

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 56

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy		
Date of Meeting:	1 December 2011		
Report of:	Head of Housing and Social Inclusion		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Becky Purnell	Tel: 29-3022
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

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. That the Cabinet Member for Housing 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 19th July 2011.

- 4.2 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19th 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 6th October 2011.
- 4.5 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 17th 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