



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Overview & Scrutiny

Title:	Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee Ad Hoc Panel -Students in the Community
Date:	5 March 2009
Time:	4.00pm
Venue	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: Meadows (Chairman), Janio and Wrighton
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AGENDA

Part One

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21. FINAL REPORT

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Please note that there was not an ad hoc panel meeting on 5 March 2009 but that the final report and recommendations were discussed at the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on that date.

Please see the attached report for a copy of the final report and the appendices.

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Date of Publication - Date Not Specified

Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Investigative Panel

Scrutiny Report - Students in the Community

February 2009

Overview & Scrutiny

Brighton & Hove City Council

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Chairman's Introduction

It is recognised in Brighton and Hove that the student population is making a positive contribution to the city's economy and diversity. However, we need to find a balance between the energy, vibrancy and economic value that students bring to our city with the genuine concerns of local residents, to maintain a positive sense of community for everyone who lives here.

As a city, we need to take steps to manage and reduce any adverse impacts on particular areas. This can only be achieved by the local authority working together with the universities, colleges, local residents, students and other partners.

This investigation and report have been borne out of the desire to recognise and balance the lifestyles of all of Brighton & Hove's residents, whether they are living in the city for the short term or have settled here more permanently

We should all strive to achieve a more equitable residential mix of housing to ensure that our city's community spirit is maintained. I hope that the recommendations made in this report will contribute to achieving this ambition.

On behalf of all three of the panel members, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to contact the panel with their views and comments and all of those people who attended our meetings; your input was greatly appreciated

Anne Meadows, Chairman Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny

Committee Ad Hoc Panel

February 2009

Executive Summary

1. The Scrutiny Review on Students in the Community was instigated by members of the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Brighton & Hove City Council in autumn 2008.
2. The initiative for the work came following the Committee's consideration of Brighton and Hove City Council's draft Housing Strategy. The draft strategy had been formulated with extensive reference to issues relating to student housing, but following discussions with the Directorate, the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee members felt that there was an opportunity for a more focused piece of work on the issues relating to the effect of students living in Brighton and Hove.
3. The scrutiny panel was established, consisting of three members of the Committee, Councillors Anne Meadows, Georgia Wrighton and Tony Janio. Councillor Meadows was Chairman of the panel.
4. The panel recognised at the scoping stage that there was the potential for a very large piece of work; they were conscious that their work had to be focussed on the effect of student accommodation on other residents.
5. Panel members felt that hearing from members of the public was vital to establish an understanding of the effect of students living in the city; they sought public comments in a variety of ways, including inviting people to speak to the panel or send in letters or emails. A total of 42 letters and emails were received, as well as a representation on behalf of 87 Elm Grove residents. In addition, 12 city residents including students spoke to the panel at the public meeting.
6. The panel heard that residents' frustrations could be broken down into a number of broad categories:
 - noise complaints from within student houses or from halls of residence
 - noise complaints in the street, particularly late at night when students were returning home or due to non smoking legislation within buildings
 - refuse and recycling was being left out on the wrong collection days
 - refuse, especially bulky waste, was being left on the pavement or in front gardens for extended periods of time, causing an inconvenience
 - student households having multiple cars per house, and using a lot of on-road parking spaces
 - residents did not know who to contact when they had a problem with a student household, or what action they were able to take
 - student landlords did not maintain the properties adequately, leading to a run-down appearance in the neighbourhood and a poor standard of accommodation
 - that there were no restrictions on the number of student households in an area,
 - some areas were becoming saturated with student households, affecting the balance of the community and the infrastructure.
 - There were problems associated with accommodation in both halls of residence and in private sector housing.
7. Residents were also keen to make the point that the problems that they had

experienced were often limited to a minority of students and that they were aware that the majority of students lived in the city without causing any disturbance to other residents.

8. In addition, the students who attended the panel raised further issues:
 - There was a wide spread tendency to view all problems associated with young people as being student related but this was not always the case
 - There should be an accreditation system for student landlords, to ensure that all accommodation was of an acceptable standard
 - The council, universities and students' unions should work together on campaigns that targeted students
 - Students brought a lot of positive benefits to the city, and carried out volunteering work which benefited the city. They should be encouraged to play an active role in the community
 - The Students Unions could encourage students to use public transport rather than private cars
9. The panel recognised that residents might not differentiate between a student and a non-student occupied House of Multiple Occupation, tending to assume that the property was tenanted by students if it was tenanted by young people. Nevertheless, it was still beneficial to consider the impact of students on residents and neighbourhoods, as there was felt to be a correlation between student households and residents' concerns.
10. The focus was on the two large universities in the city, the University of Sussex and University of Brighton as the majority of students living in the city attend one of these two institutions. However this should not be taken to mean that the panel's discussions and recommendations exclude other establishments such as City College and Brighton Institute of Modern Music, amongst others, as both of these have their own students living in private rented accommodation and will invariably have their own student effect issues.
11. Following the first public meeting, the panel held three evidence gathering public meetings over November and December 2008, inviting a number of expert witnesses to speak to them, including officers of the City Council, Brighton and Sussex Universities, the police and city landlords, in order to understand the various issues that they had heard about from residents, and suggest recommendations to remedy areas where there may be problems.
12. At the end of the evidence gathering process, the panel met again to discuss the evidence that they had heard and to compile their recommendations. The panel have made a total of 37 recommendations which they hope will help to address the negative effects that residents reported.
13. The recommendations are aimed at a variety of audiences, including Cabinet Members within Brighton and Hove City Council and to the universities themselves.
14. The panel's work is intended to complement other research going on across the city through the Strategic Housing Partnership but it does not duplicate that work. It is hoped that this report and recommendations will be included in the ongoing work that is developed through the Partnership, helping them to formulate future policy documents.

Summary of Recommendations

Noise Nuisance

Recommendation 1 - The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment extends the council-run Noise Patrol to operate over more nights of the week, probably Wednesday and Thursday, and to extend the existing weekend operating hours, (page 28)

Recommendation 2 - The panel recommends that there should be increased publicity to advise residents that they can report a noise nuisance problem retrospectively; this could be included in City News, on the council's website and perhaps in leaflets in public offices.(page 29)

Recommendation 3 - The panel recommends that the Out of Hours emergency noise patrol service should be properly resourced and properly publicised, (page 29)

Recommendation 4 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment resources a 24 hour telephone line for the public to report non-emergency noise and anti-social behaviour, (page 29)

Recommendation 5 - the panel recommends that the Environmental Health and Licensing Team reviews its noise nuisance procedures in order to assess whether the noise nuisance diary sheets are always the most effective and user-friendly way of addressing noise complaints, (page 29)

Recommendation 6 - the panel would like to see the SShh campaign developed by Students' Unions and publicised widely in conjunction with community association representatives and ward councillors. This should be an ongoing annual campaign due to the turnover of students. (page 30)

Recommendation 7 - the panel recommends that the universities, the Police and the Student Union work together to find ways to jointly address the issue of street noise nuisance in residential areas, caused by groups of students returning from nights out. (page 30)

Recommendation 8 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers whether there is a more suitable outside space that might be used, and that measures are put in place to address noise from smokers and other students gathering on the Podium at the Southover Street Phoenix Halls, (page 30)

Recommendation 9 - The panel would recommend that the University of Brighton considers introducing a policy asking students on the Phoenix Halls site to close their windows before playing music at night, in order to minimize noise nuisance for neighbours. The panel would also ask that clearer, more visible signage is installed across the Phoenix Halls site asking that noise is kept to a minimum after 11pm. (page 30)

Recommendation 10 - the panel would like to suggest that the University of Brighton considers the staffing resources that might be needed to provide an effective way of managing and minimising the noise nuisance and how its premises in residential areas are controlled, (page 31)

Recommendation 11 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers planting trees and bushes on the Phoenix Halls site, in order to assess whether this would help to mask any noise. The panel would like to suggest that the university talks to local residents about their experiences after a trial period, (page 31).

Recommendation 12 - the panel would like to ask that the universities and developers have regard to possible noise impact on neighbours and the particular architectural nature of the area in which they will be built when they are being designed, especially in relation to the provision of smoking areas for residents. The panel also recommends that this suggestion is formalized in any relevant planning documents relating to student accommodation, (page 31)

Community Liaison Staff

Recommendation 13 - the panel recommends that the University of Sussex considers following the good practice established by the University of Brighton and establishes a role of a dedicated Community Liaison Officer for the University of Sussex. The two officers could work together to address shared student problems across Brighton and Hove, (page 32)

Refuse & Recycling

Recommendation 14 - the panel recommends that CityClean issues wheeled bin stickers giving information about collection days so that all households know when to put their refuse out. It is recommended that this would be an alternative to the magnets that are currently issued, (page 33)

Recommendation 15 - the panel recommends that for those areas of the city that do not currently have council-issued wheeled bins, CityClean should erect additional notices on lamp-posts advising residents of their collection day. (page 34)

Recommendation 16 - the panel recommends that CityClean places the information stickers for their recycling boxes in order that they can be stuck to the box rather than on the lid, as the lids tend to blow away, (page 34)

Recommendation 17 - the panel recommends that CityClean advertises information about changes in collection dates for refuse and recycling in both of the universities' newspapers and on the universities' websites, in addition to the usual council publication locations. (page 35)

Recommendation 18 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the issue of how to tackle the problem of bulky waste being fly tipped by student households, both throughout term-time and at the end of term. The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member gives the suggestions made in the body of the report due consideration, (page 36)

Recommendation 19- the panel suggests that the universities organise termly clean up days in conjunction with their student unions, (page 36)

Car Parking

Recommendation 20 - the panel recommend that the universities include information in their prospectuses and accommodation guides about the range of public transport and Car Clubs in the city and that they explicitly recommend that students do not bring cars with them, (page 37)

Recommendation 21- Students should be treated on the same basis as non-students when it comes to the issue of residents' parking permits, (page 37)

Council Tax

Recommendation 22 - the panel would encourage Council Tax officers to continue to liaise regularly with the universities in order to establish current and future student numbers, (page 38)

Recommendation 23 - the panel recommends that the Council Tax service considers the four suggestions made in the body of the report about how to improve levels of registered student household exemptions, (page 39)

Planning Policies

Recommendation 24 - the panel recommend that the existing Planning Strategy team carries out research into the various planning options available to control the level of student housing, and to consider whether there would be any merit in introducing such controls into Brighton & Hove where this was appropriate for the area. If planning controls were introduced, this would help to ensure balanced and mixed communities across the city.

The Planning Strategy Team should also consider the feasibility of adopting a planning condition regarding the need for universities who have planning permission to expand their educational space to provide a commensurate increase in bed spaces.

The findings should be published as a Supplementary Planning Document, (page 41)

Recommendation 25 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council with regard to the planning Use Classes Order and the associated permitted development rights, (page 41)

Recommendation 26 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council to request that student housing is given its own targets with regards to providing accommodation, (page 41)

Recommendation 27 - the panel recommends that the Planning Strategy team recognises the need for student accommodation to be planned and that the team considers positively identifying land suitable for halls of residence in the Local Development Framework. The team could consider the scope for including small numbers of units of student housing amongst major new- build developments (page 42)

Provision of Halls of Residence

Recommendation 28 - the panel would suggest that the universities, working with the students' union consider the potential for offering alternative, affordable accommodation in halls of residence for students with low incomes, (page 43)

Recommendation 29 - the panel would suggest that the universities consider whether there is scope to expand the offer of rooms in halls of residence, not only to first year students but also to those second and third years who would like to live there, (page 43)

Recommendation 30 - the panel would suggest to the universities that they explore the possibilities of expanding their portfolio of directly managed properties over the long term, in order to increase the range of options available to student tenants, (page 44)

Student Landlord Issues

Recommendation 31 - the panel recommends that the Private Sector Housing Team discuss the potential benefits of extending the landlord accreditation scheme in relation to student accommodation, which does not fit into the existing Houses of Multiple Occupation accreditation scheme, with representatives from Brighton and Hove's landlord associations and other parties, (page 46)

Empty Properties

Recommendation 32 - the panel recommends that the Empty Properties Team works proactively with student landlords and managing agents to ensure that student properties that are unoccupied can be reused for social housing, (page 46)

Partnership Working and Communications

Recommendation 33 - the panel recommends that a Student Working Group is formed, comprising of both of the universities and local colleges, the council, police, residents representing Residents' Associations, the students' unions, ward councillors, representatives for landlords and community liaison staff or staff from the accommodation teams. This would facilitate ongoing and improved communication and liaison between the partners.

The Group should consider the operational issues caused by the impact of students living in the city and discuss ways of addressing possible solutions where necessary. The Group should also coordinate a shared database of sanctions that the partners already have. (page 48)

Recommendation 34 - the panel recommends the immediate benefits of a shared information pack for all partners in the city to issue to students and that the Student Working Group could implement this as one of their first actions, (page 49)

Recommendation 35 - the panel recommends that the Student Working Group considers the benefits of carrying out a 'Neighbourhood Health Impact Assessment' or a cumulative

impact zone in student neighbourhoods, (page 49)

Positive Impact of Students to Local Community

Recommendation 36 - the panel would recommend that the universities continue to encourage students to take part in volunteering opportunities in the residential areas in the city where there is a significant student population in order to foster improved community relations. The ward councillors and community association should become involved in helping to prioritise tasks, (page 50)

Recommendation 37 - the panel would encourage students, via their Students' Unions, to attend their Local Action Team meetings and to play an active part in the community. (p50)

Part A - Introduction

1-The Scrutiny Review

- 1.1** The Scrutiny Review on Students in the Community was instigated by members of the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2008, as part of Brighton and Hove City Council's Overview and Scrutiny programme.

Brighton and Hove City Council's draft Housing Strategy had been formulated with extensive reference to issues relating to student housing, but the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee members felt that there was an opportunity for a more focused piece of work on the issues relating to the effect of students living in the local community.

The scrutiny panel was proposed, with its remit to seek to take evidence from local residents including students and from a variety of expert sources, including officers of the City Council, Brighton and Sussex Universities, the police and city landlords, in order to understand the various issues and suggest recommendations to remedy areas where there may be problems. Please see Appendix 2 for copies of the letters and emails and Appendix 4 for a list of witnesses.

