

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 59

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Housing Management Performance Report
Date of Meeting: 20 January 2009
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 To provide the Committee with information on current performance within Housing Management services and on general policy initiatives underway to improve performance. The appendices to the report summarise the key performance results for the second financial quarter of 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Management Consultative Committee comment on the contents of this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

3.1 Rent Collection and Current Arrears

- 3.1.1 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 & Hove	98.04% (2nd Quarter 2008/09)
Unitaries – Top Quartile	98.37%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	97.33%
Unitaries – Average	97.79%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is included but is provisional until confirmation in January 2009.

- 3.1.2 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%.
- 3.1.3 The indicator result includes former tenancy arrears when a tenant has moved from one Housing Revenue Account property to another.
- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 The results shown for Brighton and Hove are the results to the end of September 2008.
- 3.1.6 The graphs on pages 4-11 of the appendix show performance for the year to the end of October. Below the monthly data for 2006/07 and 2007/08 is also shown as a comparator. It should be noted that to improve the BVPI by 0.1% it is necessary to increase rent collected by £ 43,000.

Neighbourhood	Performance September 2007	Performance September 2008	Difference Between 2007/08 and 2008/09
Brighton East	95.89%	97.48%	+1.59%
Central	97.47%	98.34%	+0.87%
North & East	97.58%	98.33%	+0.75%
West	96.55%	98.34%	+1.79%
Temporary Accommodation	95.00%	96.14%	+1.14%
Citywide	96.79%	98.04%	+1.25%

- The table below shows what the percentages translate to in financial terms. Based on current performance it is forecast that the council will collect £39.27 million of the total collectable rent during the year that became due during the year.

Neighbourhood	Annual Rent Charged to Tenants (£)	Performance to the end of September 2008	How much of the rent charged for the year that we forecast we will collect (£)
Brighton East	12,757,059	97.48%	12,435,581
Central	7,742,343	98.34%	7,613,820
North & East	11,486,272	98.33%	11,294,451
West	7,792,215	98.34%	7,662,864
Temporary Accommodation	278,708	96.14%	267,950
Totals	40,056,597	98.04%	39,271,488

- 3.1.8 The figures above are a forecast relating to rent collected from charges made through the year. This figure can only ever be a forecast until the end of the year as only then is the exact rent charge for the year known. This is because during the year properties are purchased and rent is no longer charged, whilst others become empty and rent is not charged until they are occupied once again.
- 3.1.9 The figures above do not include any rent collected from arrears in previous years. The actual drop in arrears during the first two quarters of 2008/09 is £104,611. During this period the net total current tenant arrears has dropped from £905,675 to £801,064.
- 3.1.10 All neighbourhood areas have improved on last years result for the same period 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. The team is confident that it will meet its target collection rate of 98.5% by the end of 2008/09.
- 3.1.11 Although the performance for temporary accommodation is lower than other areas the significance of this is far less with arrears standing at £11,439 at the end of September 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 & Hove	6.56% (2nd Quarter 2008/09)
Unitaries – Top Quartile	4.71%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	6.81%
Unitaries – Average	5.98%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is included but is provisional until confirmation in January 2009.

- 3.1.12 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.
- 3.1.13 For 2008/09 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 small 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.
- 3.1.14 At the end of quarter 2 performance stood at 6.56%, or an average of 781 debtors with arrears of more than 7 weeks. During the first and second quarter of 2008/09 the number of tenants with more than 7 weeks arrears has dropped by 71. At the time of writing this report the target is being reviewed so that it remains stretching for the team.

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

BVPI 66c	
Brighton & Hove	14.49% (2nd Quarter 2008/09)
Unitaries – Top Quartile	15.91%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	31.01%
Unitaries – Average	23.11%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is included but is provisional until confirmation in January 2009.

- 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 of 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 comprehensive 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 do not lead officers into inappropriate court action. The government has issued a pre-action protocol for taking recovery action and internal procedures ensure officers follow these guidelines to give tenants every opportunity to enter into a repayment agreement and engage support services, where necessary. It does not therefore seem appropriate or desirable to artificially influence this indicator by not serving a NOSP, 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.

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 we 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. At the time of writing benchmarking information is only available for 2006/07. Extrapolating that data we estimate that this result will place Brighton & Hove in the 4th Quartile.

3.1.20 Brighton & Hove's procedure means that a NOSP is generally served 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 objective is to do well at BVPI66a whilst keeping BVPI66c as low as possible.

