
Annual Report

to council tenants & leaseholders

2012

In this report...

Introduction	2
Performance highlights	2
Resident involvement & empowerment	2
Customer service, choice & complaints	2
Supporting diversity	3
Your home	3
Repairs & maintenance	3
Your tenancy	4
Sheltered housing	4
Your neighbourhood & community	5
Neighbourhood management	5
Anti-social behaviour	5
Local area co-operation	6
Value for money	7
Income & expenditure	8



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Introduction

This is our third annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders. We've worked closely with residents to make sure we are reporting on the things you want to know about and we have listened to feedback which is reflected in this shorter report. There is also a version of this report with more information on our services available on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/ctl-annualreport. You can also find more details about our performance data at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsi-performance.

This report for 2012 gives you information about how we are performing and how we use money from rents and service charges, what we are getting right and areas that need some improvement. It also sets out the progress we have made in meeting our commitments to you and the improvements we plan to make this year.

Please let us know what you think of the annual report and what you would like to see in a future report. Please contact James Pemberton, Performance & Improvement Officer on 01273 290562 or e-mail james.pemberton@brighton-hove.gov.uk with your suggestions.

Performance highlights

- Results from the STAR customer satisfaction survey – which 1,200 residents completed in December 2011 – showed 83% of residents are satisfied with the service provided by Brighton & Hove City Council housing services. This is a significant increase on 2008 when 72% were satisfied.
- An independent inspection in early 2012 identified that we deliver high quality services.
- In our benchmarking group of councils that directly manage their housing, we were the 'biggest improver' in terms of overall satisfaction.

Resident involvement and empowerment

We will provide a wide range of opportunities for you to be involved in what we do and how we do it, involving you in setting our standards and making sure we meet them. We welcome involvement from any of our residents to improve services. If you'd like to get involved, please contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01273 292112 / 294561, or email RIT@brighton-hove.gov.uk

What we have done

- Over 2,000 residents are involved in providing feedback, such as questionnaires or other consultations, which we use to help us improve our services.
- We support 65 tenant and resident associations. Residents from these associations also play an important part on four area panels, the City Assembly and the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee.
- Residents have continued to be involved in key groups which have oversight in such vital areas as repairs, anti-social behaviour, sheltered housing, high rise accommodation and being a leaseholder.
- We have improved access to the City Assembly using social media, and have updated our website (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing) to make it more interactive.

What we are doing

- Establishing a Tenant Scrutiny Panel to ensure residents are independently able to hold us to account and help improve our services.
- Exploring ways of involving under-represented members of the community.



4 out of 5 tenants
are very or fairly satisfied
with our service

Customer service, choice and complaints

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

What we have done

- We answered 230,000 phone calls, 5,000 emails and over 4,000 letters. While lower than last year, we also had 40,000 visits to our housing offices.



We've received
over
230,000
phone enquiries

- We launched the Housing Customer Online Service so that residents could have direct access to their rent and other housing accounts 24 hours a day, seven days a week – over 1,000 people have now signed up
- Complaints about tenancy management fell but complaints about repairs rose.
- We have created a new Customer Service Team as a single point of first contact for general enquiries and tenancy management - you can call them on 01273 293030.
- Appointed a new Financial Inclusion Officer and a Money Advice Worker to help residents with budgeting and financial advice in light of the changes from welfare reform.

What we are doing

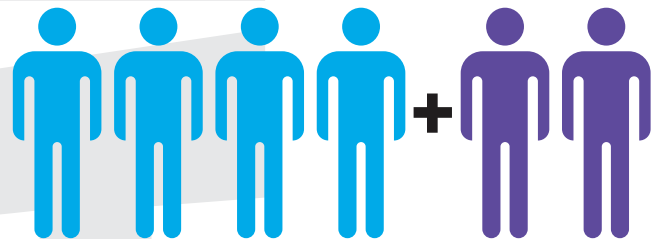
- We are committed to a 'lessons learnt' evaluation of complaints – and will be doing more work to respond well when you complain to us
- Introducing the Institute of Customer Service training to support staff in their new roles.

Supporting diversity

We will ensure we communicate and deliver our services in a way which meets the diverse needs of our community.