- 1.2** The Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form the proposed ad-hoc investigative panel to investigate this issue at its 4 September 2008 meeting.

[http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000139/M00001586/\\$\\$\\$Minutes.doc.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000139/M00001586/$$$Minutes.doc.pdf)

- 1.3** Councillors Anne Meadows, Georgia Wrighton and Tony Janio agreed to become panel members. The panel members subsequently elected Councillor Meadows as Chairman of the panel.

- 1.4** The panel held one public meeting for residents and students to share their experiences with the panel, and three public meetings for evidence gathering, at which invited witnesses spoke to the panel, responding to questions about students in the local community.

- 1.5** The public meeting was very well attended. Many city residents took the opportunity to share their views about living alongside student households; students from both universities also spoke about their experiences of living in Brighton and Hove. In addition to the public comments, the panel received a number of written submissions from residents on this topic.

- 1.6** The witnesses at the three evidence gathering meetings included experts on student impact both nationally and locally; representatives for the Strategic Housing Partnership; representatives from Neighbourhood Police; officers of Brighton & Hove City Council (including managers from Private Sector Housing and Housing Strategy, Neighbourhood Renewal, Development Control, Planning Strategy, CityClean,

Environmental Health and Licensing, Council Tax and Strategic Finance); local letting agents; a representative on behalf of the National Federation of Private Landlords; senior officers from both the University of Sussex and Brighton University, and members of staff from both universities.

The panel would like to place on record its thanks to all of the people who took the time and effort to write in to them or gave evidence in person, to the expert witnesses for their invaluable contribution, and to all of the participants for the positive and helpful way in which they discussed the matter with the panel.

2 - Scope of the Review Panel

- 2.1 The panel members met prior to the first public meeting in order to agree the scope of the review.
- 2.2 The members agreed that their focus would be to consider how best to investigate the effect of student accommodation in residential areas, whilst recognising the long and short term positive effects of the universities and colleges and their student population for Brighton and Hove. It was important to set the effects in a context of the advantages of having the universities and colleges and their students in the city.

The panel was aware that there were already high-level strategic partnerships in place between Brighton & Hove City Council, both of the city's universities and other housing partners through the work of the Strategic Housing Partnership, one of the family of partners in the Local Strategic Partnership.

The ad hoc panel's work was not intended to duplicate the Strategic Housing Partnership's work but rather to assist its work by considering operational and practical solutions to the effect of student accommodation.

- 2.3 The panel recognised from the outset that a significant proportion of the negative impacts that they were investigating were not limited to student households, but that they were often indicative of Houses of Multiple Occupation.

Brighton has one of the highest proportions of privately rented homes in England outside London, although not all of these will be Houses of Multiple Occupation. Nationally 48 per cent of heads of household in the private rented sector are under 35, compared to 20 per cent in social renting and 13 per cent in owner occupation (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housinasurvevs/survevofenali/shhousina/sehlivetables/survevenalish/224421/>)

The panel also recognised that residents might not differentiate between a student and a non-student occupied House of Multiple Occupation, tending to assume that the property was tenanted by students if it is tenanted by young people. Nevertheless, it was still beneficial to consider the impact of students on residents and neighbourhoods, as there was felt to be a correlation between student households and higher reports of residents' concerns.

- 2.4 The panel members had an initial range of ideas of the witnesses that they wished to invite to speak, but they felt that it was essential for residents to be able to have their input into the review at an early stage, so that members could attempt to identify and

understand the various issues involved from the outset. With this in mind, the first meeting was publicised as being open to anybody who wished to speak to the panel; written submissions were also actively encouraged, through press releases in the local newspaper, *The Argus*, and on the council's website, www.brighton-hove.gov.uk.

- 2.5 There was evidence from the content of some residents' contact with ward councillors suggesting that student housing - and in particular what was felt to be an overwhelming level of student accommodation in some areas- was causing a significant level of resentment and unhappiness that it was hoped could be avoided or reduced.
- 2.6 Following the public meeting and the written submissions, the panel finalised their list of invited witnesses, arranging for the relevant people to be able to respond to the points that had been raised by residents.
- 2.7 During the investigative panel, the focus was on the two large universities in the city, the University of Sussex and University of Brighton as the majority of students living in the city attend one of these two institutions. However this should not be taken to mean that the panel's discussions and recommendations exclude other establishments such as City College and Brighton Institute of Modern Music, amongst others, as both of these have their own students living in private rented accommodation and will invariably have their own student impact issues.
- 2.8 Due to the time-limited nature of an ad hoc panel (with constitutional guidance that the work should be conducted within three meetings or less) the panel took an early decision to focus on areas of residents' complaints and concern, particularly within the accommodation arena, as this was felt to be the focus of residents' dissatisfaction. As a related issue, the panel also wished to cover associated aspects of student impact, such as the effect on Council Tax due to student-only households, as this has an effect on the city as a whole.
- 2.9 Again, due to the time restrictions of an ad hoc panel, at the scoping stage the members also took the conscious decision not to actively investigate the many positive aspects that students living in Brighton and Hove brought to the city, although several members of the public and a number of the invited witnesses did make specific reference to this. In particular, the panel decided that it would not be practical to include the economic effect of students on the city in its scope.
- 2.10 The final report will be considered by the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the parent committee of this panel. The report will then go to Cabinet Members for a formal decision on the recommendations that have been made.

3 - Number and Areas of Student Households

- 3.1 There are two universities in Brighton & Hove, the University of Sussex and University of Brighton, as well as a number of other smaller colleges including City College and the Brighton Institute of Modern Music.
- 3.2 Mapping from 2002-2007 showed the greatest concentration of student households in the 'traditional' student areas of Hanover, Hartington Road and Moulescomb but the situation had been fluid. Recent years have seen significant numbers of students residing near London Road Station and in Regency Ward, with future movements into

Hollingdean anticipated.

3.3 Joanna Sage, a research student from the University of Brighton has provided the panel with a breakdown of student households from both of the universities in Brighton and Hove, by ward for the 2006/07 intake.

Table One shows students living in the private rented sector or their own homes (but not those living in the parental home). Table Two shows students living in halls of residence, for example, those living in Phoenix Halls in Southover Street.

Table One:

Ward	Students in Private Rented Sector or Own Home
Withdean	189
North Portslade	54
Hangleton and Knoll	92
Stanford	75
Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	1715
Hollingbury and Stanmer	711
Rottingdean Coastal	184
Woodingdean	63
Wish	103
Goldsmid	347
St. Peter's and North Laine	1650
South Portslade	81
Preston Park	568
Patcham	85
Hanover and Elm Grove	1497
East Brighton	253
Brunswick and Adelaide	429
Westbourne	154
Central Hove	210
Regency	569
Queen's Park	697
TOTAL	9726

Source: University of Brighton and University of Sussex enrolment: data

Coverage: 2006-07 intake, Brighton & Hove City

Description This data refers to undergraduate students living in the Private Rented Sector, or in their own home - this does not refer to the parental home, but a home owned by the student or their family, but lived in solely by the student. This data does not include the postgraduate population.

Table Two:

Ward	Number of Students Living in Halls/ University Managed Accommodation
Withdean	13
North Portslade	0
Hangleton and Knoll	3
Stanford	0
Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	419
Hollingbury and Stanmer	3334
Rottingdean Coastal	4
Woodingdean	0
Wish	0
Goldsmid	29
St. Peter's and North Laine	117
South Portslade	1
Preston Park	43
Patcham	1
Hanover and Elm Grove	161
East Brighton	6
Brunswick and Adelaide	179
Westbourne	3
Central Hove	3
Regency	230
Queen's Park	56
TOTAL	4602

Source: University of Brighton and University of Sussex enrolment data

Coverage: 2006-07 intake, Brighton & Hove City

Description: This data refers to the undergraduate student population living in halls of residence or University managed accommodation, and does not include the postgraduate population. This data has been mapped according to student term time postcode data provided by the student at the point of enrolment. Students living outside of the Brighton & Hove City boundary are not included in this data set.

3.4 It can be seen from both of these tables that there are some areas of Brighton & Hove that are more sought after and populated by students as areas to live, in particular, the four Brighton wards of Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, and St Peters and North Laine, each of which had in excess of 1500 students in the ward.

At the opposite end of the scale, there were a number of wards within Brighton & Hove that had a very low student population. Six wards - North Portslade, Hangleton and Knoll, Stanford, Woodingdean, South Portslade and Patcham - each had fewer than one hundred students living in the ward. It can be seen from the numbers above that

students are more likely to live in Brighton rather than Hove.

- 3.5** This pattern of a concentrated number of student households in certain areas of the city is not unique to Brighton and Hove. It is a situation that has been occurring nationally in university towns and cities. It has been termed 'studentification', a term coined by Dr Darren Smith of the University of Brighton.

'Studentification' can indicate the social and environmental changes caused by very large numbers of students living in particular areas of a town or city (Macmillan English Dictionary - <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/New-Words/040124-studentification.htm>)

However the term 'studentification' has taken on negative connotations in the media - page 11 <http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/community%20report1.pdf> and the National Union of Students Welfare Campaign looking into the issue of student housing suggested that the term 'students in the community' was used as an alternative; we have endeavoured to use 'students in the community' in this report.

Part B - Evidence Gathering

1 -Public Engagement

- 1.1 Panel members considered it essential for residents to have the opportunity to describe how their lives were affected by students living in their neighbourhoods at the start of the process so that the investigation could be resident-led.
- 1.2 An article was published in the Argus on 4 October 2008 and on Brighton & Hove City Council's website at the same time inviting people to either write in with their comments or to attend the public meeting at Hove Town Hall on 17 October 2008. Subsequently, stories were published in the Argus on 21 October, 27 October, 29 October, 30 October, 31 October, 10 November and 24 November 2008. It was the topic of an on-line 'Friday Inquisition' on the Argus's website on 31 October 2008, where members of the public emailed in their questions about student housing and Councillor Meadows and representatives from both universities publically responded to the questions.
[http://www.theargus.co.uk/search/3808497.Councillor Anne Meadows and Brighton universities Student Unions /](http://www.theargus.co.uk/search/3808497.Councillor+Anne+Meadows+and+Brighton+universities+Student+Unions/)
- Please see Appendix 1 for the press release and Appendix 5 for copies of the text of the above articles.
- 1.3 The panel ensured that both Sussex and Brighton's students' unions were aware of the public meeting. The student union presidents and students from both universities were encouraged to attend and did attend the meeting.
- 1.4 The panel received 42 individual letters and emails from residents, and a representation from David Lepper MP on behalf of 87 residents from the Elm Grove area of Brighton. Please see Appendix 2 for copies of the text of the letters, emails and representations.
- 1.5 Members heard detailed submissions and statements from twelve residents including students at the public meeting on 17 October 2008 in Hove Town Hall. The local media attended, as they did for the evidence gathering meetings, and stories and letters were published in the Argus after the meetings.
- 1.6 Members would like to formally thank everybody who took the trouble to contact them or to come to the public meeting. Members were particularly pleased to hear from students from both universities, including the presidents of both Students' Unions.

Residents' Comments

- 1.7 As mentioned in Section 2a, there are four areas of Brighton and Hove which have a much higher student population than others. It was anticipated that the majority of resident comments would therefore come from residents living in those four wards - Moulscroomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, and St Peters and North Laine. This proved to be the case.
- 1.8 Residents expressed a wide variety of views, both positive and negative, about the impact of student households in their neighbourhoods and in the city generally.

Residents were, in general, keen not to lay the blame for problems with students as a whole, recognising that the majority of student households did not cause trouble.

Residents felt that it was the problems that had been experienced were largely due to a combination of factors, including a lack of information being given to student households on a variety of issues such as refuse collection days, a lack of planning legislation specifically on student housing.

1.9 The more negative comments that the panel received from the letters, emails and the public meeting are summarised in the list below.

- noise complaints from within student houses or from halls of residence
- noise complaints in the street, particularly late at night when students were returning home or due to non smoking legislation within buildings
- refuse and recycling was being left out on the wrong collection days
- refuse, especially bulky waste, was being left on the pavement or in front gardens for extended periods of time, causing an inconvenience
- student households having multiple cars per house, and using a lot of on-road parking spaces
- residents did not know who to contact when they had a problem with a student household, or what action they were able to take
- student landlords did not maintain the properties adequately, leading to a run-down appearance in the neighbourhood and a poor standard of accommodation
- that there were no restrictions on the number of student households in an area,
- some areas were becoming saturated with student households, affecting the balance of the community and the infrastructure.

It is important to note that there were problems associated with accommodation in both halls of residence and in private sector housing.

1.10 In addition, the students who attended the panel - who are also residents in the city - raised further issues:

- There was a wide spread tendency to view all problems associated with young people as being student related but this was not always the case
- There should be an accreditation system for student landlords, to ensure that all accommodation was of an acceptable standard
- The council, universities and students' unions should work together on campaigns that targeted students
- Students brought a lot of positive benefits to the city, and carried out volunteering work which benefited the city. They should be encouraged to play an active role in the community
- The Students Unions could encourage students to use public transport rather than private cars

More information is given on each of these points in the relevant chapters of this report.

2 -Evidence Gathering Meetings

2.1 Following the public meeting on 17 October 2008, the panel held three expert witness meetings in public, where invited witnesses came to speak to the panel about their thoughts on the impact of students living in Brighton and Hove. These were on 7

November 2008, 21 November 2008 and 5 December 2008. Residents and students attended each of the meetings.

The panel decided to divide the meeting location between Hove Town Hall and Brighton Town Hall in order to allow for greater accessibility for members of the public.

Full copies of the minutes for each of the four public meetings can be found in Appendix 3.

2.2 7 November 2008 in Hove Town Hall

2.2(i) Dr Smith, Reader in Geography, and Ms Sage, University of Brighton told the panel that they had studied the effect of increasing student numbers on several cities across the UK; they had mapped student households in Brighton and Hove. There was fluidity in the student housing market, with different areas of the city having higher concentrations and others lower numbers. The panel heard that Dr Smith and Ms Sage anticipated that there would be more student movement into Hollingdean in the near future.

