton	97.75% (07/08)
All England – Top Quartile*	98.57%
All England – Bottom Quartile	97.07%
All England – Average	97.66%
Unitaries – Top Quartile	98.56%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	96.88%
Unitaries – Average	97.74%

* N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national reported figures from 2006/07. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is not published by the Audit Commission until autumn 2008.

- 3.1.3 This performance indicator relates to the proportion of rent collected as a percentage of the total rent due during the year. It does not take account of any cash collected to clear arrears from previous arrears or pre-payments taken to cover rent due in future years. This means that it is not possible for the result to exceed 100%.
- 3.1.4 The indicator result includes former tenancy arrears when a tenant moves during the year from one Housing Revenue Account property to another.
- 3.1.5 There are a number of examples where a tenant in arrears may transfer to another property. These include tenants who are relocated due to serious harassment or who are moved due to exceptional over-riding medical need. There are also circumstances where a new tenancy is granted at the same address, for example where a tenant succeeds the tenancy from a spouse or partner.
- 3.1.6 The results shown are the final results for 2007/08.
- 3.1.7 The graphs on pages 3-10 of the appendix show performance for the year. The monthly data for 2006/07 and 2007/08 is also shown as a comparator.

Neighbourhood	Performance 2006/07	Performance 2007/08	Difference Between 2006/07 and 2007/08
Brighton East	95.44%	97.07%	+1.63%
Central	97.30%	98.21%	+0.91%
North & East	97.27%	98.08%	+0.81%
West	96.19%	98.09%	+1.9%
Temporary Accommodation	93.06%	93.8008%	+0.74%
Citywide	96.44%	97.75%	+1.31%

- The table below shows what the percentages translate to in financial terms. Based on current performance it is forecast that the council will collect £36.18 million of the total collectable rent during the year that became due during the year.

Neighbourhood	Annual Rent Charged to Tenants (£)	Performance 2007/08	How much of the rent charged for the year that we collected (£)
Brighton East	12,536,060	97.08%	12,170,007
Central	7,554,072	98.21%	7,418,854
North & East	11,031,008	98.08%	10,819,213
West	7,487,056	98.09%	7,344,053
Temporary Accommodation	263,308	93.80%	245,087
Totals	38,871,504	97.75%	37,997,214

3.1.8 The figures above relate to rent collected from charges made through the year. It does not include any rent collected from arrears in previous years. The total amount collected was £39,349,984, which relates to an arrears reduction of £478,480 during 2007/08. Over the year the net total current tenant arrears has dropped from £1,384,155 to £905,675.

3.1.9. The housing Income Management Team has worked hard to achieve this result and have exceeded their target of 97.7%. All neighbourhood areas have improved on last years result demonstrating that after a period of settling into the role and resolving many long standing complex cases the team are obtaining the results that have been expected by tenants, leaseholders and members.

3.1.10 Although the performance for temporary accommodation is lower than other areas the significance of this is far less with arrears standing at £17,711 at year end. It also needs to be remembered that temporary accommodation staff have a high

turnover of residents and often only a very short period of time in which to deal with benefit claims and resolve arrears issues.

BVPI 66b. % of tenants with more than seven weeks arrears

BVPI 66b	
Brighton	7.85 (07/08)
All England – Top Quartile*	3.89%
All England – Bottom Quartile	7.69%
All England – Average	6.35%
Unitaries – Top Quartile	4.64%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	8.40%
Unitaries – Average	6.94%

* N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national reported figures from 2006/07. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is not published by the Audit Commission until autumn 2008.

- 3.1.11 This indicator shows the percentage of tenants with more than seven weeks' arrears. The indicator is an average over the year rather than a snap shot at anyone time i.e. the end of a month or quarter. This means that the figures shown are cumulative and we take weekly snapshots to calculate average to date.
- 3.1.12 For 2007/08 we have set a target of no more than 7.60% of tenants having more than seven weeks' arrears. In setting the target we have factored in the number of new tenancies each year, approximately 800, and the percentage of tenants who are in receipt of full and partial Housing Benefit. This is because a proportion of this debt will be as a result of Housing Benefit processing times and delays caused by some tenants not providing relevant information to allow their claim to be processed quickly.
- 3.1.13 At the year end performance stood at 7.85%, or an average of 954 debtors with arrears of more than 7 weeks.
- 3.1.14 Although it is disappointing the team were just off target members of this committee are asked to note that over the course of the year the number of debtors with more than seven weeks rent arrears dropped from 1068 to 852. This equates to a drop of 216 cases.

BVPI 66c. Tenants who have received a NOSP for rent arrears.