What we have done

- Provided translations and alternative versions of leaflets and handbooks.
- Provided training for frontline staff from the 'Trust for Developing Communities' to better understand the diverse needs of the community.
- Increased the number of Tenancy Sustainment Officers from four to six to provide support to our most vulnerable residents.



An extra two Tenancy Sustainment Officers to provide support for our most vulnerable residents.

What we are doing

- Examining how we can better meet the needs of the transgender community.
- Carrying out an assessment of services to the black and minority ethnic community to pinpoint where changes need to be made.
- Starting basic skills classes for tenants who need help with reading, writing, maths or computer skills.
- Offering more help with kitchen and bathroom adaptations to tenants with disabilities.

Your home

We will advise you of major home improvements and work to agreed timescales. We will make sure all empty homes meet the locally agreed standard before we let them.

Repairs and maintenance

- The repairs and maintenance budget is £10.4 million in total. This is divided into three main areas:
 - Responsive repairs - £6 million
 - Empty Properties - £1.4 million
 - Servicing and other repairs - £3 million
- 41,252 responsive repairs were completed – an average of 113 each day.
- The STAR survey records satisfaction with the last repair tenants had done at 81%.



An average of 113 repairs carried out each day

Other improvements

- We fitted 30 new solar installations to properties in Woodingdean, Hollingdean and the Bristol Estate.
- 90% of our properties now meet the Decent Homes standard and we are on target to complete all homes by 2014.
- 99.87% of properties had a current gas safety certificate at 31 March 2012.
- Our Neighbourhood Response Team completed minor adaptations for our residents in an average of three days of the request.

What we are doing

- We are continuing to make homes more energy efficient, with our programme of over-cladding, and our programme for tackling damp and condensation.
- We are reviewing the Brighton & Hove Standard to make sure we meet tenants ongoing needs.

Your tenancy

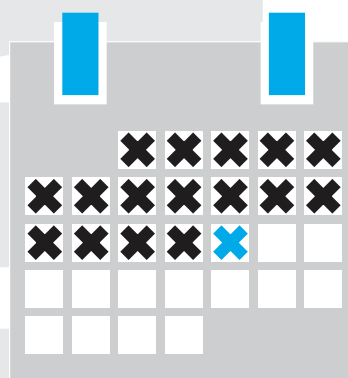
We will provide the advice and information to maintain your tenancy. We will carry out tenancy visits at least once every three years.

What we have done

- We visited over 8,000 people in their own homes (excluding repairs) - including the most vulnerable and disabled residents in the city.
- We started work on building 15 new council homes at Ainsworth House and prepared other sites for development.
- 56 people downsized on the Transfer Incentive Scheme – up from 50 on the previous year.
- Our average time to re-let a property is 17 days – down from 18 – saving over £60,000 for the year. (The national average is 23 days).
- We brought 161 empty homes brought back into use – eight above target.

What we are doing

- Re-housing Officers are spending more time with new tenants to assess their needs at the earliest possible stage.
- We have appointed a specialist mutual exchange officer to help tenants who wish to transfer their tenancy.



On average, we re-let a property in

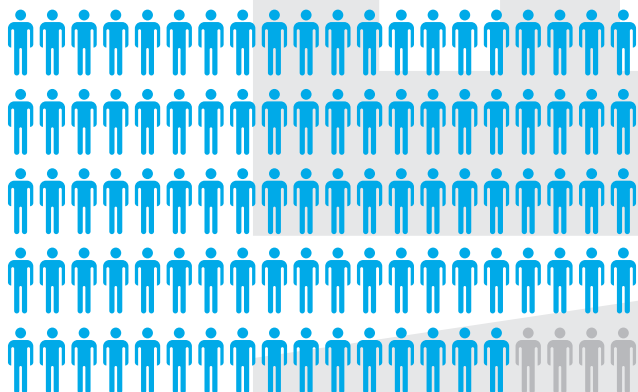
17 days

Sheltered housing

We will provide every tenant with a support plan to aid their wellbeing. We will prioritise support for the most vulnerable tenants.

What we have done

- In a survey of 124 people living in sheltered housing, 96% were satisfied.