The panel heard that Dr Smith and Ms Sage did not think it likely that de-studentification (where the overall numbers of students fall significantly) would occur in the city as it was an attractive destination for students. Both universities anticipated their attendance figures rising or staying stable until at least 2015.

Dr Smith and Ms Sage's research had shown that, in cities where de-studentification had occurred in some areas, this did not mean that the properties reverted to use as family housing; instead they were used for young professional tenants.

2.2 (ii) Mr Mannall, Community Liaison Officer, University of Brighton spoke about his role at the University of Brighton. He liaised with different agencies across the city on behalf of the University, as well as investigating and resolving individual complaints. Mr Mannall said that agencies welcomed there being a liaison officer.

Mr Mannall thought that it might be useful for there to be a shared information/ induction pack for all of the educational institutions to use, as well as the landlords, letting agents, the local authority and other partners. University of Brighton students were currently made aware of the standard of behaviour that was expected through compulsory inductions; the Student's Union was very involved in this process.

2.2(iii) Mr Newell, Community 2020 Partnership Officer, Brighton and Hove City Council spoke on behalf of the Strategic Housing Partnership, who were carrying out their own investigation into student impact on the city from both a positive and a negative stance. The Strategic Housing Partnership was focused on high-level strategic planning, coordinating discussions between various partners.

2.2(iv) Mr Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing, Brighton and Hove City Council told the panel about the legislation relating to Houses of Multiple Occupation from a private sector housing viewpoint. Legislation was fairly restrictive, both with regards to the way in which it defined a House of Multiple Occupation - a property of more than two storeys and/ or housing more than five people not living together as a single household - but also in terms of the powers given to local authorities. These powers tended to focus on ensuring a certain standard of

accommodation rather than managing any effect on the local community. Mr Reid said that most city landlords already provided good quality accommodation; any problems could be addressed through close working together between the universities and the local authority.

2.2(v) Mr Allen, Director, ebndc (East Brighton and New Deal for Communities) Partnership and Head of Neighbourhood Renewal Development and Strategy, Brighton and Hove City Council spoke about the positive contributions made by students to Brighton and Hove. Both of the universities were heavily involved in community and voluntary work in the city.

2.3 21 November 2008 in Brighton Town Hall

2.3(i) Sergeant Belfield, Street Policing Team explained that his team covered Hanover, St Peters and the North Laine areas. These were areas with high numbers of student residents, in both private rented accommodation and in halls of residence. Sergeant Belfield said that in his experience, students did not tend to cause difficulties in the city centre, but that the Street Policing Team would be tend to be called for noise complaints from students returning home or from noisy house parties. The police had powers to become involved in closing down noisy parties; tackling parking obstructions and double parking offences and so on.

Sergeant Belfield felt that students were often unaware that they were causing noise problems; it was important to raise students' awareness, perhaps by students attending residents' meetings to gauge the scale of the upset caused.

2.3(ii) Mr Nichols, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Brighton and Hove City Council explained that his officers had a statutory duty to investigate all noise complaints received. The largest proportion of environmental health complaints were about noise nuisance, with over 3200 complaints received in 2007/8. It was not possible to calculate what percentage of the complaints received were about student households as this information was not collected.

The panel heard that a variety of penalties could be imposed, with equipment seizure being the most stringent. In 2007/8 149 noise abatement notices had been issued, with 16 prosecutions and two audio equipment seizures. Noise nuisance complaints had escalated by approximately 10% last year and 7% the year before. So far in 2008/9, there had been six equipment seizures [This had now increased to eight equipment seizures by February 2009]. It was hard to quantify why complaints had escalated, but it could be due to a combination of factors including better audio equipment, smoking legislation leading to more people being outdoors, and the removal of artificially early fixed licensing hours. Mr Nichols listed the various ways that the team could investigate noise complaints; it was not limited to calling out the noise patrol.

Mr Nichols said that he felt that addressing the problem of street noise was a gap in protection for residents. The recent Noise Act had introduced the power to issue fixed penalty notices of £100 fine or £1000 on prosecution which assisted in remedying sporadic, occasional loud parties. The council had issued 67 warning notices in 2007/08 and 71 warning notices between April 2008 and 22 January 2009.

The Environmental Protection team carried out customer satisfaction surveys, which had shown a generally high level of customer satisfaction with the service. The most

common comment from residents was that the hours of the service should be extended or operated on other days of the week.

2.3(iii) Mr Fraser, Head of Planning Strategy, Brighton and Hove City Council told the panel that the current Local Plan had been based on information from 2001 at which time student housing had not been an issue for the city; therefore student housing had not featured within it. Central government gave local authorities various housing targets, but that there was no government target for student housing. He would be wary of allocating land for student-specific accommodation in the city centre, due to the competing demands for any such land.

Mr Fraser did not feel that planning controls were the way to tackle problems caused by student accommodation; instead, it would be more beneficial to work with the universities and housing colleagues to find ways of providing more adequate student accommodation near the universities. The Planning Strategy Team was actively working with both universities to address possible solutions to the student housing problem.

2.3(iv) Ms Walsh, Head of Development Control, Brighton and Hove City Council, outlined the role of the Development Control Team in making recommendations on planning applications, and in investigating breaches of planning control. Ms Walsh clarified the legislation on Houses of Multiple Occupation from a planning control perspective, which differed from the private sector housing viewpoint.

2.3(v) Ms Marston, Head of CityClean, and Mr Marmura, Operations Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council, explained CityClean's policies with regard to student households. Households of five or more people could request a larger wheeled bin from CityClean. There was no limit (within reason) to the number of recycling boxes that a household could have. Problems such as leaving refuse or recycling out on the incorrect day were not a student-specific problem but a city-wide issue; CityClean would be happy to consider other communication campaigns to help address this. CityClean worked with the universities on a communication campaign. It was felt that more could be done with landlords to keep information flowing to student households. CityClean would welcome telephone calls from residents advising them of any households that might be causing problems.

2.4 5 December 2008 in Brighton Town Hall

2.4 (i) Mr Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance, and Ms Pearce, Assistant Director, Customer Services, Brighton and Hove City Council, spoke about the effect of student households on Council Tax, both in terms of households being exempt and in terms of the unnecessary costs incurred by the local authority in billing households who had not claimed exemption. This was particularly costly for those cases where the council had issued court proceedings before the household notified of their exemption status. The Council Tax Team already worked closely with the universities to try and encourage students to register for exemptions as early as possible, but it was always possible to improve the situation and raise students' awareness.

2.4(ii) Mr Pearce, MTM Lettings said that he had been a student landlord in the city for 14 years; MTM had been in operation for five years. They managed approximately two hundred properties in the city, mostly being student lets in popular student areas. MTM were keen to tackle any negative student impact issues, and issued an induction pack with useful information. MTM operated a complaints procedure and addressed resident

complaints directly with the students where necessary.

Mr Pearce felt that the supply of student accommodation exceeded demand, and that he already had some empty properties on his books. The key factor was the quality of the accommodation.

2.4(iii) Mr Shields, G4 Lets said that G4 Lets focused on student lets, particularly in the Ditchling Road area. G4 gave their tenants a welcome pack with useful information and aimed to visit each property once a month. If a neighbour reported a problem household, G4 would address this directly with the student.

Mr Shields spoke about the trend of adding conservatories to student properties in order to create a living area. Mr Shields felt there were a number of benefits to converting the garden to a conservatory; students tended not to garden and so it made the space more useful.

2.4(iv) Ms Rich, National Federation of Private Landlords explained her qualifications to the panel; these included being a previous director of the National Federation of Private Landlords and author of the Federation's Landlord Training Manual. Ms Rich felt that it was becoming harder for landlords to let to students due to the lack of power given to landlords to take any action against problem tenants. It would take several months for a landlord to take a case to court; this was not a practical solution. Ms Rich did not feel that planning controls would be the answer to tackling the problems; it depended on micro-management. Ms Rich felt that one solution to noisy tenants could be to introduce on the spot fines, to be imposed by the council or police.

2.4(v) Mr House, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton said that the university needed to expand its campus accommodation; if it wished to offer first year accommodation to those students who had expressed an interest, it would have to double the current level. There were plans to expand Varley Hall and to develop land in Circus Street. However private sector housing also had a key role.

Mr House spoke about the problems that had been reported from Phoenix Halls; the university had been surprised by the current level of complaints as this was a relatively new situation. The university was committed to dealing with the problems and resolving them for the benefits of all parties. The university had employed a fulltime Community Liaison Officer, which he hoped would show their commitment to tackling problems. They were also reviewing the adverse effect of the smoking ban, recognising that students gathering to smoke outdoors had caused significant noise problems.

2.4(vi) Mr Dudley, Director of Residential, Sport and Trading Services and Ms Holness, Residential Services Manager, University of Sussex said that the university did not have a designated community liaison officer but that they suggested residents contacted the Housing Team in the case of any problems. Ms Holness said that the university did not tend to receive many complaints about its students in general. The university took steps to teach skills for life to their first year students living in halls.

The university was committed to housing all first year students in university managed accommodation. An exit survey was carried out with first year students leaving halls; 45% of students would like to have remained living in halls for a further year. There was almost 100% occupancy rate for the accommodation, with a majority of students stating that they believed them to offer value for money.

A study was underway looking at shared services with the University of Brighton; it was possible that recommendations from this might include the University of Sussex having its own community liaison officer, and improved communication channels between the two universities.

Part C - Recommendations

1 - Next steps

- 1.1 Following the public meeting and the three expert witness meetings, the panel met to consider all of the evidence that they heard and to suggest recommendations that might improve or affect some of the negative student effects that residents had raised.
- 1.2 Recommendations that have been made about council services will need to be considered and responded to by the relevant Cabinet Ministers. There are recommendations which will be made to the Cabinet Member for Housing; recommendations made to the Cabinet Member for Environment; recommendations made to the Cabinet Member for Central Services; and recommendations made to the Cabinet Member for Communities.
- 1.3 There are a number of suggestions that the panel has made that are solely for the universities. The panel acknowledges that the universities will have their own requirements and priorities, and that the council cannot impose its own rules on the universities. Nevertheless, there were a number of issues that residents raised which the panel wished to address as much as they were able. It is hoped that the universities will give reasonable consideration to the suggestions that have been made.

Recommendations

2 - Tackling Negative Impact in Residential Areas

- 2.1 The panel heard about a range of ways in which student households had a negative effect on residents' day to day living. These included noise nuisance in a variety of forms, problems with refuse and recycling, and student households having more than one car, thereby taking up an excessive number of parking spaces.

2.2 Noise Nuisance

'all night parties were a very regular, sometimes nightly occurrence both at the Phoenix and in the streets and gardens backing onto mine'

'there is the everyday disturbance that happens when people come home drunk at 2am, chase each other screaming up the stairs...a house filled with fire doors slamming through the night'

'the sshh campaign is a great idea'

- 2.2(i) Nuisance caused by noise was one of the areas most commonly raised by residents who contacted the panel or who spoke at the public meeting and it is clearly an issue that generates a high level of public feeling.

Complaints fell into two broad themes, noise caused by students whilst they were inside their house, and noise caused whilst students were returning to their homes or were gathering outside them.

2.2(ii) Noise from within a student property could be because of a late night party or students and friends returning home late at night, or by slamming fire doors that are required under House of Multiple Occupation legislation

2.2 (iii) Residents told the panel that noise nuisance caused by students was the biggest issue and caused the most concern for residents. They commented on the current noise patrol service provided by Brighton & Hove City Council and its effectiveness in tackling noise complaints:

The service was currently only in operation on weekends until 3am, which meant that it could not address the issue of students coming home after clubs closed and having parties. It was suggested that some students might deliberately choose to have parties after 3am, knowing that the noise patrol was no longer in operation. If a house party was broken up, it was often the case that the noise was simply transferred into the street outside. Residents suggested that the service should be available on weekdays and with extended hours of service to help tackle some of the later parties

In addition, some residents felt that the current system of issuing diary sheets to people who made complaints about noise nuisance did not adequately address the noise complaints. For example, it might be the case that different houses in the same street had parties on different nights, and the noise diary sheets that are issued was not suitable for capturing this cumulative nuisance information.

In addition, some people felt that noise was more of a problem during the week, with students coming home late, taxi engines running, car doors slamming, people shouting, noise coming from rooms in the attic or the conservatory, front and internal doors banging and so on. This problem was exacerbated by the fire doors in the house; often the doors would be slammed shut throughout the day and the night. This could be addressed by insisting that door closers be fitted and maintained.

Residents commented on the length of the prosecution process in relation to noise nuisance; it could be the case that the offending neighbours might have moved on before the process is over, and potentially another set of noisy neighbours had moved in, meaning a new prosecution process must be started

2.2(iv) External noise nuisance was often caused by students returning home late at night and forgetting that other people were asleep or being disturbed by the noise. Other factors included students smoking outside properties due to the ban on smoking inside properties.

Residents in Hanover complained particularly about Phoenix Halls, and about the Podium, a large space where students gathered, often for extended periods of time well into the night. Due to the layout of the Hanover streets and houses, residents said that noise echoed around the streets and through the houses. Residents said that they had tried to complain to the security staff on duty at the halls and had asked them to take action, but that there seemed to be little that the staff were able to do to address the noise on a permanent basis. Some residents felt that it would make a significant difference to the noise levels if there were more security staff on duty; they appreciated that there was a mobile patrol that could attend from the Falmer site but this would invariably mean that the problem had already occurred and the patrol was attending in

reaction to this. If there were more security staff on site at Phoenix Halls, this would be a preventative measure. It was also requested that signs were installed on the halls site asking that noise be kept to a minimum after 11 pm.

Residents welcomed the SShh campaign and said that it had made some improvements but that these had been undermined by the decision not to allow smoking on campus, leading to students smoking outside the halls on Southover Street, and the subsequent noise that was caused.