BVPI 66c	
Brighton	27.23% (07/08)
All England – Top Quartile*	16.55%
All England – Bottom Quartile	32.99%
All England – Average	26.46%
Unitaries – Top Quartile	17.01%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	33.35%
Unitaries – Average	25.36%

* N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national reported figures from 2006/07. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is not published by the Audit Commission until autumn 2008.

- 3.1.15 This indicator measures the percentage of local authority tenants who have had a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) served on them for rent arrears. A NOSP is the first stage in legal action against tenants and gives notice that unless a tenant takes steps to address their arrears or enter into an agreement with the council to repay the debt then the council may proceed to court action. A NOSP will not be served without attempts to speak with the customer. These efforts will then continue after the NOSP has been served and through all stages until the case reaches court, if indeed it does go that far. The government calls for the indicator to be calculated as a percentage of the average number of tenants in arrears throughout the year.
- 3.1.16 The government is very clear that local authorities must adopt a preventative approach to rent arrears. The aim of this indicator is to ensure local authorities are only using legal action and threats of legal action as a last resort. The government expect local authorities to review policies and procedures to ensure that preventative measures are in place so that Notices of Seeking Possession are kept to a minimum.
- 3.1.17 Although the government's intentions here are clear, many landlords see the serving of a NOSP as an effective tool to collecting rent arrears, as it gives an obvious message to debtors that we are serious about collecting debts. It does not follow that the serving of a NOSP will lead to court action. Within a well thought out and proactive rent arrears procedure the serving of a NOSP can actually reduce the number of tenants taken to court.
- 3.1.18 Brighton and Hove's arrears procedures are well laid out, and do not lead officers into inappropriate court action. It does not therefore seem appropriate or desirable to artificially influence this indicator by not serving NOSPs, potentially at the expense of the overall collection rate. It is instead anticipated that our proactive policy of early intervention/prevention work will stop debts escalating to the 6-7 week point at when a NOSP is usually served.

Part of the project plan for the next 6 months is to review our arrears processes with a view to further streamlining the process. This will include looking at the time we take to serve a NOSP. At present the protocol prior to serving a NOSP is as follows:

Week 2	First Arrears letter
Week 4	Second Arrears letter
Week 5	NOSP warning letter
Week 6/7	NOSP served

The tenant is contacted by phone throughout this process, and will not serve a NOSP without attempting a home visit, even if that only results in us leaving a calling card.

- 3.1.19 As the year progresses, an increasing number of NOSP's will be served although consideration is always given to individual cases. To support this sensitive but legally rigorous approach we have set an annual target that at the end of the year there should be no more than 15% of tenants who are in arrears with a Notice of Seeking Possession. At the end of 2007/08 the performance was 27.23% against a target of 15%.
- 3.1.20 This is a new performance indicator and at the time of writing benchmarking information is only available for 2006/07. Extrapolating that data we estimate that this result would place Brighton & Hove in the lower median quartile.
- 3.1.21 Brighton & Hove's target was set taking into account that we will normally serve a notice where arrears are at the 6 – 7 week level. This gives a very clear message to a tenant who has not engaged that we are serious about debt collection. It also protects the council's interests as we cannot proceed to court, (if we deem that necessary) until four weeks after a NOSP has been served. The target has also been set based on the figures for BVPI66b, which measures those with more than 7 weeks rent arrears. The objective is to do well at BVPI66a whilst keeping BVPI66c as low as possible.
- 3.1.22 It is disappointing that we are well outside our target, however, members of the committee are asked to recognise the achievement for BVPI66a, which is the actual income that feeds into the Housing Revenue Account. It is not considered sensible, given our collection rate to keep BVPI66c artificially low (i.e. by not serving NOSP's) at the expense of BVPI66a.

BVPI 66d. Tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears

BVPI 66d	
Brighton	0.17% (07/08)
All England – Top Quartile*	0.20%
All England – Bottom Quartile	0.49%
All England – Average	0.45%
Unitaries – Top Quartile	0.23%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	0.5%
Unitaries – Average	0.39%

* N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national reported figures from 2006/07. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is not published by the Audit Commission until autumn 2008.

3.1.23 This indicator measures the percentage of all tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears. The denominator in this calculation looks at the number of tenancies at the end of each quarter.

3.1.24 It has been agreed that we do not wish to evict more than 35 households as a result of rent arrears. During 2007/08 Brighton & Hove Council evicted 23 households for rent arrears.

3.2 Empty Property Turnaround Time

3.2.1 This section of the report provides performance information for the full financial year 2007/08, for BV212, the Best Value Performance Indicator for the letting of empty homes.

