

Items from the Central Tenant Only meeting held on 26/6/19

1. How can we deal quickly and effectively with local upkeep and environmental issues?

It was agreed that there is no effective procedure for identifying and resolving building and environmental problems at an early stage. Small issues become big ones, and persistent small problems generally make people's homes and environment more difficult.

It was felt that despite an increase in personnel – Field Officers, Community Engagement Officers – there were no improvements in this area. It was also felt that the 'Don't Walk by' policy is not working effectively, as people generally do not report problems. Estate Inspections had been a past attempt to address this, but were also not entirely successful.

It was agreed that a review was needed to look at procedures for identifying and sorting out building and environment problems, as they arise.

Action:  to agenda setting meeting for Area Panel

Response from Janet Dowdell | Tenancy Services Operational Manager | Housing Services | 01273 293191

'Don't walk by'

We are pleased residents agree this is a good policy and thank residents for taking the time to provide feedback on their experiences with reporting issues to us.

When we launched the policy we aimed to provide as many contact methods as possible to enable staff and residents to report issues easily in the method they choose. To do this we have attempted to avoid confusion by providing too many different routes into the service. Following this feedback we have added additional information to help understanding around where to report issues against the different team contacts so that it reaches the correct part of our service without delay. See below –

How to report

Online:

- Complete a [Report a problem form](#) on the Council website
- Join the Housing Facebook page & report non urgent issues
- Follow @BHCCtenants on Twitter for service updates

By email or telephone:

Email: housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk **For reporting of ASB & tenancy related issues. Fencing issues and Car parks and garage enquiries**

- Telephone: 01273 293030

- Email: BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk **For reporting repairs to aerials, central heating, chimneys, external doors, drains and covers, flooring & walls.**
- Telephone Freephone 0800 052 6140 (24hrs) or 01273 294409
- Email: estatesserviceteam@brighton-hove.gov.uk **For reporting emergency sharps, lock changes, graffiti removal in communal ways, fly tipping on housing land, repairs to communal lights.**
- Telephone: 01273 294769
- Email: seniorshousing@brighton-hove.gov.uk **For reporting repairs please contact Housing customer services number as displayed.**
- Telephone: 01273 293030

By post, address all enquiries to:

Housing Centre
 Unit 1 Fairway Trading Estate
 Eastergate Road
 Brighton
 BN2 4QL

Below are answers to specific queries -

- If you phone, you are often put into a queue, with no indication of how long you will have to wait.

Response: The response time for calls to the Housing Customer Service team (01273 293030) is good, with the average waiting time in June being one minute. The Housing Customer Service team is increasingly receiving contact from residents by email and web enquiries, particularly for non urgent queries and again response times to this form of contact is very good, with the team replying to the majority of queries in one working day. The council's telephony system does not have the facility to advise callers of where they are in the queue, if their call is not immediately answered. The current telephony contract is coming to an end and this is one of the features that we are looking to include in the future.

Mears telephony systems do not state how long a caller has to wait as this is dependent on how long the existing calls take to end, however the Repairs Helpdesk telephony system does indicate where the caller is in the queue e.g. "you are 2nd the queue". The average call wait time for the month of June for the Repairs Helpdesk was 52 seconds.

- You don't get to communicate with the person responsible for that area.

Response: If you are reporting a tenancy related issue and it needs to be managed as a case, the issue will be allocated to one of our Housing Officers working out of the area teams or our Complex Cases Team. If allocated, you will be provided with the Officer name and direct contact details and they will maintain contact with you until the case is closed. This guidance is aimed at reporting communal issues on Housing land and the service doesn't have area based officers for this.

- You don't get any feed-back on how your complaint has progressed – it can feel that it disappears into a void.

Response: When reporting a repair, you should be given a job reference number, if not please ask for it. For an update, please call the Repairs Helpdesk quoting the job reference number. Unfortunately Mears do not have resources to call residents to provide updates on the vast number of communal repairs carried out.

- If there is no action as a result of the complaint, you have to go through the whole process again. People lose faith in the system, and the motivation to report issues.

Response: If you are not satisfied with the Repairs Service, please follow the agreed Process for Resident Representatives to Resolve Repairs Issues - please find attached.

- If the issue you have raised can't be resolved, you are not told why.

Response: As above, if you have a job reference number you can make enquiries to Mears about any reports you make to the service for a repair. When managing requests for funding under the new Environmental Improvement Budget, we have introduced a process which includes direct feedback on projects being considered. The projects coming from our new Environmental Improvement Meetings will also follow this process and results will be posted on the website.

- Increasingly the only way to report issues is on-line. This discriminates against lots of people who do not have access to computers. Residents have been told they can go to the library, but this clearly discourages immediate reporting of problems.

Response: We provide details of the many different methods of accessing our service and although for many, email is the most straight forward we understand that this will not be the case for all residents. We ensure all methods of accessing the service are managed by staff but some receive high levels of demand, and this can sometimes lead to a delay in our ability to respond quickly.