2.2(v) The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing told the panel that noise control was an accepted local priority in Brighton and Hove. The panel heard about the noise nuisance complaints that were received and investigated, and the penalties that could be imposed, including the recent Fixed Penalty Notices issued under the recent Noise Act. The panel heard about the different ways that noise nuisance complaints could be investigated and dealt with. The noise patrol team was just one way to gather evidence; other methods included interviewing and corresponding with complainants and alleged offenders, collecting statements, installing recording equipment, visiting the premises at any time of the day or night, carrying out surveillance and stakeouts. However it was difficult to address complaints about sporadic noise complaints.

The Environmental Health and Licensing team operated an out of hours emergency service to deal with all environmental health emergencies, for example, widespread public noise nuisance, food poisoning and infectious disease outbreaks, severe pollution incidents, for instance, major fires, food hazard warnings, work place major injuries and fatalities. It is staffed on a voluntary basis by four managers and is unfunded, but its officers are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and are called out approximately twice a month.

The team had carried out customer satisfaction surveys which showed a generally high level of customer satisfaction with the service. The most common comment from residents was that the hours of the service should be extended or operated on other days of the week.

2.2(vi) The University of Brighton said that they were aware that the Phoenix Halls had become a focus of resident concerns in relation to noise over the past year. In response to these concerns, the University had switched to direct employment of a night security officer with back up support from the University mobile security team, relocated the staff office at Phoenix to provide a better overview of the site, and were due to install an upgraded CCTV system with audio capacity and additional cameras. The University acknowledged that the smoking ban in halls introduced as a result of the legislation banning smoking in public places had resulted in an increase in noise from students smoking outside and they were exploring whether a shelter could alleviate the problem.

The universities and students told the panel that the SShh (Silent Students, Happy Homes) campaign was in operation in Brighton and Hove. The campaign aimed to ensure students were respectful of their neighbours to assist in creating a good community atmosphere.

The University of Brighton Students' Union launched its first SShh campaign in Eastbourne in 2006; this was successful in raising awareness about noise disturbance with the students, and the Students' Union reported receiving fewer complaints following its introduction. The University of Brighton's Students' Union had decided to launch the

SShh campaign across all of its campuses.
(<http://www.ubsu.net/content/index.php?page=13651>)

2.3 Recommendations

2.3 (i) The panel wished it to be noted that they fully appreciated all of the work that the Environmental Protection team was carrying out; they recognised that it was a service that was in high demand across the city and they wished the team to carry on the work that they were doing. The panel was aware that this was not an issue that could be dealt with solely by the council. The panel appreciated the fact that the SShh campaign was in operation in the city, recognising that this was a positive step to addressing some of the late night noise complaints that they had heard.

With these points in mind, the panel wished to make some recommendations to enhance those services:

2.3(ii) The panel was mindful of the fact that many residents who made submissions requested that the noise service be extended. The panel heard that the current provision did not adequately address the noise nuisance incidents in the city. The current patrol was consistently working at maximum capacity and it was clear that there was more demand than could be met by current provision.

The panel was aware that the noise patrol team currently operated between 10pm and 3am and that analysis had been carried out into the frequency of calls that were received. Between 10-11 pm, on average the team received 25% of their calls; 11pm-12am, a further 25%; between 12-1 am, a further 25%; between 1-2am, 12.5% and between 2-3pm, the team received 12.5%. The inference was that call numbers and requests for service tapered down throughout the evening and early morning, although there was still a significant demand for the service.

The panel was aware that the annual unit cost for providing one night of noise patrol for five hours once a week was approximately £25, 000. The panel recognised, therefore, that there would be considerable resource implications to extending the noise patrol service.

Recommendation 1 - The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment extends the council-run Noise Patrol to operate over more nights of the week, probably Wednesday and Thursday, and to extend the existing weekend operating hours.

2.3(iii) The panel heard that the Environmental Protection Team encouraged residents to report noise complaints to the council, whether this happened retrospectively or at the time, in order and to try and avoid a recurrence of the noise nuisance and to enable a central record of reported noise problems. It would generally be the case that a household that had caused an alleged noise nuisance would receive a warning letter from the Environmental Health Team; this was often enough to stop the problem from recurring.

However it did not appear that many residents were aware of the service. The panel felt that if awareness was raised of this facility, it might help address some of the frustrations that were expressed about the current operating hours. The panel considered various options to publicise the service, in order to reach as many residents as possible. It was felt that the two recommendations below could be combined to

ensure that residents had a twenty-four hour service.

Recommendation 2 - The panel recommends that there should be increased publicity to advise residents that they can report a noise nuisance problem retrospectively; this could be included in City News, on the council's website and perhaps in leaflets in public offices.

Recommendation 3 - The panel recommends that the Out of Hours emergency noise patrol service should be properly resourced and properly publicised.

2.3(iv) The panel heard that other local authorities, for example, Canterbury, had considered the introduction of a non-emergency 24 hour telephone line. The intention was that this would be used when the Noise Patrol was not in operation but the noise nuisance was not felt to be an emergency. The telephone line could be another means of recording noise nuisance complaints, keeping a central database of incidents and taking the necessary steps to deal with it.

The panel felt that this was an option that ought to be explored further within Brighton & Hove, as it may be another way for residents to register non-emergency noise nuisance complaints with the authority, and for the authority to build up a record of persistent offenders and assess the cumulative impact of such nuisance.

Recommendation 4 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment resources a 24 hour telephone line for the public to report non-emergency noise and anti-social behaviour.

2.3(v) The panel heard from residents that Brighton & Hove City Council's noise nuisance procedures and the issuing of noise diaries did not always seem to be particularly useful in addressing sporadic problems. The panel recognised that there were limited resources for the team and they were mindful that there were statutory requirements on the council but they felt that there were benefits to be gained from reviewing the team's procedures and considering whether there were alternative ways of addressing intermittent noise nuisance complaints.

Recommendation 5 - the panel recommends that the Environmental Health and Licensing Team reviews its noise nuisance procedures in order to assess whether the noise nuisance diary sheets are always the most effective and user-friendly way of addressing noise complaints.

2.3(vi) The panel heard that the University of Brighton promoted the SShh campaign across all of its campuses, including those in Southover Street. This was welcomed and the panel would encourage its ongoing expansion and promotion, particularly bearing in mind the turn-over of students on campus. The panel also felt that it might be beneficial to publicise the SShh campaign to people outside of the university so that residents were aware that the matter was not being ignored; this might help relations between students and non-students.

Residents told the panel that they were annoyed by students parking their cars and playing music from the car with their windows open. The panel felt that this was an issue that could be tackled by the SShh campaign. Residents said they would also welcome firmer action being taken against students playing music from the Phoenix Halls late at night with the windows open.

Recommendation 6 - the panel would like to see the SShh campaign developed by Students' Unions and publicised widely in conjunction with community association representatives and ward councillors. This should be an ongoing annual campaign due to the turnover of students.

2.3(vii) The panel heard that many residents were distressed and upset by the noise caused by students returning home late at night and it was felt that tackling street noise should be a priority for partners. The nuisance was exacerbated by the fact that the noise was unpredictable and it could extend for long periods into the night. Residents felt that this was a particularly student problem rather than one caused by young people in general. The panel felt that this noise nuisance was not generally within the local authority's power to address; it was suggested that it would be better addressed by the universities, the Student Union and the Street Policing Team.

Recommendation 7 - the panel recommends that the universities, the Police and the Student Union work together to find ways to jointly address the issue of street noise nuisance in residential areas, caused by groups of students returning from nights out.

2.3(viii) The panel heard from residents who lived near the Phoenix Halls in Southover Street that students often gathered in groups on an outside area known as the Podium; this was either when they had returned from nights out, or when they wished to smoke, as it was not permitted to smoke inside the halls. The panel heard that, due to the narrow residential streets, noise echoed from the students all around the streets and caused significant noise nuisance.

The panel would like the University of Brighton to consider whether there is a more suitable outside space that might be used instead of the Podium. The panel considered recommending that the University re-allowed smoking in private rooms, as this is within the University's power, but it was felt that this would be unfair on other residents in the property.

The panel would like the university to consider introducing a policy asking students to close their windows before playing music at night, in order to minimize noise nuisance for neighbours. The panel would also like the university to install clearer, more visible signs across the Southover Street site, requesting that noise was kept to a minimum after 11pm.

Recommendation 8 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers whether there is a more suitable outside space that might be used, and that measures are put in place to address noise from smokers and other students gathering on the Podium at the Southover Street Phoenix Halls.

Recommendation 9 - The panel would recommend that the University of Brighton considers introducing a policy asking students on the Phoenix Halls site to close their windows before playing music at night, in order to minimize noise nuisance for neighbours. The panel would also ask that clearer, more visible signage is installed across the Phoenix Halls site asking that noise is kept to a minimum after 11pm.

2.3(ix) The panel heard that residents near to Phoenix Halls also expressed frustrations with

the level of staffing allocated to the halls, particularly late at night. When residents contacted the halls to complain about the noise caused by students gathering on the Podium, it did not seem that the security staff were able to control the noise on a permanent basis.

Residents asked whether consideration could be given to either moving the night reception area to a location nearer to the Podium in order to monitor any disruptive behaviour by students, or alternatively whether there could be a porter's lodge on the Podium to overlook the area. The panel would ask the university to consider both of these suggestions.

Recommendation 10 - the panel would like to suggest that the University of Brighton considers the staffing resources that might be needed to provide an effective way of managing and minimising the noise nuisance and how its premises in residential areas are controlled.

2.3(x) A number of residents explained that, inadvertently, the design of the Phoenix Halls of Residence and the inclusion of the Podium has led to unanticipated noise nuisance due to students gathering outside the halls. The panel recognised that this was entirely accidental but they would like to ask the universities to be mindful of what has happened in Phoenix Halls and to bear this in mind in any future developments. The panel will also recommend that this suggestion is included in any planning documents that relate to student accommodation.

With regard to the Phoenix Halls, residents were concerned that there were no trees or bushes to conceal some of the noise from the halls, and asked whether these could be introduced.

Recommendation 11 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers planting trees and bushes on the Phoenix Halls site, in order to assess whether this would help to mask any noise. The panel would like to suggest that the university talks to local residents about their experiences after a trial period.

Recommendation 12 - the panel would like to ask that the universities and developers have regard to possible noise impact on neighbours and the particular architectural nature of the area in which they will be built when they are being designed, especially in relation to the provision of smoking areas for residents. The panel also recommends that this suggestion is formalized in any relevant planning documents relating to student accommodation

2.4 Community Liaison Staff

2.4(i) The panel heard that the University of Brighton had chosen to employ a full time member of staff as a Community Liaison Officer. The Community Liaison Officer's remit includes: coordinating activity to promote social responsibility and good citizenship amongst students; advising students on maintaining good relations with local communities; liaising with community groups in areas near to the university's campuses; mediating between students and residents as necessary and acting as a focal point of contact for non-student residents with a complaint.

The Community Liaison Officer said that he was aware that partner organisations in the city welcomed his role and that they found it very useful to have a central contact.

- 2.4(ii)** The University of Sussex told the panel that they had opted not to have a designated Community Liaison Officer but that they had a dedicated housing team who could assist with any issues or complaints about student households. The University said that it seemed that they would need to do more work to promote awareness of this service amongst residents.
- 2.4(iii)** Residents told the panel that they appreciated having a known person to contact when they had problems with particular households and that the Community Liaison Officer was very effective at dealing with complaints about students from the University of Brighton and in identifying practical ways forward. The panel heard that some residents found it more difficult to make complaints about students from the University of Sussex; the existing service was reported to be insufficiently responsive to their needs. There seemed to be a lack of awareness about the role of the University of Sussex housing team in addressing complaints. If residents wished to complain about a student household, the residents would not necessarily be aware of whether they were students of Sussex or of Brighton. Residents were adamant that there should be a consistent service across the city, regardless of which university the students came from.
- 2.4(iv)** Residents from the Elm Grove Local Action Team requested that university representatives liaise regularly with Local Action Teams and other residents groups across the city, ensuring that their contact details are known to residents. It was asked that the universities provide clear and consistent advice to students about avoiding neighbour disputes, as well as informing them of their rights as tenants and providing support for them to enforce those rights where necessary.

2.5 Recommendations

- 2.5(i)** The panel considered the comments made by the universities and by residents. They felt that there was a case to be made for the University of Sussex to appoint its own Community Liaison Officer, who could work with the officer from the University of Brighton to address issues about students across the city.

The panel felt that, in the interim period, it would be beneficial for the University of Sussex to promote their existing housing team's service, advising residents that they could contact the housing team if they wished to complain about a student household from the University of Sussex. The University of Sussex agreed that it would be useful to raise awareness of how to contact the team.

Recommendation 13 - the panel suggests that the University of Sussex considers following the good practice established by the University of Brighton and establishes a role of a dedicated Community Liaison Officer for the University of Sussex. The two officers could work together to address shared student problems across Brighton and Hove.

2.6 Refuse & Recycling

'they [students] do not take a blind bit of notice about the rubbish collection day, when their bags get ripped open by seagulls they just leave it on the pavement'

'the majority of students in this area do not recycle'

'at the end of summer term, the whole contents of houses are thrown onto the streets...this then encourages fly-tipping...it often remains on the pavements for weeks'

- 2.6(i)** When the panel considered the comments made by residents about the influence of student households on residential areas, it was apparent that households who were not sticking to the correct refuse and recycling procedures were a particular problem. However it should be noted that these are not solely student problems, but happen across the city in student and non-student households.
- 2.6(ii)** Residents commented that student households were not always aware of their refuse/ recycling collection day. This could lead to refuse being left out for several days before collection and related environmental/ hygiene problems. Residents and students felt that this was in part due to a lack of information given to student households by CityClean, Brighton & Hove City Council's refuse and recycling service.

The panel heard examples of situations where residents had called CityClean on behalf of the student households to address problems with their refuse collections, as the student households had not been aware of who to contact or what they could request.

As well as problems with the weekly refuse collections, residents told the panel that they were unhappy about bulky waste and furniture being left either in front gardens or on the pavement. It was quite often left there for long periods of time, which was not only unsightly but caused obstructions on the pavement.