96% are satisfied
with our service

- We worked very closely with agencies such as MIND, AgeUK, the Alzheimer's Society and Diabetes UK to increase the wellbeing of our residents
- 97% of tenants have a support plan to aid their well-being

What we are doing

- We are working closely with the Sheltered Housing Action Group to improve services.
- We continue to train our staff in the Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 Certificate in Supported Housing to provide the highest level of support.



Getting it fixed!

One Sunday afternoon I returned to my flat to find the bathroom floor wet – not a flood exactly but enough to cause concern. I called the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 and some 20 minutes later I had just finished mopping up when a Mears plumber rang my bell. He identified a leaking stopcock and fixed it, he also said that this was a problem that had been going on for some time, as the hardboard panel was sodden. He took measurements and a picture and said that a colleague would come and fit a new panel the following Thursday. Sure enough, as promised, on Thursday I had a new panel and my bathroom left clean and tidy.

The 0800 number is great for emergencies and for those without the internet but for most repairs I prefer to use email - bhcc.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk

In addition to the repairs service there is also the Estates Service Team for things such as hallway lights out and making safe potential hazards – they are on 01273 294769 or email them when you will see a full list of the tasks they undertake - estates Serviceteam@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Barry Hughes, Sylvan Hall Estate

Tackling anti-social behaviour together

Anti-social behaviour is a problem that has been growing and affecting our communities for many years. It comes with varying levels of nuisance; the neighbour's budgie chirping non-stop, bikers tearing up and down the street, and unfortunately escalating to cases of violence, threats and intimidation. Brighton & Hove has its fair share of anti-social behaviour like any other sizeable city, but I feel that the dedication and thoroughness of our anti-social behaviour team make them some of the best in the country.

The highest number of reported crimes in Brighton & Hove since January 2012 has been for anti-social behaviour, far out weighing any other reported crime. Tenants and residents working together with the police and the council can help to reduce these crimes. Many people feel intimidated about reporting these types of crimes, Don't, the support available to you when you do is the best. Just dial 293030.

Leon Delaney, North Whitehawk

!@#?%!

#\$&!

Your neighbourhood & community

Neighbourhood management

We will make sure common areas and estates are clean; carry out estates inspections and provide a budget for residents to decide on improvements.

What we have done

- Carried out an extensive clearing of items that might present a fire risk in hallways and common areas.
- Worked with residents and the council's City Parks service on a Grounds Maintenance Review to co-ordinate actions and improve services.
- Introduced the Estates Development Budget quick bids process to allow tenants to bid for smaller improvement items of up to £500 to improve their estate.



What we are doing

- Providing training for staff in our Neighbourhoods Team so that they are able to deal with a wider range of issues.
- Undertaking a programme of wildflower planting to make estates like Craven Vale and Albion Hill look more colourful and encourage wildlife.

Anti-social behaviour

We will not tolerate anti-social behaviour. We will take action, keeping you informed and offer support to all those who are victims of anti-social behaviour.

What we have done

- Trained more officers to help victims and witnesses receive greater support with their case.
- We are part of a nationally recognised partnership approach to tackling high risk anti-social behaviour with other agencies in the city.
- Of 73 people surveyed in regard to ASB, 68 were satisfied with the service provided – far above the national average.

What we are doing

- Frontline housing staff are being trained in the use of the police monitoring system for victims of crime to co-ordinate actions between the police, Community Safety Team and housing.
- We are working closely with residents, police, and the Community Safety Team to reduce drugs offences on our premises.
- We are a pilot local authority for the government's new 'Community Trigger' scheme.

Local area co-operation (working with other organisations)

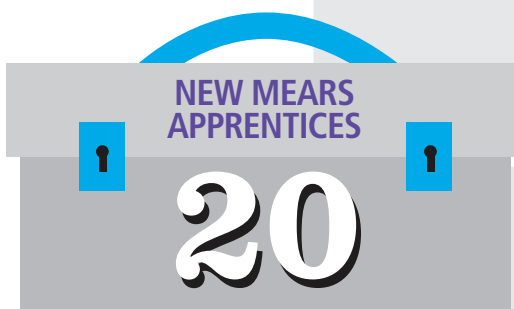
We will work with other agencies in the city to increase safety and support for residents. We work to try to increase local employment.