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

BVPI 66d	
Brighton	0.02% (2nd Quarter 2008/09)
Unitaries – Top Quartile	0.23%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	0.43%
Unitaries – Average	0.34%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08. Benchmarking information for 2007/08 is included but is provisional until confirmation in January 2009.

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

3.1.21 During the first two quarters of 2008/09 Brighton & Hove Council evicted 7 households for rent arrears.

3.2 Empty Property Turnaround Time

3.2.1 The Lettings Team are currently working with Housing Accounts and Housing IT, on a project to enable new tenants to start their tenancies on any day of the week, rather than just on a Monday, as is the current arrangement. Once completed, this initiative will enable new tenants to collect keys for their new property as soon as they can after repair works have been carried out, and provides an improvement in customer service in that tenants will be able to carry out their move over the weekend if they wish to.

3.2.2 The initiative will also help ensure that the council spends less money on clearing unwanted items from council properties, or recharging for the work, as transferring tenants will have more time to move from one property to another. A further benefit will be that where new tenants collect their keys on a Friday for example it will reduce the empty property turnaround time by three days.

3.2.3 New tenancies will not be charged for the part of the week in which they take early possession of the property. This is an added advantage for them, as they have a few days grace, and has no additional cost to the council as the property would have remained empty until the following Monday.

2008/9 <u>Target – 28</u> <u>days</u>	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Year to date
General needs housing													
BV212-Gen needs	24	26	25	22	26	30							25
Total let	56	53	63	50	45	54							321
% Let in target	75%	77%	70%	82%	73%	78%							76%
Sheltered housing													
BV212 - Sheltered	35	59	48	25	34	33							39
Total let	14	9	11	6	12	15							67
% Let in target	57%	67%	45%	83%	58%	40%							55%
Total for Housing Management													
BV212 – Total HM	26	31	28	23	28	30							28
Total let	70	62	74	56	57	69							388
% Let in target	71%	76%	66%	82%	70%	70%							72%
Temporary Accommodation													
BV212 - TACC	47	67	40	31	38	44							46
Total let	15	17	17	8	12	9							78
% Let in target	47%	59%	35%	63%	67%	33%							50%
All properties													
BV212 - All	30	38	30	24	30	32							31
Total let	85	79	91	64	69	78							466
% Let in target	67%	72%	60%	80%	70%	65%							68%

Empty property turnaround time:

3.3 Repairs and Maintenance Performance

Responsive Repairs

3.3.1 The tables below shows the percentage of responsive repairs completed within target time. The columns show overall performance for last year, the performance target for each repair priority, as well as the overall performance and the performance achieved by each repairs constructor.

Priority of Repair	Last Year 2007 / 2008	Target 2008 / 2009	Q1 Total Apr – Jun 08	Q2 Total Jul – Sep 08
Emergency Repairs Completed in time	88.36 %	97 %	95.45 %	93.79 %
No of Emergency Repairs completed	8,299	N/A	2,020	1,804
Urgent Repairs Completed in time	87.40 %	96 %	90.14 %	89.98 %
No of Urgent Repairs completed	8,938	N/A	1,806	1,078
Routine Repairs Completed within target time	88.63 %	95 %	91.05 %	93.92 %
No of Routine Repairs completed	13,892	N/A	4,259	4,425

Priority of Repair	Q1 Mears Apr – Jun 08	Q2 Mears Jul – Sep 08	Q1 Kier Apr – Jun 08	Q2 Kier Jul – Sep 08
Emergency Repairs Completed in time	94.83 %	97.87 %	96.21 %	88.31 %
No of Emergency Repairs completed	1,122	1,034	898	770
Urgent Repairs Completed in time	93.42 %	94.87 %	85.91 %	84.18 %
No of Urgent Repairs completed	1,018	585	788	493
Routine Repairs Completed within target time	94.50 %	97.33 %	86.27 %	88.96 %
No of Routine Repairs completed	2,474	2,623	1,785	1,802