- 2.6(iii)** Students told the panel that at the end of term, some landlords encouraged them to leave all of their refuse including bulky furniture on the pavement regardless of the correct collection day, telling the students that CityClean would clear the refuse away.
- 2.6(iv)** The letting agents told the panel that they issued induction packs to their tenants at the start of their tenancy, which included information on refuse and recycling collections.
- 2.6(v)** CityClean told the panel that problems such as leaving refuse or recycling out on the incorrect day were not student-specific but a city-wide issue. CityClean worked with the universities on a communication campaign but they would be happy to consider other options and introduce new ways of notifying residents about their collection days. It was felt that more could be done with landlords to keep information flowing to student households.

2.7 Recommendations

- 2.7(i)** The panel recognised that CityClean provided refuse and recycling services to all households across the city. The panel considered ways of increasing awareness of their refuse and recycling collection days for all households, including student households. They heard from CityClean that households were currently issued with fridge magnets,

leaflets and letters showing the collection dates for the year, but there was concern that the magnets and letters were liable to become lost or get thrown away as tenants moved in and out of the properties.

The panel felt that it might be more beneficial to issue stickers with the collection day to go onto the wheeled bin rather than the magnets currently used. It was more likely that the wheeled bin would stay with the property and so the information would stay with the house.

The panel felt that this could be a solution that could be implemented across the city, as it had been noted that this was not an issue caused solely by student households but by households across Brighton & Hove. It was suggested that the roll-out could begin in areas with the highest numbers of student households, but this would be an operational decision for CityClean.

Recommendation 14 - the panel recommends that CityClean issues wheeled bin stickers giving information about collection days so that all households know when to put their refuse out. It is recommended that this would be an alternative to the magnets that are currently issued.

- 2.7(ii) The panel was aware that there were a number of areas, including Hanover and Lewes Road, in which households did not have council-issued wheeled bins; it would not be possible for the recommendation above about wheeled bin stickers to be introduced in those areas. The panel considered that an alternative might be for streets in those areas to have notices fixed to lampposts advising residents of their collection day and of the possible penalties for refuse being put out on the wrong day. The panel was aware that this system had already been successfully introduced in some areas but felt that that was scope for it to be more widely spread.

CityClean updated the panel about their progress on this recommendation; they had begun to install signs in Kemptown, Hanover and Elm Grove. They would then be moving on to the Lewes Road and Bevendean/ Moulsecomb areas. CityClean also advised that they were trialing another refuse container known as 'binvelopes' in parts of Hanover. If this scheme were successful, CityClean would look to roll this out across other areas that could not have wheeled bins.

Recommendation 15 - the panel recommends that for those areas of the city that do not currently have council-issued wheeled bins, CityClean should erect additional notices on lamp-posts advising residents of their collection day.

- 2.7(iii) The panel heard that CityClean issued stickers to go onto recycling boxes to advise residents of what could be recycled, and of their collection dates for the year. However, the panel heard that the stickers were designed to go on the lids of the box, and these tended to blow away if it was windy and the information would be lost. The panel felt that the idea of the stickers was a positive one, but that it might be more beneficial if the stickers could be redesigned to go on to the box itself, rather than the lid. Again this was a recommendation that could benefit all households across the city, not just those with student tenants.

Recommendation 16 - the panel recommends that CityClean places the information stickers for their recycling boxes in order that they can be stuck to the box rather than on the lid, as the lids tend to blow away.

2.7(iv) The panel heard that the letting agents and landlords advised their student tenants on where to find information about their refuse and recycling collection; this was welcomed. It was recognised, however, that student households might not be aware of any changes in the collection schedule, for example, over bank holidays. The panel was aware that this information was published in CityNews and on the council's website but they were unsure how effective this might be in reaching student households. They thought that it would be useful for CityClean to publicise changes in the collection dates in the universities' own newspapers in order to try and reach student households that would be affected. It might also be prudent to include this information on the universities' websites.

Recommendation 17 - the panel recommends that CityClean advertises information about changes in collection dates for refuse and recycling in both of the universities' newspapers and on the universities' websites, in addition to the usual council publication locations.

2.7(v) Residents and students told the panel that there was an ongoing issue with regards to bulky waste, how it might be stored and where it might be left. Bulky waste might include such items as old furniture, unwanted mattresses, unwanted bicycles etc. Residents were upset that items might be abandoned in a front garden for months on end, causing a visual blight and possible health and safety risk. The panel heard that some residents had approached the student households to ask them to remove the bulky waste; this had received mixed reactions. Students told the panel that they knew landlords who had advised students to leave unwanted furniture on the pavement for collection and that the council would collect it.

The panel heard that there was a difference as to how refuse could be handled according to whether it was left on the pavement or whether it was left within the curtilage of a property, i.e. in a front garden. If the item was within a property's boundary, CityClean would be unlikely to be allowed to remove it, as it would be designated as private property. However if the item was on the pavement, CityClean could remove it, and may have the right to recharge the cost to the owner or tenants.

The panel was aware that this was a complicated issue, and that there might be a number of options that could help reduce the bulky waste being left out, either in a garden or on the pavement. The panel has suggested various options below but would recommend that further work is carried out by the Cabinet Member and/ or the Directorate to consider each suggestion, both on its own merits and in conjunction with other options.

Options to address this issue include:

- The city council carrying out more enforcement cases, either for refuse being left out on the wrong day, bulky waste being abandoned on the pavement or other cases of fly-tipping.
- An agreement between landlords and the council in which landlords would have a specified amount of time to clear a property and dispose of the waste, once it became empty, or CityClean would do this and re-charge the landlord.
- There might be an incentive offered where CityClean would offer a discount on their bulky waste collection service at the end of term for a fixed period of time.
- The end of term waste issue should also be tackled by better publicity and promotion of

the existing services that are available

Recommendation 18 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the issue of how to tackle the problem of bulky waste being flytipped by student households, both throughout term-time and at the end of term. The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member gives the suggestions due consideration.

2.7(vi) The panel was aware that some cities, for example Canterbury and Loughborough, who had previously considered how to tackle the bulky waste issue had introduced termly clean-up days in student neighbourhoods. These were organised by the student's union in conjunction with ward councillors. During the termly clean-ups, the students took anything that was re-sellable to charity shops, arranging for the remainder to be collected for recycling or for landfill.

The panel thought that this might be a useful approach for Brighton and Hove; it could be introduced in student halls as well as in private sector student housing. The panel felt that it would be best led by the students' unions and the universities, as an indication that they were taking responsibility for the students. The panel suggested that the two students' unions work together, as student households will be made up of a mixture of students from both universities. The students' unions might wish to work in conjunction with Magpie as well as charity shops in the city.

Recommendation 19 - the panel suggests that the universities organise termly clean up days in conjunction with their student unions.

2.8 Car Parking

' a car was parked outside my house for three months'

'the road simply can not cope with 4 or 5 cars per household'

2.8(i) Residents told the panel that they were often frustrated at student households who had several cars per household and who occupied several parking spaces in the street. Residents felt that their opportunities to park near their homes were hampered by a proliferation of student cars in their neighbourhood. Some residents asked whether students needed their cars, pointing to the public transport links across the city. Students said that there could be scope for the students' union to promote the public transport and discourage students from bringing cars to the city.

The Sergeant from the Street Policing Team told the panel that parking obstructions and double parking offences were targeted on a regular basis, with fixed penalty notices being issued where necessary. More permanent measures had been put in where possible; for example in Elm Grove, barriers had been erected to stop on-pavement parking.

2.9 Recommendations

2.9(i) The panel thought that a good way to encourage students to use public transport rather than rely exclusively on their own cars would be for both universities' prospectuses and accommodation guides to have promote public transport and explicitly recommend that

students do not automatically bring their cars with them. This could include reference to the 24 hour bus to the university campus the Big Lemon bus, the car clubs in the city, the cycle routes to and from the universities and the train stations.

The panel noted that the University of Brighton's accommodation guide did include a section on public transport and explained that students living in certain halls of residence must not bring cars with them, but it was felt that there was room for a more direct statement requesting that students think carefully before bringing cars to Brighton & Hove. The University of Sussex's accommodation guide did not appear to make reference to public transport, although it did explain that students living on campus must not bring cars with them. The universities could draw students' attention to the difficulties and potential costs of parking in the city.

Recommendation 20 - the panel recommend that the universities include information in their prospectuses and accommodation guides about the range of public transport and Car Clubs in the city and that they explicitly recommend that students do not bring cars with them

2.9(ii) The panel also considered what options there might be for those student households who did choose to bring cars to the city. There are a number of Controlled Parking Zones in Brighton & Hove, where residents must have a permit to park their cars. Permits are restricted to one permit per person, and the car must be registered to a Brighton or Hove address. Not each area of the city has a Controlled Parking Zone, and for those areas that do not have one, there are generally no restrictions on parking. The panel felt it was important that, where applicable, student households were treated equally with other households requesting permits. They understood this to be the case already and wished the practice to continue.

It was noted that the four areas with the highest student population numbers - Moulescoomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, and St Peters and North Laine - only one, St Peters and North Laine, was subject to any type of parking restriction. There were plans to consult on a Controlled Parking Zone in Hanover in summer 2009, with a potential introduction date of 2011.

Recommendation 21 - Students should be treated on an equal basis as non-students when it comes to the issue of residents' parking permits.

2.10 Council Tax

2.10(i) The panel heard from the Head of Strategic Finance and the Assistant Director, Customer Services that those student households who had not registered themselves as exempt under Council Tax legislation led to the local authority incurring costs in sending bills to those households, up to and including issuing court proceedings. These costs were incurred unnecessarily and this was therefore an inefficient use of council funds. The Assistant Director, Customer Services said that they worked closely with the universities in trying to publicise the importance of registering for exemption as soon as possible but recognised that this would not always be a priority for students.

The panel heard from one letting agent that they would return tenants' rent deposits only after the households could evidence that they had cleared their Council Tax obligations.

The panel also heard that it was important that the council had the correct number of student households registered, as this might affect central Government calculations for the council's funding. There were already regular information sharing meetings where this data was discussed but the panel queried whether these were as effective as they might be in communicating the necessary information between partners.

2.11 Recommendations

2.11(i) The panel was pleased with the proactive work of the Council Tax officers in meeting students and registering student households for exemption but wished to make recommendations for ways in which this could be extended.

The panel discussed whether there might be scope for letting agents or landlords to take any steps with their student tenants to complete the exemption forms at the beginning of their tenancy.

2.11(ii) The panel understood that meetings already took place between the universities and the council to establish the numbers of students in the city and to estimate future numbers in order to advise central Government for their funding calculations and that such information was shared with the Strategic Housing Partnership. The panel felt that these were important and wished to encourage the various parties to continue the meetings, perhaps on a bi-annual basis. The panel requested that results from the meeting could be made available to the proposed Student Working Group so that they could take it into account in their considerations.

Recommendation 22 - the panel would encourage Council Tax officers to continue to liaise regularly with the universities in order to establish current and future student numbers.

2.11(iii) The panel was concerned at the unnecessary administrative overheads being incurred by the Council Tax team in billing student households because those households had not registered their exemption. They were aware that Council Tax was not often a priority for students, and that many students might incorrectly assume that they did not have to register their exemption. The panel heard that the Council Tax officers went to Freshers' fairs at the beginning of term and that this was successful in terms of a number of households registering for exemption. The panel wished to think of ways in which this could be extended, perhaps by involving letting agents or universities earlier in the process. The panel had a number of suggestions that they wished the Council Tax team to consider:

- Letting agencies and private landlords could be emailed a web link to access exemption certificates online and encouraged to provide a form to each student household at the start of their tenancy. The email link would mean that as many forms as were needed could be printed off by the landlords, and it would be in line with the council's sustainability agenda
- The universities and student unions could be emailed the same web link and students actively encouraged to complete the forms as soon as possible. The Council Tax team could consider whether an incentive could be offered to the universities if a certain percentage of households were registered
- The universities and students' unions could be asked to publish the form in their

newsletters and on their website on a regular basis. This would mean that students could either tear out the form from the printed newspaper or complete the form online via the university website. The university newspapers might wish to expand this by publishing occasional articles reminding students to register their exemption and explaining the benefits for students in registering?

- When students enrolled with the university with details of their address, they could authorise the university to share the information solely with Council Tax, to ensure that an exemption form is sent to the household as soon as possible.

Recommendation 23 - the panel recommends that the Council Tax service considers the four suggestions made in the body of the report about how to improve levels of registered student household exemptions.

3 - Planning & Accommodation Policies

3.1 Planning Policies

'Neighbours ...tell me of feeling like they are virtual prisoners in their own homes because they are surrounded by HMOs. Many of these have conservatories built out into the garden so there is no escaping their presence.'

'overbuilding is a huge problem'

'one solution would be... to limit the numbers of extensions granted for HMOs'

- 3.1 (i)** The panel heard from a number of residents that they felt that there should be a cap put on to the number of Houses of Multiple Occupation tenanted by students in certain areas. This was requested because it was felt that some areas were in danger of losing or changing their character as the make-up of tenants had changed. They pointed to the fact that one school had already closed one of its two reception classes due to low pupil numbers, because there were fewer families and more students living in the area.

The panel's research showed that some university cities had chosen to introduce restrictions on future student housing, for example Loughborough introduced a threshold approach and Newcastle established areas of Student Housing Restraint, where potential student landlords would be subject to tighter planning restrictions for future developments.

The universities and the Federation of Private Landlords told the panel that they did not think that further planning restraints would be of any benefit to Brighton & Hove; they recommended that it would be better to micro-manage the situation and address problems as they arose.

The panel heard that there was currently no requirement to report or obtain permission for plans to convert family accommodation for student use unless the accommodation in question was designated a 'House in Multiple Occupation'. Although there was widespread support for the notion of introducing some kind of 'class order' for such changes of use, this could not apply retrospectively, so even if it were to be introduced,

it would apply to only a small percentage of student housing.

The panel's research had indicated that local authorities had the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of Houses of Multiple Occupation to address particular problems that existed in smaller properties, although there was a corresponding requirement to compensate landlords who were negatively affected by any such licensing introduction. The panel said that an analysis of this option and its potential application in Brighton and Hove should be included in the research undertaken by the Planning Strategy team.