BV212 Average time taken to re-let local authority housing	
Brighton	31 (07/08)
All England – Top Quartile*	26
All England – Bottom Quartile	46
All England – Average	39
Unitaries – Top Quartile	39
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	45
Unitaries – Average	28

* N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national reported figures from 2006/07. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is not published by the Audit Commission until autumn 2008.

3.2.2 The full year turnaround time average for 2007/8 was 31 days, falling very slightly short of the annual target of 30 days, and an improvement on the

previous years average of 35 days. Please see Table 1. The team and repairs partnering contractors have been successful in recovering from high turnaround figures of 49 days in May last year to around 24 days on average for the last quarter of the year.

BV212 Average turnaround time in days - 2007/8

2007/8 Target – 30 days	Last Year	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	<u>Qtr 4</u>	Year end total
Average turnaround time	35	45	32	25	24	31
Lets within target	55%	30%	56%	74%	74%	60%

3.2.3 The table below demonstrates the difficulties experienced within the contract during the first few months of the last financial year, as previously reported to Housing Management Sub Committee in September 2007.

BV212 Average turnaround time in days - 2007/8

Target – 30 days	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Yr end total
General needs housing													
General needs	46	46	44	35	31	23	25	25	22	24	22	21	30
Total let	51	49	45	63	46	49	54	61	62	57	53	67	657
% Let in target	29%	22%	38%	46%	57%	76%	72%	74%	79%	61%	85%	82%	62%
Sheltered housing													
Sheltered	46	57	47	57	32	39	37	32	24	37	37	28	39
Total let	15	13	6	11	11	6	12	12	14	7	10	9	126
Let in target	26%	31%	33%	9%	64%	67%	34%	58%	86%	57%	50%	67%	50%
All properties													
All	46	49	44	38	31	25	27	26	22	26	24	22	31
Total let	66	62	51	74	57	55	66	73	76	64	63	76	782
Let in target	26%	24%	37%	41%	58%	75%	71%	71%	80%	61%	79%	80%	60%

3.2.4 The excellent focus on improving performance over the last half year has enabled us to rank 21st place out of the 61 housing organisations in the South East

Benchmark Club, and rank first place of 12 Major Cities Benchmark Club, in the last quarter of the year.

Table 3 below compares quarterly BV212 and shows the difference in sheltered properties with and without shared facilities. There remains a general pattern of sheltered properties of all types taking longer to let than general needs housing, as well as sheltered properties with shared facilities generally exceeding the average time for sheltered homes with their own facilities. There have been a few difficulties in letting some sheltered properties, even with their own facilities, in our less desirable blocks and those with two bedrooms.

BV212 figures with detailed sheltered accommodation comparison

2007/8	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year end total
<u>Target – 30 Days</u>					
General needs	45	30	24	22	30
Sheltered own facilities	45	44	29	35	37
Sheltered shared facilities	72	39	49	25	49
Total sheltered	48	43	30	34	39
All properties	45	32	25	24	31
Let in target	30%	56%	74%	74%	60%

3.2.5 Number of empty properties

The number of empty council properties stood at 122 at the beginning of this financial year. This represents only 0.97% of the councils stock.

Empty properties at the beginning of the year

Time	Number	% of stock
April 2004	232	1.85%
April 2005	257	1.87%
April 2006	112	0.89%
April 2007	123	0.98%
April 2008	122	0.97%

3.2.6 Refusal of properties by housing applicants

We record detailed information on reasons properties are refused by applicants. These assist in a continuous review that aims to supply the most appropriate information to applicants.

In 2007/08, not liking the area is the principle reason given for refusing the offer of a property. Evidence suggests that a number of applicants do not look around an area until the day of the viewing. There is currently no penalty for applicants making multiple refusals.

It also remains of concern that such a high proportion of applicants make no response to offers. It appears that a proportion of these customers change their mind about wanting to move, but do not notify us of this change.

The other top reasons for refusal are set out in the chart below.

Top reasons for refusal during the year

2006/7	Reason given by applicant	As a percent of all refusals
1	Applicant has changed area of choice, subsequent to offer being made	15%
2	No response is received from applicant, subsequent to offer, despite efforts to make contact by staff	14%
3	Subsequent to offer being made, applicant declares that they want a different property	13%
4	After viewing the property, applicant declares it to be unsuitable for their purposes	10%
5	After viewing the property, the applicant declares it to be too small for purpose	8%

3.3 Repairs Update

3.2.1 The responsive repairs partnering contracts with Kier and Mears have now been in place for just over a year. Performance has greatly improved over the last six months following the mobilisation of the contract.

3.3.2 The table below shows the level of responsive repairs carried out in each quarter of last year and the percentage of repairs that were completed within the target time.