What we have done

- We worked closely with the police and the Community Safety Team to do risk assessments on all victims of anti-social behaviour.
- We have worked with the Community Payback Team on a number of projects, such as decorating work in Coldean and cleaning on the Bates Estate.

What we are doing

- Mears took on another 20 apprentices in September.



- The Sheltered Housing Service is working closely with Brighton University to help run the 'Active Pharmacy', where pharmacy students and their tutors meet groups of older residents.

Value for Money

To assess annually the Housing Revenue Account and seek to produce high class services at the lowest cost.

What we have done

- Continued to fast track benefit claims for all new tenants to stop them getting into rent arrears.
- Collected 98.75% of rent due – in line with last year and among the top performing councils on rent collection.

Almost
99%
of rent
collected

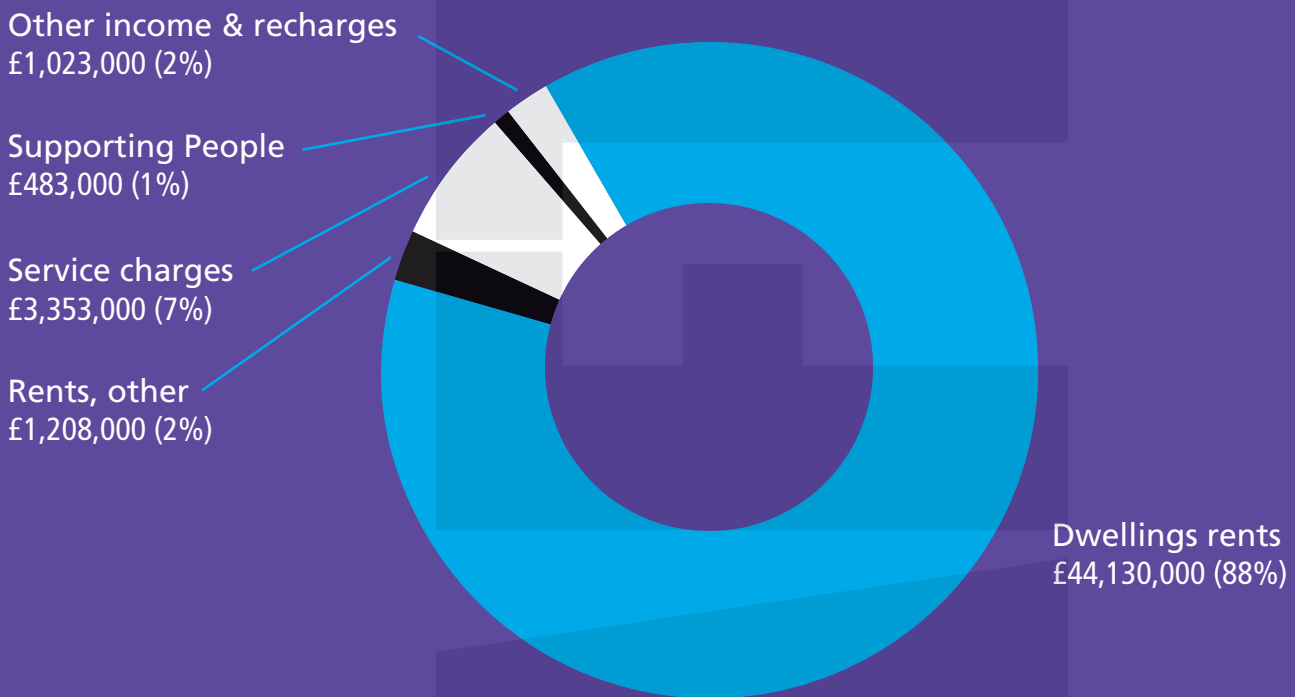


- Reduced tenancy management costs from an average of £17.85 per unit per week in 2011/11 to £17.09 in 2011/12.
- Lowered the number of evictions for rent arrears from 26 to 16 (an eviction can cost over £10,000).
- Improved tenancy services creating more frontline posts and saving over £150,000.

What we are doing

- Leasing properties to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes, generating revenue so far of £10 million.
- Following a self-financing model, which means we can control more of our income locally.

Income



Expenditure