- 3.1 (ii)** The panel heard that some local authorities had a planning condition that stipulated that, for every square metre of additional educational space that was agreed, the university would agree to supply a corresponding number of bed-spaces rather than relying solely on private sector housing to meet the additional need that would be created. The panel thought that this was an interesting concept and one that should be explored further by the Planning Strategy team in their work on the Supplementary Planning Document.
- 3.1 (iii)** The Head of Planning Strategy and the Head of Development Control told the panel that there was a limited amount that Brighton & Hove City Council was able to do with regard to registering student households, due to the legislation on Houses of Multiple Occupation. The panel heard that there were two sets of legislation relating to Houses of Multiple Occupation, one from a planning perspective, and one from a private sector housing point of view, and the two sets of legislation did not correlate.

In terms of planning permission and property classification under the Use Classes system, the panel were told that, although it was relatively straightforward to re-classify a 'family home' as a 'student home', it was more complicated to change the classification in the opposite direction. This might discourage possible purchasers from buying an empty property. The panel's research indicated that there was already a national lobby regarding this issue. The panel thought that it would be helpful if the Government took action to make it easier to change property classification from 'student' house to 'family house'.

- 3.1 (iv)** The panel heard that the Planning Strategy team had to demonstrate how they would meet challenging government targets for different housing types in the Local Plan; at least 11, 000 new homes were needed by 2025. However there was no government target for student housing. This meant that the Planning Strategy Team was loath to allocate specific land for student housing in the Local Plan and it was not considered a priority. On-campus accommodation did not conflict with any other housing policies.

3.2 Recommendations

- 3.2(i)** The panel considered residents' requests for the council to introduce a cap on student housing in the city. The panel concluded that they did not have sufficient time to explore all of the options in enough detail to provide meaningful comment. However they were mindful that it would be useful for further research to be carried out and that the conclusions be drawn up and included in a formalised Supplementary Planning Document by the council.

The panel therefore felt that it would be more appropriate for a recommendation to be made that the Planning Strategy team carry out research into the various planning

options available to control the level of student housing, and to consider whether there would be any merit in introducing such controls into Brighton & Hove. Their findings should either be published as or be included in a Supplementary Planning Document. The Supplementary Planning Document would be of use to the Strategic Housing Partnership in their work on strategic planning for student impact.

Recommendation 24 - the panel recommend that the existing Planning Strategy team carries out research into the various planning options available to control the level of student housing, and to consider whether there would be any merit in introducing such controls into Brighton & Hove where this was appropriate for the area. If planning controls were introduced, this would help to ensure balanced and mixed communities across the city.

The Planning Strategy Team should also consider the feasibility of adopting a planning condition regarding the need for universities who have planning permission to expand their educational space to provide a commensurate increase in bed spaces.

The findings should be published as a Supplementary Planning Document.

- 3.2(ii)** The panel heard about the discrepancies in the planning and private sector housing legislative systems with regard to the use classes order. The panel felt it would be of use for the local authority to make representations to the Government on these anomalies, requesting that the process was streamlined.

The panel was also mindful of residents' comments that developers were using permitted development rights to build conservatories at the rear of properties and using these as living rooms, thereby freeing up additional rooms to be used as bedrooms. Residents were aggrieved that there was no action that could be taken to prevent this from happening.

Recommendation 25 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council with regard to the planning Use Classes Order and the associated permitted development rights.

- 3.2(iii)** The panel was mindful of the competing demands on land resources and it recognised that the Planning Strategy team had a number of demanding targets to accommodate, although student housing was not included within a target. The panel thought that it would be advantageous for the council, through the Cabinet Member for Environment, to lobby central Government to issue a target for student housing so that more forward planning could be carried out.

Recommendation 26 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council to request that student housing is given its own targets with regards to providing accommodation.

- 3.2(iv)** The panel considered that it was necessary to take steps to plan for future student housing provision in Brighton & Hove, regardless of whether or not there were central Government targets for student housing. The panel appreciated the various competing demands on the available land, but they felt that it was short-sighted not to consider

allocating land space for the development of halls of residence. The panel thought that there might also be scope to include some units of student housing in major new build housing developments across the city, for example, Preston Barracks. This work would be best carried out in conjunction with the universities.

Recommendation 27 - the panel recommends that the Planning Strategy team recognises the need for student accommodation to be planned and that the team considers positively identifying land suitable for halls of residence in the Local Development Framework. The team could consider the scope for including small numbers of units of student housing amongst major new- build developments.

3.3 Provision of Halls of Residence

'reduce demand for student housing by encouraging the Universities to build more student halls on their own land'

'recent campus building has focussed on the luxury end of the market ...beyond the means of many students'

- 3.3(i)** The panel, the universities, residents and students were all in agreement that providing more halls of residence would be valuable in addressing some of the issues of student effect, although it should be borne in mind that the halls of residence themselves led to certain problems. It was clear from listening to both of the universities that there was a high demand for accommodation in halls of residence and that the universities were unable to meet the demand.
- 3.3(ii)** The University of Sussex had drawn up a housing strategy campus master plan in consultation with planning officers from Brighton & Hove City Council. The University guaranteed to offer accommodation to all of its first year students who wanted to live in halls. It managed 3,400 bedspaces in total, with 3,145 at Falmer. 35% of students were housed, which was in line with the national average, and were aiming at a target of housing 40%. 18% of their students did not require housing, preferring to live at home or make their own arrangements. The University's housing strategy was having a positive influence, with the number of students living in private sector accommodation reducing by more than 1000 people. The University had recently received planning permission to build a new halls of residence on its land.
- 3.3(iii)** The University of Brighton told the panel that its supply of purpose built halls accommodation has not kept pace with the growth in student numbers; as a result, a high proportion of their students lived in private sector accommodation. The University considered it a high priority to increase the stock of halls accommodation on offer and was working with Brighton & Hove City Council to expand Varley Hall and on a development in Circus Street.

A comparison of the approximate numbers of full time students at each of the University of Brighton sites with the availability of halls of residence accommodation is below:

Campus	Full time students	Number of halls beds	Shortfall	Halls places as % of students
Falmer	3,500	1,128	2,372	32%
Moulsecoomb	5,000	163	4,837	3%
Grand Parade	1,500	298	1,202	20%
Total	10,000	1,589	8,411	16%

- 3.3(iv)** The panel heard from some students, however, that they found the costs of the rooms in

halls prohibitive, at up to £125 per week inclusive for an en-suite study room, and that they actively chose to live in lower standard private rented accommodation because it was much cheaper. The panel also heard that there was demand for accommodation in halls from some second and third year students, but that this could not be met at present.

- 3.3(v) The panel also heard from the universities that they currently managed some properties in the private rented sector that were tenanted by students. These were popular places to live for students, and the demand outstripped supply. The universities did not rule out the possibility of expanding their portfolio of managed properties, although they were mindful that they did not wish to become full landlords directly.

The panel was aware that halls of residence had to be carefully sited and planned, as they would also have a significant effect on the local community, as seen, for example, in the case of the Phoenix Halls. Both of the universities said that they would be happy to consider any suggestions for managing student impact.

3.4 Recommendations

- 3.4(i) The panel recognised that the halls of residence were highly in demand and that there were almost 100% occupancy rates in halls. They were also mindful that the rent included gas and electricity, cleaning costs, broadband internet and other facilities.

However, members were concerned at the comments made by some students that the costs were too high for the students to consider living in halls and wished the universities to consider whether it was possible to offer cheaper rooms to students with a low income, perhaps in exchange for slightly fewer facilities to be offered.

Recommendation 28 - the panel would suggest that the universities, working with the students' union consider the potential for offering alternative, affordable accommodation in halls of residence for students with low incomes

- 3.4(ii) The panel heard that a significant proportion of second and third years who had lived in halls in their first year had expressed an interest in staying on in halls in their second and/ or third years but that this was not possible due to the limited number of rooms available. The panel considered that, if even a small number of second or third year students were able to live in halls, this might slightly reduce the number of private sector houses needed for students.

Recommendation 29 - the panel would suggest that the universities consider whether there is scope to expand the offer of rooms in halls of residence, not only to first year students but also to those second and third years who would like to live there.

- 3.4(iii) The panel considered the option of the universities directly managing accommodation in the private rented sector. It was apparent that there was unmet demand for such accommodation and the universities said that they would not rule out taking on more properties in this manner. The universities have their own occupancy standards for properties, and any private property would need to meet the standard.

The benefit of these properties for residents is that the university is directly involved with

the management and can take swift action against any complaints; the benefit for students is that the property would be of a certain guaranteed standard.

Recommendation 30 - the panel would suggest to the universities that they explore the possibilities of expanding their portfolio of directly managed properties over the long term, in order to increase the range of options available to student tenants.

3.5 Student Landlord Issues

'Landlords should be made, through their HMO licences to have more responsibility for their properties and tenants'

'Little money is spent in the upkeep of houses...HMO houses are easily identifiable by their scruffy exterior'

3.5(i) The panel heard from residents unhappy with the condition of student properties in their neighbourhood; the panel heard about houses with flaking paint, broken windows, and unkempt gardens. Students told the panel that they often had to live in unsatisfactory conditions in private rented accommodation, and that they had little control over the condition of the building.

The panel was mindful that this was an issue that could cause tension between student and non-student neighbours, and that it was not a subject that could be resolved by either party, but that it was the responsibility of the landlords to resolve.

3.5(ii) The Head of Private Sector Housing told the panel about the legislation that already existed in terms of Houses of Multiple Occupation, from a housing perspective.

The Housing Act 2004 relating to the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and the new Housing Health & Safety Rating System for assessing property conditions came in to effect in 2006. The Act requires landlords of many Houses in Multiple Occupation to apply for licences. Licences were needed for Houses of Multiple Occupation with:

- three or more storeys, which are
- occupied by five or more people forming two or more households (ie people not related, living together as a couple, etc), and
- which have an element of shared facilities (eg kitchen, bathroom, etc)

The council issued a set of standards for licensable houses in multiple occupation:

http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/housing/hmo_licensing/BH_HMO_Licensing_Standards.pdf

The panel heard that the legislation governing Houses in Multiple Occupation was quite restrictive, both in terms of defining an House in Multiple Occupation and in terms of the powers it granted to local authorities, which tended to focus on ensuring the quality of accommodation provided rather than on managing the effect upon the local community.

3.5(iii) In terms of landlord accreditation schemes, members were told that there was an existing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation and that most city landlords already provided good quality accommodation. However most student properties did not fit the House of Multiple Occupation definition, so it might be beneficial to extend the scheme's criteria. This might be achieved by closer co-working with the universities.

It might also be useful to encourage the universities to manage their own accommodation. It was recognised that the ultimate guarantor of housing quality was demand: if demand for a particular kind of housing outstripped supply, then accreditation could never be wholly effective, as non-accredited landlords would still find customers.

- 3.5(iv)** The panel heard that some private landlords were wary about the introduction of a formal accreditation system; there were concerns that some landlords might decide not to continue renting properties if the legislation were too onerous.
- 3.5(v)** Letting agents told the panel that potential student tenants would choose or ignore properties based on the standard of the accommodation. They already had some properties that were not tenanted and they felt that this number would be likely to increase.
- 3.5(vi)** Students told the panel that they felt there would be benefits to having an accreditation system for properties as this would mean it would be more likely that accommodation would be of a reasonable standard.
- 3.5(vii)** The panel heard that the universities limited the private sector rental properties that they advertised on their websites to those properties with a rent of £80 or under. They were concerned that this gave potential students who did not live in Brighton and Hove a false idea of rental levels in the city, and potentially restricted their access to better quality accommodation. The panel thought that it might be more beneficial if the universities were to offer the full range of housing options on their websites, and then allow students to make their own choice about costs.

3.6 Recommendations

- 3.6(1)** The panel considered the comments of all of the parties involved and the experience of local authorities who had introduced a voluntary accreditation scheme. Canterbury, for example, reported that approximately 50% of private landlords had signed up to their voluntary accreditation system. Canterbury said that they had found it useful to offer incentives to the landlords, for example, additional refuse services for registered accredited landlords at the end of term.
- 3.6(ii)** The panel was mindful that it would not do to be too heavy-handed or forceful with any potential accreditation system as this would alienate landlords and not achieve the desired outcome. However it was hoped that a voluntary accreditation scheme would be of assistance to landlords too; if there was more of a supply of properties than was needed, the accreditation system might help to signpost students to properties of a better standard. It would help to improve the management and safety of student houses in the city.

The panel thought that it would be valuable to explore the potential for a voluntary accreditation system with the various parties concerned or to extend any scheme that was already in existence. It was suggested that this would be led by the Private Sector Housing Team as they would be likely to be the team to administer any such scheme. The research should take resource implications into account as well as any costs for the landlord.

Recommendation 31 - the panel recommends that the Private Sector Housing

Team discuss the potential benefits of extending the landlord accreditation scheme in relation to student accommodation, which does not fit into the existing Houses of Multiple Occupation accreditation scheme, with representatives from Brighton and Hove's landlord associations and other parties.

3.7 Empty Properties

3.7(i) The panel was concerned by comments from the letting agents that some properties were already sitting empty because they had not been let to student tenants. The panel thought it was more likely that these properties would become rundown and so become less desirable; any disrepair might have an adverse effect by spreading to neighbouring properties. The letting agents told the panel that they anticipated that more and more student properties would remain vacant as there was higher supply than demand in the city. Empty properties were of no benefit to the owners; they would be losing money for the entire time that the property is empty, and they would have to cover any resulting repairs costs etc.

3.8 Recommendations

3.8(i) The panel was mindful that there was an overwhelming demand for family accommodation in Brighton & Hove, and that some of the student properties that were now standing empty had originally been intended as family housing. They considered whether there might be a citywide strategy to encourage landlords to use empty homes for family accommodation again. This might be particularly welcome in the current economic climate; any steps that could be taken to reduce the number of vacant properties, assist community cohesion, help landlords financially and ensure that family accommodation was brought back to its original use should be strongly considered.