Responsive Repairs

	Q1 Apr – Jun 07	Q2 July - Sep 07	Q3 Oct - Dec 07	Q4 Jan - Mar 08
Emergency Repairs Completed in time	82.97 %	88.62%	97.87%	97.65%
No of Emergency Repairs completed	1427	1230	1846	2339
Urgent Repairs Completed in time	85.40%	87.89%	90.97%	94.02%
No of Urgent Repairs completed	2233	2114	1572	1756
Routine Repairs Completed within target time	86.14%	87.49%	90.75%	94.88%
No of Routine Repairs completed	1731	2143	3104	4667

- 3.3.3 The highest performing authorities are currently achieving 98.16% for emergency repairs completed in time, we finished the year slightly below that but in a good position to achieve that level in 2008/2009.
- 3.3.4 For urgent repairs completed in time highest performing cities are achieving 97%, we finished the year at 94%.
- 3.3.5 The highest performing authorities achieved above 93.70% for routine repairs completed in time, our responsive repairs contract is currently performing above that at 94.88%.
- 3.3.6 This benchmarking information is from the Major Cities group as at beginning of May 2008.
- 3.3.7 Other performance indicators for the responsive repairs contract are summarised in the table below and are from February 2008, which is the latest complete information available for these indicators.

Responsive Repairs

		Target	February 2008
1	Resident Satisfaction with Responsive Repair Service	95%	98.67%
2	Orders Repaired in First Visit	85%	91.78%
3	Orders Passing Quality Inspection	95%	96.04%
4	Reportable Health & Safety Incidents	0	0
5	Emergency and Urgent Repairs Completed within target time*	98.5%	93.51%
6	No of Days to Complete Routine Repairs*	14 days	14 days

*Target times as follows:

- Emergency repairs: 24 Hours
- Urgent repairs: 3 working days
- Routine repairs: 20 working days

3.3.8 All of the indicators reported for February have exceeded the set targets except for indicator 5 measuring the emergency and urgent repairs completed in time. Work is being undertaken by the partnership to address this area of performance, this includes the introduction of simplified emergency schedule of rates and early indications are that April has delivered a 2% improvement on the February figure.

3.3.9 In all areas the performance has improved over the course of the first year of the responsive repairs contract, and in a number of important areas Brighton & Hove City Council has exceeded top quartile performance. The partnership sees this level of performance as a good platform to achieve top quartile over the coming months.

3.3.10 From a slow start mobilising the new contract, it became evident quickly that poor performance completing repairs within their target time had a significant impact on the customer. We have worked with our partners on a regular basis to reduce the level of jobs overdue their target date, from a peak of 2800 to 453 by the year end. There is still a lot of hard work to do but our target is to reduce the level to below 200 by the end of the summer

3.3.11 Alongside the operational management of the Responsive Maintenance contract, The Repairs and Maintenance team are working to add value to the contract and improve the council's overall performance to three star rating.