- 3.3.2 Top quartile performance for other Major Cities within the country is as follows (based upon end of year 2007/2008 Major Cities benchmarking data):
- Emergency Repairs – 97%
 - Urgent Repairs – 97%
 - Routine Repairs – 94%
- 3.3.3 Overall performance remains below target with considerable difference in performance between the two constructors. Mear's performance is above target for emergency and routine repairs and slightly below target for urgent repairs. Kier's performance remains below target for all priorities. It should be noted that Kier are dealing with their backlog of overdue repairs so performance may be affected. Mears have already reduced their overdue repairs to less than ten orders.
- 3.3.4 Two IT issues have been identified with the link between Kier and BHCC, measures implemented to overcome these issues have had some success, but a multidisciplinary meeting for the week commencing 24th November has been set up to resolve these.
- 3.3.5 Measures implemented to improve our ratio of emergency to routine repairs have been a significant success, reducing the number of emergency works raised to our target of 25% indicating a more planned approach to carrying out work. The effect of this is to improve the number of jobs appointed, improving the service delivered to residents and giving the contractor better opportunity to plan workload.
- 3.3.6 Work with our constructors continues to ensure that diagnosis and specification of repairs are enhanced and that the level of repairs completed in one visit continues to improve. We anticipate that the measures being implemented to assist Kier and the continued improvement with Mears will deliver top quartile performance across the board by the next quarterly report.
- 3.3.7 The surveyor appointment system continues to be a success and has received some very positive feedback from tenants about the improvement in the service. The initiative has enabled surveyors to better focus on quality issues and follow jobs from inception to completion. It is acknowledged that the future involvement of customers in participating in this process was a desired objective. When agreement is reached on a form and methodology of participation, in this area, work will be progressed through the Asset Management Panel.

3.3.8 Decent Homes and Energy efficiency

The table below shows performance for other areas of repairs and maintenance:

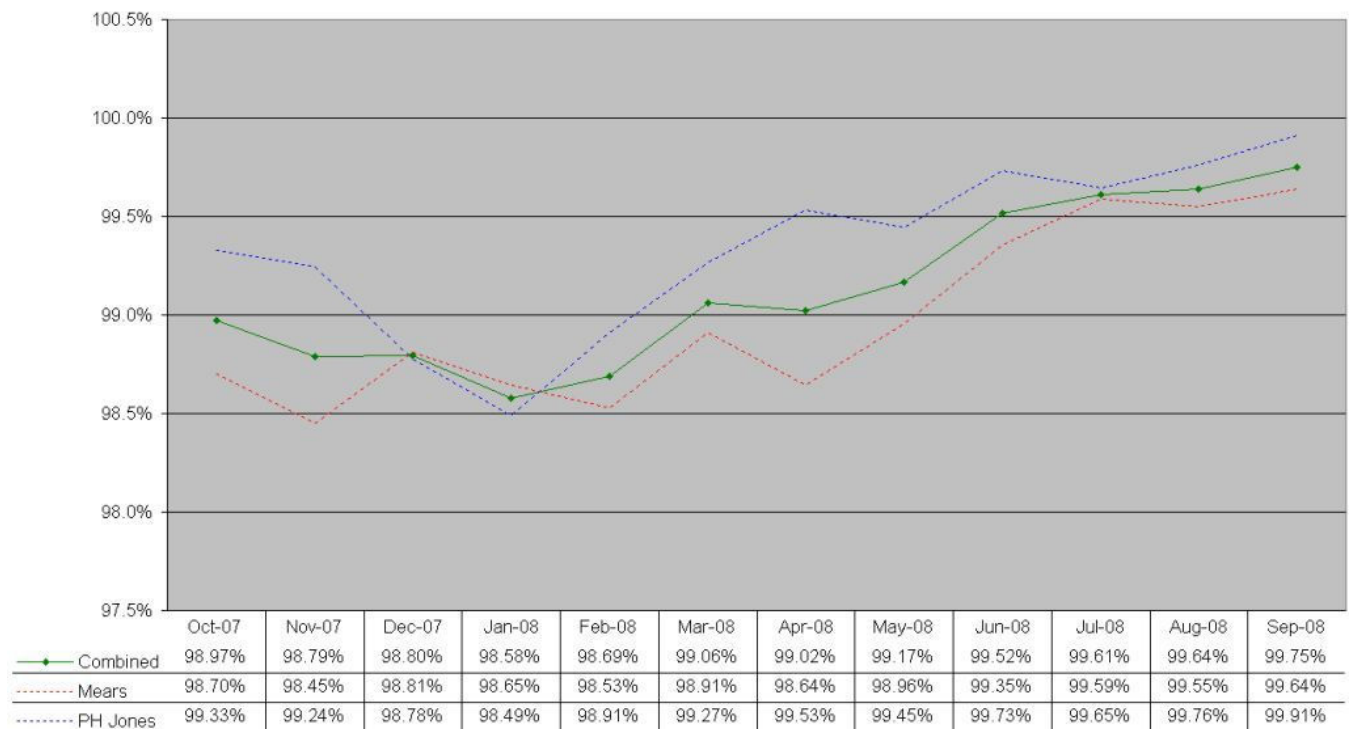
Performance Indicator	Last Year	Target	Q1 Total	Q2 Total
	2007 / 2008	2008 / 2009	Apr – Jun 08	Jul – Sep 08
NI158 % of council homes that are non-decent	56.65 %	46 %	56.45 %	55.69 %
BV63 - Energy Efficiency (SAP Rating)	75.4	75.6	75.5	75.6