The Panel discussed whether there might be a further role for the council's Empty Properties Officer to build on its existing good practice. The Officer could look at properties that had been empty for perhaps one or two years, assisting with grants or other ways of renovating property on the agreement that the property would then be let to families via a Housing Association.

3.8(ii) The panel was aware that there would be a great many factors to be taken into consideration when debating how the long term empty properties might best be used and that there were already empty property strategies in place within Brighton & Hove City Council. They felt that it was a piece of work that should be fully researched and the potential benefits of extending the Empty Properties Strategy to be considered.

Recommendation 32 - the panel recommends that the Empty Properties Team works proactively with student landlords and managing agents to ensure that student properties that are unoccupied can be reused for social housing.

4 - Partnership Working and Communications

4.1 Partnership Working

4.1(i) The panel felt that an overarching approach for all of the student impact issues could be useful in continuing to develop partnership working in the city. The partners might include:

stakeholders such as both of the universities and local colleges, the council, police, residents, the students' union, local councillors, landlords and community liaison staff. It was recognised that the Strategic Housing Partnership met to consider a wide range of strategic housing issues across the city and there was no intention to duplicate this work.

The panel felt that this was a significant piece of community work. The issues that had been raised could not be addressed in isolation but would be better tackled by cross-partner working and shared approaches; for example, the council might introduce an initiative to address noise problems but this would be more effective if, as suggested in recommendation 7, the universities and Students' Unions were involved and could promote the message amongst its students.

It was felt that local councillor involvement might be better coordinated through more joint working. At present, individual ward councillors tend to contact the universities separately, although it is likely that the issues are largely the same. In addition, the panel felt that there were also a number of initiatives going on across the city but they are not always joined up as well as they might be.

- 4.1(ii)** Residents told the panel that they were not concerned about which university or college a student household might attend; if there were complaints about the tenants, they would like there to be a consistent approach across all of the educational institutions in the city. Partnership working and shared communication could help to address this. Residents said that it was difficult to always know to which agency a particular complaint should be addressed; would it be a police matter, local authority or university. The panel heard that residents would welcome guidance and asked whether this might be publicised on the council's website.

4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2(i)** The panel heard that the Strategic Housing Partnership met to develop strategic approaches to a variety of housing issues in the city, and that both of the universities were represented at the Partnership. There was debate amongst the panel as to whether the Strategic Housing Partnership might be best placed to deal with the operational issues that had been raised by residents or whether another forum ought to be established. It was felt that a number of the potential issues would fall outside of the remit of the Strategic Housing Partnership, for example, noise nuisance protocols or work involving CityClean.

The panel concluded that it wished to recommend a new Student Working Group, which might act like a 'Student Impact Local Action Team'. Their work would be community based, facilitating better relationships between residents and students, and covering the whole range of student effects that have been discussed in this report.

Subject areas might include residents' complaints about street noise; about refuse, recycling and bulky waste; planning policy; council tax implications; the quality of student housing; review students living in certain wards; student numbers in the private rented sector compared to numbers in halls of residence, joint work on promoting the SShh campaign as suggested in recommendation 7, review the provision of purpose built accommodation and so on.

- 4.2(ii)** The panel was mindful of Dr Darren Smith's comments that 'existing powers were often

enough to tackle problems' and that it might not always be necessary to introduce new policies but rather to use the existing ones. The partner organisations each already had a number of powers and sanctions that might be of use in tackling any kind of antisocial behaviour, not just that which could be attributed to students. The council, for example, had its noise abatement procedures, and CityClean could take enforcement action if households consistently left refuse or recycling out on the wrong days.

However, there was a sense that partners were not always fully aware of the extent of the power that other stakeholders might have. The panel thought that it would be beneficial for the members of the Student Working Group to summarise the powers that already existed, and to monitor and update the information as necessary. This information should be made available to the public, via the website and other means.

There may well be other occasions when various partners needed to meet up throughout the year; this suggested meeting is not intended to replace those other meetings. However the suggested Student Working Group would be an opportunity for all of the various stakeholders to be together to discuss operational issues and to allow them to consider possible solutions.

The panel recognised that there would be resource implications in establishing a new group. It was felt that the local authority could provide officer support and it was hoped that all of the partners, in particular the universities, would recognise the benefits and value of having such a group, and support it accordingly.

The panel felt that it would be important for the Student Working Group to be aware of the information gathering that was currently happening in the city. It welcomed the work that was being carried out by the University of Brighton on behalf of the Strategic Housing Partnership in mapping student numbers in Brighton & Hove and hoped that this research would be continued into the future, as this would help to inform planning and strategies for student housing in years to come.

Recommendation 33 - the panel recommends that a Student Working Group is formed, comprising of both of the universities and local colleges, the council, police, residents representing Residents' Associations, the students' unions, ward councillors, representatives for landlords and community liaison staff or staff from the accommodation teams. This would facilitate ongoing and improved communication and liaison between the partners.

The Group should consider the operational issues caused by the impact of students living in the city and discuss ways of addressing possible solutions where necessary. The Group should also coordinate a shared database of sanctions that the partners already have.

4.3 Communications

4.3(i) The panel felt that one of the areas that the Student Working Group might wish to consider was that of the induction packs given to students. At present, the universities each have their own pack, the letting agents and landlords issue students with a pack, and the council has its own information that it wishes to give to students; this can lead to students being overloaded with information and discarding it all out of frustration.

The Community Liaison Officer from the University of Brighton confirmed that a joint

council/ university information pack for students would be useful, particularly if landlords and letting agents were encouraged to distribute it, as many students take up accommodation in advance of their university induction, meaning that landlords are a better initial contact than universities or student unions.

4.4 Recommendations

- 4.4(i)** It was felt that it might be more effective to have one induction pack that was used by all of the partners in order to coordinate the information that is given to students across the city.

The panel thought that this might be resourced by redirecting the funds that are currently spent on each partner's individual induction packs. It was considered that it could prove to be more cost-effective to have a centralized induction pack.

The pack might include a checklist that students ought to consider when setting up their tenancy, for example, suggesting that the students introduce themselves to their neighbours; that they check details of their refuse and recycling days; has the household completed its Council Tax exemption form etc. The panel was aware that the University of Sussex's current accommodation induction booklet included a checklist of this nature; they considered this to be an example of good practice that they would like to see continued.

Recommendation 34 - the panel recommends the immediate benefits of a shared information pack for all partners in the city to issue to students and that the Student Working Group could implement this as one of their first actions.

- 4.4(ii)** As a long-term goal, the Student Working Group might wish to commission a piece of work to look at various environmental factors in a student neighbourhood, in order to assess its 'healthiness'. This could include car pollution/ refuse/ effect of poor standard accommodation on health and stress levels, and so on. The research might include work about the hidden costs of student accommodation, for example, the number of students living in private rented accommodation means that a certain number of family type houses are no longer available for family use, and the ongoing effect that this might have on the demand for social housing.

Alternatively, the working group might wish to work in conjunction with researchers at the universities to carry out investigations into the feasibility of an Area Action Zone, also known as a cumulative impact zone.

Recommendation 35 - the panel recommends that the Student Working Group considers the benefits of carrying out a 'Neighbourhood Health Impact Assessment' or a cumulative impact zone in student neighbourhoods.

5 - Positive Impact of Students to Local Community

- 5.1 (i)** The panel was concerned that it may seem as if Brighton & Hove did not welcome students and that the entire panel had been focused on listing the negative effects of students living in the city. The members wished to place on record their commitment to students living in Brighton and Hove.

The panel heard that students played a valuable and useful community role in the city in terms of carrying out volunteering in the city. This was welcomed and students were encouraged to carry on volunteering.

- 5.1(ii) The panel heard that the University of Brighton was linked to local communities through the Community University Partnership Programme which had been in operation since 2003. One of its main tasks was to develop the curriculum to give students the chance to contribute to their local community through their studies. Over 300 students were annually involved in community projects as a formal part of their learning, with each student would normally do 50 hours which equates to 15,000 hours of University of Brighton student resource going into the community each year. On top of this many students also volunteered in their own time. The panel heard that the University of Brighton was the winner of the national award for outstanding contribution to local community 2008, awarded by the Times Higher Educational Supplement. Students from the University of Sussex also contributed to community engagement in a large number of projects in the city.

5.2 Recommendations

- 5.2(i) The panel welcomed and supported the current volunteer arrangements that were in place at both universities. The panel thought that there may be benefits if students were encouraged to undertake volunteering opportunities in their immediate neighbourhood as much as possible, as this would help to foster good relationships between students and non-students. Members thought that it would be useful for the volunteer coordinator or organising group to work closely with ward councillors to establish what might need to be done in an area; this would help to ensure that the most pressing tasks were being prioritised. The panel would encourage the student volunteers to liaise with the local press and with the university newspapers in order that their achievements could be recognised and publicised.

The panel was aware that work was underway on a citywide volunteering strategy and would encourage the universities and students' unions to sign up to the strategy.

Recommendation 36 - the panel would recommend that the universities continue to encourage students to take part in volunteering opportunities in the residential areas in the city where there is a significant student population in order to foster improved community relations. The ward councillors and community association should become involved in helping to prioritise tasks.

- 5.2(ii) Dr Smith told the panel that students were traditionally under-represented on residents' groups and associations and any work which encouraged greater engagement should be welcomed. The panel also thought that it would be a positive move if students were encouraged to be active members of their Local Action Teams and Residents' Committees. This would help to build relationships between students and non-students, and break down barriers between the two groups.

Recommendation 37 - the panel would encourage students, via their Students' Unions, to attend their Local Action Team meetings and to play an active part in the community.

6 - Conclusion

- 6.1** The panel heard and received evidence from a wide range of Brighton and Hove residents and bore this in mind throughout the three evidence gathering meetings. The panel members would like to sincerely thank all of the residents and witnesses who took part in the work of the investigative panel in any way.
- 6.2** The panel appreciated that the issue of students living on a temporary basis amongst longer established communities had a significant effect on residents, although it was often the case that the majority of students had little or no effect on other residents.
- 6.3** The panel has made a range of recommendations that it hopes will help to address the various aspects of the student impact on residents. These recommendations are not intended to stand alone but, if accepted, should form part of the policy framework for student housing that already exists in the city.

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Appendix One – Press Release

Council seeks views on students in the city

The growing number of students choosing to study in Brighton & Hove and the impact they have on local communities, is to be discussed at a series of public meetings.

Brighton & Hove City Council's Scrutiny Team has set up its first investigative ad hoc Panel under the new Cabinet arrangements.

The Panel, made up of councillors and open to members of the public will be looking at the impact that growing numbers of student households in the private rented sector might have on longstanding communities within the city.

The Panel will be chaired by Councillor Anne Meadows, Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee and will also include Councillor Georgia Wrighton and Councillor Tony Janio.

The Panel will be holding three public meetings to gather evidence and views. The first meeting, on 17 October 2008 from 2-4pm is for residents, including students, to tell the Panel about their experiences and make recommendations for feasible policy changes. If you would like to submit evidence but you are unable to make this meeting, you are able to provide a written statement to the Panel. Please email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk or write to the Overview and Scrutiny Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2LS.

These opinions and experiences will set the agenda for the second two meetings, in November 2008, when experts will provide evidence to the Panel.

Councillor Meadows said: "Everyone living in Brighton & Hove understands the benefits and the value that the two Universities bring to the city and we very much welcome their presence.

"This is the first time that Overview and Scrutiny at Brighton & Hove City Council has studied the effects that students living in the community might have on long standing local communities and we will be looking to make practical policy recommendations as a result of the Panel.

"I hope that residents in the city, including students, will take this opportunity to let us know their views, either by writing to us or by attending the meeting on 17 October 2008 at Hove Town Hall".

Following these public meetings the Panel will report back to the Scrutiny Committee with practical recommendations.

Please contact the Scrutiny Team on (29)0450 or email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk for further details or if you would like to provide any evidence for the meeting.

Appendix Two –Letters from Residents

11 10 2008

Thank you for your letters. I am unable to attend the meeting as the time is not convenient, especially for those people who work. Shame as they are the very people being affected most by student problems. What about an evening meeting?

I live next door to five student house. The last two lots have been fine, but previous lot were very violent men. They were in their twenties so not young lads and they made my partner and I ill over the year they rented the house. Previous to that we had very noisy students, who dealt drugs we believe. With this in mind I am withholding my name and address as I do not want retribution from anything I have said in the statement I have put in the attachment. I hope it can go towards other statements, but if not then so be it. I like the many people who will be to scared to contact you or go to the meeting are to frightened of damage done to us or our property.

It sounds dramatic I know, but people are frightened, especially the elderly.

yours

A Brighton resident. (from Bevendean)

Statement for student meeting 17th October 2008

I am a resident in Brighton and the student population in my area has caused massive changes to a once quiet, tidy and clean residential estate. Here are my views on the impact students have made to the area.

1. Developers have bought nice family sized homes and turned them into student rooms, with the help of extensions many of these houses can have upwards of 6 students. This makes a problem straight away. Six people not recycling or putting their rubbish out in the bins provided. Six cars parked on the pavements, grass verges etc, as there is not the room. Mountains of vodka and lager bottles in the unkept gardens. This is the norm.
2. There are to many of these houses within the area. Many developers have 16 or more houses each. They do not take responsibility for their tenants, neither does Brighton University or the Council. Students have ridden rough shod over everyone in my area.
3. Noise levels during term time is unbelievable. Students wander around late at night into the early hours yelling and screaming, talking load on mobiles, playing football at 3am (yes 3am) on the green while the rest

of us who pay council tax have to get up in the morning for work.
Children for school.