3.4 Sickness Absence

3.4.1 The table below sets out the sickness absence across the council in the second half of the year.

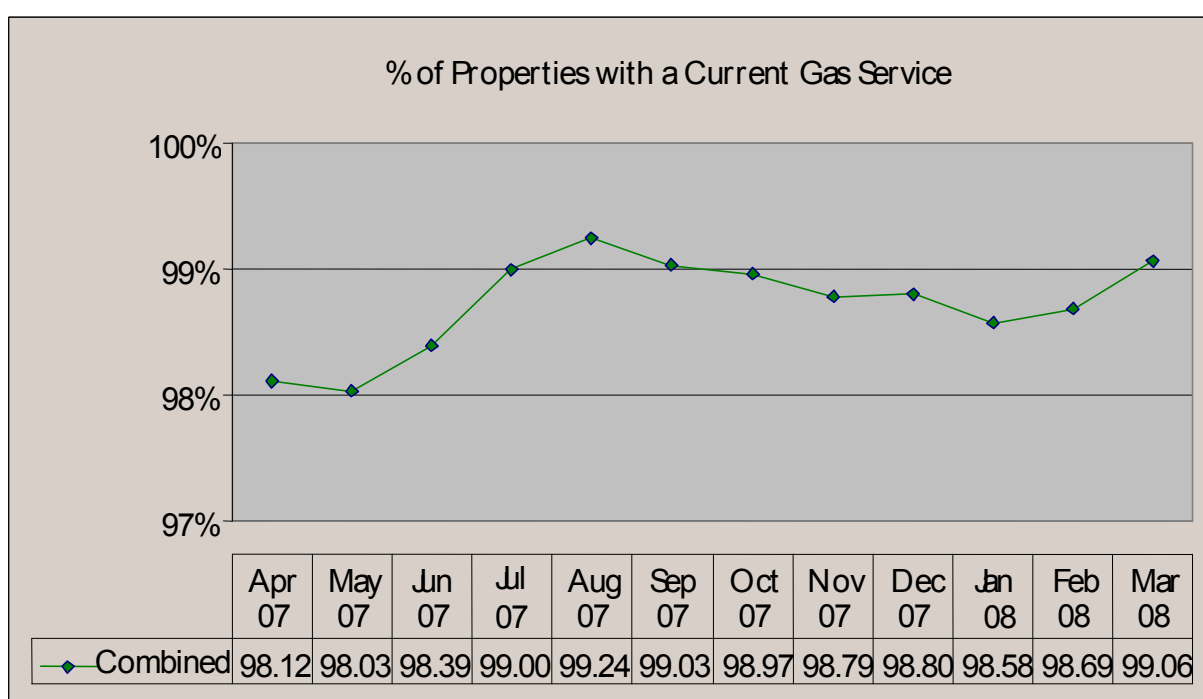
Directorate (BV12)	Q3 Average Days Lost	Q4 Average Days Lost	2007-2008 Average Days Lost
Adult Social Care & Housing	4.25	4.52	16.54
Children & Young Peoples' Trust	2.07	2.31	7.56
Cultural Services	2.88	2.81	10.85
EB4U	5.52	0.92	13.23
Environment	2.33	2.46	10.07
Finance & Resources	2.75	3.14	10.99
Strategy & Governance	2.11	2.19	7.79
All Council	2.63	2.84	10.12
Division	Q3 Average Days Lost	Q4 Average Days Lost	2007-2008 Average Days Lost
Adult Services	4.60	4.80	17.48
Community Care (S75)	2.12	3.03	9.22
Housing Management	5.04	4.45	19.32
Housing Strategy	5.05	6.03	18.09
Integrated Learning Disability	3.27	3.57	14.16
Adult Social Care and Housing Total	4.25	4.52	16.54

BV12 2006/7	
Brighton	10.78
All England – Top Quartile	8.09
All England – Bottom Quartile	10.73
All England – Average	9.44
Unitaries – Top Quartile	8.70
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	10.78
Unitaries – Average	9.6

3.4.2 Initiatives are currently underway by Housing Management with the aim of improving attendance. The Housing Management division has undertaken a corporate pilot for a Stress Risk Assessment initiative. Human Resources are also assisting Housing Management Managers by improving the methodology by which absentees have their return to work interviews conducted.

3.5 Gas Servicing

The graph below shows the progress of Brighton & Hove City Council, Mears and PH Jones in servicing gas installations. The end of year (March) figure was 99.06%, the second highest achieved in the year.



3.5.1 The number of Council properties with a valid gas safety certificate has shown a year on year improvement. The March 2008 figure of 99.06% shows nearly a 1% increase on the previous year and is only 0.18% below the traditionally high August figure. Indications show that the improvement should continue this year. The partners continue to perform well and have consistently met their Key Performance Indicators. In a drive for continuous improvement and in consultation with the partnering contractors, the majority of KPI's have been raised for 2008/2009.

3.5.2 Investment in gas heating continues and during the year 2007-08 the partners replaced 698 gas boilers and installed 40 new systems. This investment will reduce ongoing service and repair costs, improve overall energy efficiency, and importantly, reduce tenant's fuel bills. Investment will

continue during the new financial year with greater emphasis on renewing older and less efficient boilers.

- 3.5.3 In March 2008 CORGI was invited to carry out a management audit on the Planned Maintenance and Engineer Section. The audit was carried out in conjunction with similar scrutiny of the partnering contractors, also by CORGI. The auditor reported:

“The organisation has a very effective access procedure and excellent service compliance rate of 98.75% on the day of the audit. These are very good results if benchmarked against similar social landlords where this exercise has been undertaken. Within the organisation there are dedicated staff who give gas safety issues a high priority and demonstrate high standards in the delivery of service to the tenants”

The audit also highlighted several areas where improvement could be achieved, including:

1. a more robust procedure in reporting gas leaks.
2. the gas administration staff to have a greater understanding of gas issues
3. the procedure for maintaining gas safety in empty properties (in particular monitoring of gas contractors where the partnering contractor is not involved).

An action plan is in place to ensure improvement in all these areas.

- 3.5.4 Housing officer involvement in the gas safety process has been particularly effective. Further improvement is being implemented to achieve even better access rates to those properties that are difficult to reach. Targets have been agreed for processing of referred no-access cases:

- 50-60% properties to be completed within 30 days of referral
- 85%- 90% to be completed within 90 days of referral

- 3.5.5 In order to assist in improving access rates, a trial is being undertaken for the fixing of awareness raising notices over tenants' door locks, and it is proposed that new boiler controls that incorporate a service reminder alarm should be fitted to properties where access has been difficult.