3.3.9 A number of projects focused on decent homes are in progress this year. These include large programmes to install new boilers and to replace kitchens and bathrooms in resident’s homes as well as the replacement of front doors. Brighton & Hove City Council remains a strong performer on the energy efficiency of dwellings. Performance has again slightly improved over the second quarter of 2008/2009 and remains in the top quartile for performance when compared to other authorities (top quartile for all authorities is 72, top quartile for unitary authorities is 75).

3.4 Gas Servicing

3.4.1 The graph below shows the progress of Brighton & Hove City Council, Mears and PH Jones in servicing gas installations. The last five months figures (May, June, July, August and September) have each been new highs. The current figure of 99.75% of properties having a current gas service is the highest achieved by BHCC and its partners to date.

% of Properties with a Current Gas Service



The number of council properties with a valid gas safety certificate continues to improve. The end of quarter two figure of 99.75% (September 2008) is an improvement of 0.72% on the figure for the same time last year (99.03%, September 2007).

3.5 Estates Service

3.5.1 In the second quarter of this year the percentage of cleaning tasks carried out increased, to the extent that during this period almost 100% of all cleaning tasks were done across the city. Performance reporting within the Estates Service has recently improved, with data on the work that is done each day captured and recorded more quickly than previously. This change may have contributed to the improved figures.

3.5.2 The Estates Service Monitoring Group has said that it wants to see improved performance monitoring of the cleaning service and the group is now working with officers to introduce qualitative assessment into performance reporting. This will accompany the quantitative data below in future reports and will be based on information from satisfaction surveys, estate inspections and resident feedback on the service.

3.5.3 The new delivery model based on dedicated cleaners will also introduce greater accountability to the service, with named cleaners for the majority of buildings and increased assessment of the standard of their work by Cleaning Managers.

Estates Service Monitoring Figures					
Cleaning Performance June 08 – Sept 08					
	2007/8	June	July	August	Sept
Cleaning Performance	87	93	98	99	99
This data shows the cleaning performance percentage. This is defined as the cleaning tasks completed in the 4 week period as a percentage of the total number of jobs on the cleaning schedule that period.					

3.5.4 The bulk and graffiti removal teams continue to carry out a high number of jobs across the city. However, there was a drop in the number of jobs the graffiti team completed in August when their vehicle was in the garage for refurbishment. During this period, graffiti removal jobs were given to a contractor and the staff who usually work on the graffiti team carried out cleaning duties.

Estates Service Monitoring Figures					
Bulk Waste Removal May 08 – Sept 08					
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Urgent jobs	5	2	2	1	0
Routine jobs	204	213	237	191	226
Total	209	215	239	192	226
Target met for urgent jobs	40%	100%	0%	100%	N/A
Target met for routine jobs	66%	82%	83%	91%	90%
Target - urgent jobs removal in 1 working day of report					
Target - routine jobs removal within 7 working days of report					
Estates Service Monitoring Figures					
Graffiti Removal May 08 – Sept 08					
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Urgent jobs	1	1	4	N/A	4
Routine jobs	39	72	71	N/A	31
Total	40	73	75	N/A	35
Target met for urgent jobs	100%	100%	100%	N/A	100%
Target met for routine jobs	92%	93%	94%	N/A	94%
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.

The majority of performance measures discussed in this report have financial implications. For example, any improvements 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 tenant services in the future.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks 5 January 2009

Legal Implications:

5.1 There are none

Lawyer consulted: Deborah Jones Date: 5 December 2008

Equalities Implications:

5.3 There are no direct Equalities Implications arising from this report

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 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:

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

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 Not applicable to this report.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 These are contained within the body of the report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Housing Management Performance Reports - Charts

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