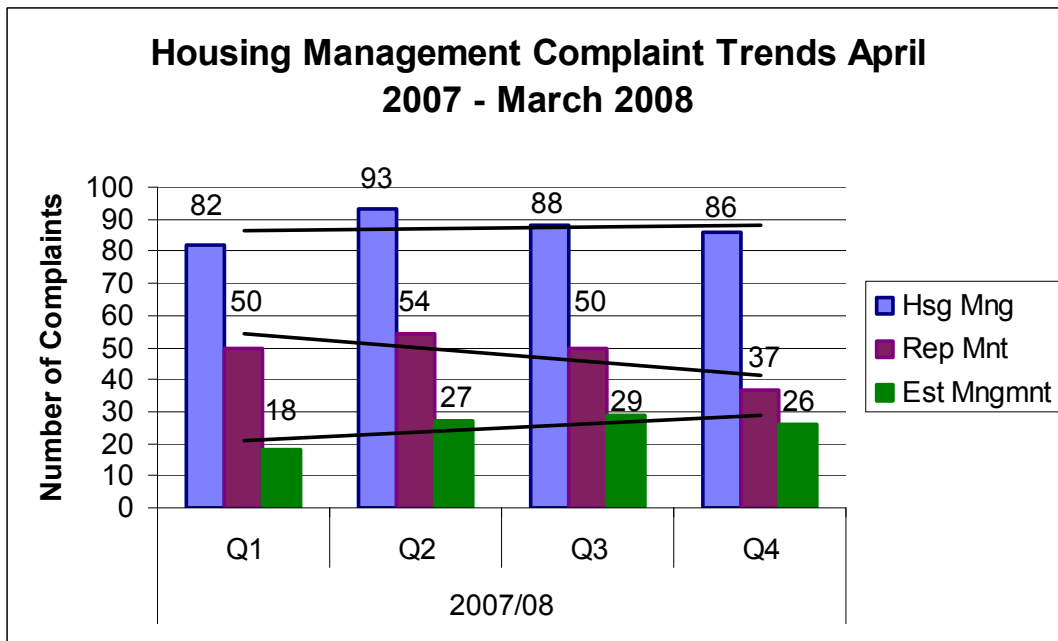
3.6 Correspondence performance in answering complaints

- 3.6.1 Complaints about Housing Management are dealt with under the Corporate Complaints procedure. Managers from the service investigate and reply to Stage One complaints. Standards and Complaints officers carry out Stage Two Investigations. Customers may then refer to the Local Government Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied.

3.6.2 Stage One Complaints; Trends, Themes, Issues

3.6.3 Chart 1 shows the trend for Housing Management complaints for April 2007 to March 2008. Complaints about the whole department have remained static over that period. Repairs and Maintenance shows a significant reduction over the year. For Housing Estate Management there has been a gradual increase in levels of complaint.

Chart 1



3.6.4 The table below, gives information about complaint numbers at all stages of the complaints process.

3.6.5 There have been noticeable levels of complaint about Garages & Car Parks (22). The increase has been as a result of customers being made aware that they can use the complaint process to appeal decision to clamp vehicles. Those complaints have resulted in no re-imbursments or findings against the clamping company.

Volume of complaints by service area.

Housing Management 2007/08	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	S1	S2	LGO	S1	S2	LGO	S1	S2	LGO	S1	S2	LGO
Repairs & Maintenance	50	4	2	54	3	2	50	1	3	37	3	0
Housing/Estate Management	18	1	3	27	3	2	29	3	0	26	3	0
ASB	2	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0
Garages/carparks	6	2	3	4	0	0	3	2	1	9	2	0
RTB/Leasehold	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0
Debt Recovery	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
New Tenancies	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
Sheltered Housing	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0
Total	82	8	8	93	6	4	88	6	6	86	9	0

3.6.6 Table 5, shows improvements in plumbing services and reduced delays in carrying out repairs have contributed to falling levels of complaints about Repairs and Maintenance.

Complaints relating to repairs and maintenance

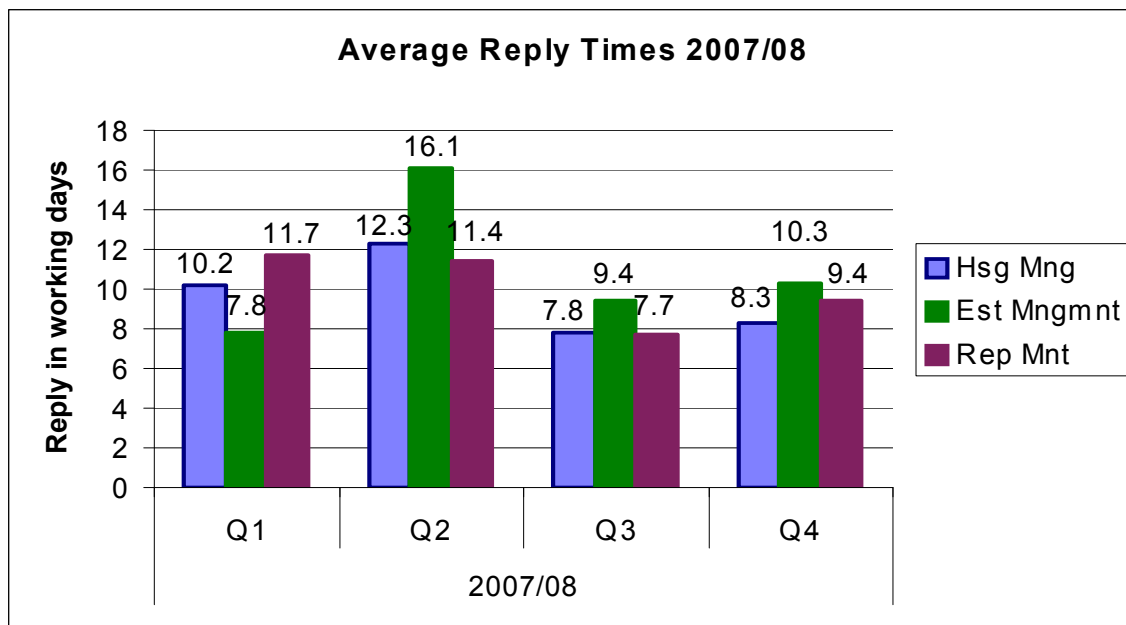
	Repairs and Maintenance Issues 2007/08			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Brickwork	3	2	0	1
Carpentry	3	2	1	6
Condensation Damp	3	9	4	4
Delay Carrying Out Repair	37	28	26	19
Electrical	4	4	4	3
Failure to Identify Problem	5	0	4	5
Heating	3	0	8	3
M&E (Lifts etc)	0	0	1	0
Missed Appointment	2	1	1	4
Plumbing	8	43	36	17
Refusal to repair	3	1	2	0
Roofing	1	2	2	0
Scaffolding	3	1	2	1
Staff Attitude	6	7	2	6
Total	81	100	93	69

3.6.7 Correspondence Performance

3.6.8 Correspondence performance is a useful indication of how much priority is placed on dealing with customer dissatisfaction with services.

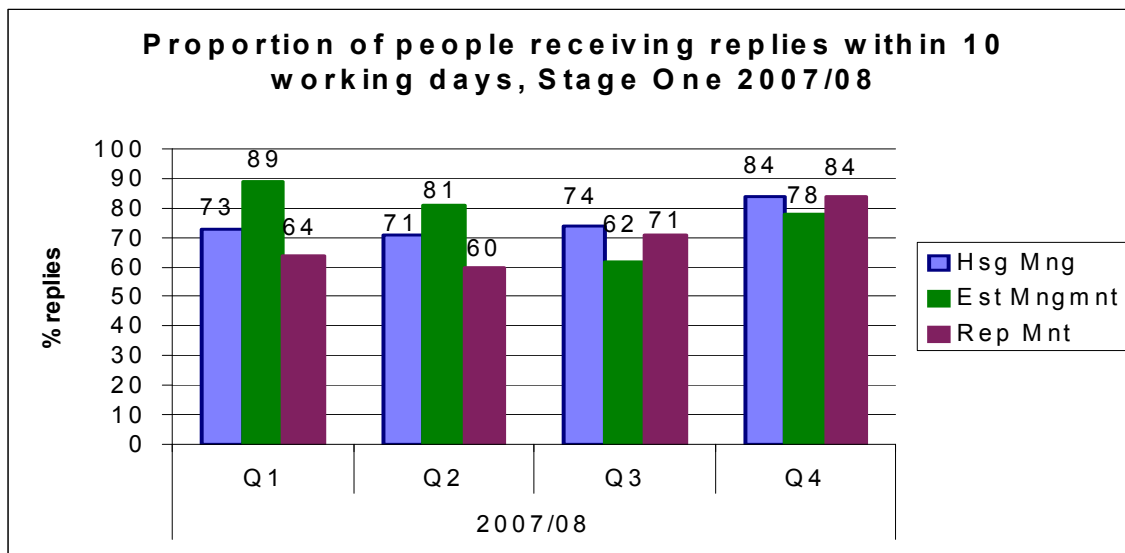
- 3.6.9 Chart 2 shows the average response times throughout the year. The Council's standard is to reply to complaints within 10 working days.
- Average reply times for the whole department improved until quarter 3 and increased slightly in quarter 4 to 8.3 days.
 - Average reply times for Estate Management have increased over the year and reached 10.3 days in quarter 4.
 - Average reply times for Repairs and Maintenance improved significantly in quarter 3 to 7.7 days but increased in quarter 4 to 9.4 days.

Chart 2



3.6.11 The small number of complaints that are taking an excessively long time to reply to are causing the average reply times to be unnecessarily high.

Chart 3



The second measure of significance is the proportion of people who receive a response within 10 working days. The chart shows that:

- For the whole department, replies sent within 10 working days increased from 73% to 84%.
- For Estate Management the proportion of replies fell from 89% to 62% in quarter three but increased to 78% in quarter 4.
- For Repairs and Maintenance replies within 10 working days have increased from 60% in quarter 2 to 84% in quarter 4

3.6.13 Stage Two Complaints

3.6.14 The proportion of Repairs and Maintenance complaints referred to Stage Two over the year was 7%. For the whole council 8% of cases were referred. There were no specific recurring themes at this stage.

3.6.15 For Estate Management 10% of complaints were referred to Stage Two. Of the ten cases referred for investigation four related to dissatisfaction with the way neighbour nuisance was being dealt with.

- Two cases were in part upheld
- One case was not investigated. The complainant had a restraining order against him and was making counter allegations
- The fourth case has not yet been concluded

3.6.16 Ombudsman Complaints

- 3.6.17 There have been no findings of maladministration against Housing Management.
- 3.6.18 Complaints about Repairs and Maintenance resulted in three Local Settlements.
- In one case the Ombudsman recommended that R&M Stage One response letters should be reviewed to ensure complainants are informed of how to access Stage Two of the complaint process.
 - Two cases resulted in recommendations of payments totalling £250. Each complaint related to delay in carrying out repairs.
- 3.6.19 One complaint about Housing Management resulted in a Local Settlement by way of an apology and payment of £200 for the delay in dealing with noise nuisance caused by an ineffective door closure.
- 3.6.20 There were four complaints to the Ombudsman about Garages and Car Parking. One case resulted in a Local Settlement in which the Ombudsman considered the Council had taken reasonable action to deal with obstruction of the complainant's garage.

3.7 Estates Service

- 3.7.1 Following the recommendations of the Chairman's Focus Group on the Estates Service, work is ongoing to review the way that the cleaning of common parts is organised and monitored. Residents on the focus group said they wanted to see more accountability for cleaning and better performance monitoring. To meet this aim, dedicated cleaners for groups of high rise buildings are being trialled. This is getting positive feedback from residents. A report providing a detailed update on this work will be brought to the next meeting of this committee.

3.7.2 The Graffiti and Bulk Refuse removal teams continue to provide a responsive service with all urgent jobs being carried out within the set response time of one working day. Tables showing the number of jobs and their performance record are set out below.

Estate Services Monitoring Figures					
Bulk Waste Removal November 07-March 08					
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Urgent jobs	0	2	4	6	8
Routine jobs	197	149	193	235	225
Total	197	151	197	241	233
Target met for urgent jobs	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%
Target met for routine jobs	99%	96%	99%	100%	97%
Target - urgent jobs removal in 1 working day of report					
Target - routine jobs removal within 7 working days of report					

Estate Services Monitoring Figures					
Graffiti Removal November 07-March 08					
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Urgent jobs	5	3	14	0	0
Routine jobs	65	38	68	28	70
Total	70	41	82	28	70
Target met for urgent jobs	100%	100%	100%	0% N/A	0% N/A
Target met for routine jobs	82%	95%	97%	100%	97%
Target - urgent jobs removal in 1 working day of report					
Target - routine jobs removal within 7 working days of report					

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Performance report will be presented to customers at the next round of Housing Management Area Panels.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Financial information on performance is included in the main body of the report.

Most performance measures discussed in this report have financial implications. For example, any improvement in turnaround times or reductions in empty property numbers increases the amount of rent collected. Improvements in performance will, in general, lead to more resources being available for tenants services in the future.

Legal Implications:

There are none.

Lawyer consulted: Deborah Jones Date: 28 May 2008

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no direct Equalities Implications arising from this report

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.2 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

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

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 There are no direct Corporate or Citywide implications arising from this report.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Alternative options are integral to the processes of performance improvement discussed in this report.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 These are contained within the body of the report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