4. Many students have a drink abuse problem. By mid evening you see them up and down the street can or bottle in hand. The bottles end up smashed in the street or on the greens areas. Great for young children and dogs feet.
5. It has been said that students care for the community they are living in. My answer to that is utter rubbish. On the whole they only care about themselves. What are they supposed to do in the community to make us feel they are part of it.
6. Noise levels from their houses and outside is horrendous, parties going on from early evening till 5 am. Cars revving and doors slamming. Windows open at all times with sound systems on full blast. It seems that the landlords set the heating so in the winter if it gets to hot they resort to opening the windows but do not turn down the stereo.
7. Students are told to smoke outside the house. This also means more yelling and screaming and mobiles while the residents are trying to sleep.
8. Violence. Most students are non violent, lippy and rude yes, but not violent. However some are. We had some who were very violent towards us and we were very frightened, no-one wanted to help us. Even their landlord was frightened of them. Another student threatened to kill a friends husband when he asked them the be quiet. They were also dealing drugs from that house.
9. I feel that the student population has reached saturation point in my area. They are not part of the community and on the whole are not liked. The value of our houses has gone down. Who after all wants to move into a bunch of noisy people who might get abusive.
10. The rubbish is another real problem. These so called intelligent people are always in bed fast asleep when the rest of us lesser mortals have put our rubbish out on the right day. Students living a different day to the rest of us. They don't go to bed until the early hours and then stay in bed till noon. This rubbish stays in the street for the gulls, foxes and rats to pick over. This is a very common problem.

11. All people want is respect. Respect that we live there all year, respect that we work and want to sleep at night, respect for the environment, that's all we ask. With students in the area on mass this will never happen.

Ryde Road
Brighton BN2

4 10 2008

Dear Sir/ Madam:

Re: Studentification/ multi-occupancy

1. At present, authorities ignore small student households of 3 or 4 residents but these can cause the same difficulties to neighbours as the larger houses with 7 or more in.
2. I believe the value of my house is reduced by having a student house next door.
3. I have had 3 years of 'good' students next door to me – but am always worried about whom I might get next time.
4. friends of mine had a happy family home in Hartington Road. They lived there until their children grew up and had every intention of staying there. They were eventually forced to move because they couldn't stand the noise from students on either side of them – after several years, they gave up the unequal struggle. That just is not fair.

Yours faithfully
GP

In response to your e-mail unfortunately I will not be able to attend but add the following for your consideration:-

I am chair of the Phoenix Community Ass which is located directly behind the halls of residence in Southover Street, Brighton.

Our estate comprises of 127 social housing units of mixed tenure ranging from single occupancy to family dwellings, situated in the middle of this is the Freebutt public house.

Over the past 11 years we have had to endure countless sleepless nights due to the noise levels emanating from the halls of residence to such an extent that residents have had to move into private sector rented accommodation because this impacted on their working lives.

When I was appointed chair I arranged a meeting between ourselves, the management and our local ward councillor to discuss the problems and try to find a way forward. From these meetings it was agreed that the councillor and a representation from our estate could attend their induction meeting with the students, the outcome of which was very positive with very few incidents that year. Another idea we implemented was to issue our residents with a direct number to the security office so as to inform them when there is noise emanating from the rear of the building so as they can act. Overall this has had the desired effect of reducing noise. The downside to this is every year

they have new students and noise levels increase. We as volunteers should not have to repeat this time consuming process every year. The management of these halls of residences should be responsible for getting the message across to their residents and made accountable where necessary with closure notices in relation to A.S.B.

As mentioned in my opening statement, the Freebutt Public House situated in the middle of our estate is an establishment frequented by students nightly to listen to live bands play. Again the history of this does not make good reading. Our resident's tolerated this establishment under the old licensing laws knowing that all should be quiet after midnight, but since the introduction to the new laws and longer hours the problems had increased to such an extent that the local authority issued a noise abatement order to the previous owner. On realising the cost needed to sound proof, immediately put the pub up for sale allowing another licensee to come in and start up again. The other problem we have to deal with is students cutting through our estate and jumping the boundary wall causing hundreds of pounds worth of damage to fencing that we have previously had raised in height at considerable cost to try and deter such action all to no avail.

I hope this enlightens you to some of the problems faced on the Phoenix Estate, if clarity is needed then I can be contacted on XXXX.

Kind regards

Malcolm Constable

Chair

Phoenix Community Association

Mr L

Ewhurst Road
Brighton

11 October 2008

Re : Survey on impact of city's student houses

Dear Sirs

Students are a continually changing population, so in streets with many houses rent to them, the character of the area has become less friendly as there are fewer neighbours to get to know and build a community spirit. The gardens of these houses are not maintained and soon become very untidy and overgrown. Houses rent to students will never become homes to them. From personal experience, I know that all a student requires is a room in which to sleep and study, not a house and gardens to maintain. Students have different lifestyles to townspeople.

Also, many students bring cars with them at the start of term, which makes parking extremely difficult, particularly close to one's home. Local residents need cars for a variety of reasons: to commute to work, bring home shopping, visit friends and family who live a few miles away, invite people to visit and to go out safely in the evenings. I suggest that students are prohibited from bringing cars to the city as they live near the universities and usually use buses and taxis anyway.

I think that large halls of residence in the city centre for students would be ideal for everyone. There are currently several empty buildings which could be converted. I can suggest the following: Anson House, Astoria Cinema, Circus

House, London Road Co-op, Preston Barracks, and Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in Dyke Road.

I hope my comments and views will be helpful to you.

Yours faithfully

Mr L

Mrs M

Dudley Road

Brighton

Survey on student homes

With regard to the above, when is someone going to take control and responsibility for these students?

There are far too many of them. I complained last year to the agents and was told to contact Health and Safety and Noise Abatement regarding rubbish and noise. It is not my responsibility to contact those authorities, there should be a central contact that should deal with complaints as this obviously is going to be an oncoming problem.

The street is noisy all hours and dirty, they are spoiling our streets in one house they have converted the garage into a room. Its not just the students in the house, its their friends that stop over plus all the cars.

As a pensioner who feels unsafe on the streets I do not want at night to have park my car at the other end of the street or the next road if I am lucky.

Owners should be local and not miles away who only visit between change-overs.

Agents and owners make money out of this and should be made more responsible, there are far too many students in our streets and quite frankly spoiling Brighton as a whole.

The houses and students should be monitored and limited.

Yours faithfully,

JM

PS Would the owners of those houses like them next door to them?

Southall Avenue

Brighton

Dear Sir,

With regard to your article about student population in off campus accommodation in Brighton, we wish to offer this photographic evidence as to the scruffy and dirty conditions living amongst these students entails.

They mostly don't bother to put bins in and out on correct collection days, they just leave them out all the time, blocking pavements. They put out stuff the recycling team won't take and that is there for weeks.

Rubbish gets thrown into their front gardens and left there for months. Some are noisy, not all I will admit.

Some front gardens are very untidy and the absentee landlords don't bother to get them done, maybe once a year.

All these factors will have devalued our property should we wish to sell, which is a distinct future possibility, as we are not happy having lived here for 43 years to now be living in a student ghetto.

Yours faithfully, JB

These photos are just 3 of the many incidents along the road.

Brading Road Brighton
BN2 3PD

Thank you for your letter dated. 7/10/08. Yes, I would be happy for you to keep my letter, regarding excessive noise from the students next door, in the public evidence file.

However I would now like to add, that since my husband has spoken to them, and made it clear that he would not tolerate the continuation of the excessive noise, it has now become much quieter, especially in the early hours, which is when we had most of the problem.

I am not sure if the fire doors have been fixed to stop them slamming, or if the students themselves are being more careful, but they are also much quieter

Yours sincerely

JD

Dear councillor

I am writing on behalf of the Coldean Local Action team and Residences Association concerning the forthcoming investigation into student accommodation in our community.

This is of great concern to our residence. We have many elderly residents that have been approached by agents who want to buy their homes to be used for student use. In my area in a space of a hundred and fifty meters (approx) there are four houses housing 5 students each. Unruly behaviour we can control ourselves with help from the Police and other bodies. But our main concern is we need families that would appreciate living in our village type community.

I do think the university could have retained the land at falmer for accommodation for students and put the Stadium at Waterhall. There are many more concerns but I shall be at the meeting with our chairman on the 17Th October.

Regards Mr Trevor Wood
Coldean Local Action Team

I am writing to make my views known to the Scrutiny Committee on student housing.

I have lived in Hartington Road for 17 years now and watched the area change from a lovely mixed residential area, with lots of families and people of all ages to one which is dominated by a people within a narrow age range who are transient and have little or no commitment to the community. Houses and gardens have become neglected and the level of noise on the street, particularly at night, has become so bad that it is impossible to sleep in the bedroom at the front of my house.

For the past five years the house next door to me has been occupied by 6 students. Until this happened I had lived very happily here and never had

occasion to complain to a neighbour. I had never been woken in the night by neighbours returning home, or having impromptu parties. Now I dread every September, knowing it will bring a new batch of people who haven't lived on their own before and have no sense of the boundaries required to live amicably in terraced housing.

The noise problems are not just those of parties. There is the everyday disturbance that happens when people come home drunk at 2am, chase each other screaming up the stairs, stand outside their front door having loud conversations in the middle of the night, or the general noise of a house filled with fire doors slamming through the night. However well, or not, we develop an understanding over the year of what the boundaries might be, I know that come the new academic year, the whole process will start again.

I am particularly aggrieved that the landlords who are effectively running their business next door to our homes are not held more to account. Like any business they should have obligations in terms of social responsibility to the area in which they operate. Their business generates noise pollution that invades our people's homes. If this was a matter of machinery running late at night next to my bedroom, it would be shut down.

This year I spoke to the landlady of the house next door and asked whether she could help in giving clear advice to the tenants about the level of noise before they moved in. She informed me that she already did this in her contract, but assured me that she would let both the tenants and their guarantors know that the house was under a "noise" warning. I felt greatly relieved that she was taking some of the responsibility.

I was therefore dismayed that the very first day the new tenants moved in, they had a party. When I asked them about the advice they had been given before moving in, they told me that they had been told by the landlord's agent that this was a "student area" and that they would be living next door to students.

I would urge the council to consider the following:

- Develop a Code of Practice for all student Landlords, which would include advice to be given to all new tenants about how to be a good neighbour and require agents to inform new tenants of their responsibilities before handing over keys.
- Implement sanctions against those landlords and agents who do not enforce the elements of their tenancies which are supposed to protect the quiet enjoyment of the neighbours. Fine landlords as well as tenants when a household creates excessive noise more than once, or is guilty of anti-social behaviour.
- Keep a register of all private landlords and agents so that neighbours can easily contact the council and find out who is responsible for a particular property.

- Limit the number of HMOs in any one street / area to prevent the development of ghettos.
- Create broader definitions of HMOs so that more properties can be regulated under this legislation
- Increase the requirements for sound insulation in HMOs and ensure that there are communal living spaces within them which are not conservatories.
- Encourage the development of more purpose built student accommodation blocks.
- Create a bigger public awareness campaign around the issues of noise / anti-social behaviour, so that everyone knows what the laws are.
- Ensure that complaints about noise are held on record for one year only, not 5, as this just discourages people from complaining.

I love my house. I've spent most of my adult life here and one of my children was born here. I'm committed to the local school. I've had wonderful neighbours, old and young. I've watched neighbours kids grow up and get married. Celebrated birthdays, Christmas and New Year with them. This area has been a tolerant, diverse place, but the community is disintegrating. So many of my neighbours, especially those with young children, have moved away from this area in the last 5 years because of the growing problem of noise. This used to be an area in which you could hear children playing in the early evening, dogs barking, people chatting to neighbours. Its ridiculous, but I crave hearing a dog bark. Now the noise you hear is drunk people careering through the streets at night. I feel on edge in my home, angry. Recently I spoke to woman in her 70 s who has lived here for 50 years. She wants to leave. How can this be right? People feeling uncomfortable, alienated, in homes they have lived in for most of their lives, because of unregulated commercial activities by greedy landlords who are not accountable to the community they are destroying. Unless we do something very soon, this place will become a ghetto of run-down properties with a completely transient population.

Please take action, both short term to manage the noise problems and stop the loss of non-student households, and long term to re-introduce diversity into the community and make it sustainable.

Many thanks

CF

To the Scrutiny Committee Members,

We have lived in Bonchurch Road for 8 years with our two young children. When we first moved into the area, we chose Elm Grove because it was very much a diverse but family orientated community with a great primary school nearby and a range of shops covering local needs.

However, in the last couple of years an increasing number of developers have out-bid family or first time buyers and consequently these properties have been over-developed and are now student accommodation. This has affected the community in many ways. Firstly the community atmosphere is very different for example: anti-social noise levels have increased, with students creating noise that ranges from their stereos to shouting in the street in the dead of night as well as spontaneous parties being held without any prior notice; litter and parking issues, not to mention the unbearable door slamming of the regulatory fire doors.

Personally speaking we do not have an anti-student mentality. We have lived next door to a property that until last year was owned by the University of Sussex and enjoyed for 6 years a very positive relationship with the ever-changing 4 students. Last year however the property was sold in a batch (it was not possible for a family or an individual to purchase a single property) to a private developer who has turned a three bedroom house into a HMO for 6 tenants. Houses in the Elm Grove area were purposely built for a family of 4. Overdeveloping these properties to house 6+ students, their cars, their noise, their rubbish and their friends has obvious consequences for the rest of the non-student community. Now that the area is being flooded with these properties the result is that families are choosing to move away. We also have another HMO directly opposite our house occupied by another 6 students. With 2 properties either side up for sale we are very concerned that every house that goes onto the market in Elm Grove will be bought by an 'anonymous' developer and turned into another HMO.

Brighton and Hove City Council urgently needs to act; many are already saying that it is too late for our community. We, however, would wish to be more positive and ask that before it is too late, that legislation, either primary or delegated needs to be enforced in order to control the number of developers who can turn family houses into HMOs or our community will be destroyed. These developers may claim that they improve properties and invest huge amounts of money but ultimately most do not live in Brighton, are not available to respond to urgent/simple problems and have no personal interest in the preservation of communities. Nor indeed, do developers pay any council tax or care for the ultimate consequences of their developments. May I respectfully suggest that all housing for 4+ students becomes regulated as an HMO; that planning permission is needed for a HMO licence (to restrict the number of communal conservatories) and that a cap is put on each area for the number of houses that can be granted HMO licences. Finally that current landlords should be made, through their HMO licences to have more responsibility for their properties and tenants.

I urge the Council to seize the opportunity to take action before it becomes too late for our community.

Yours faithfully,

JH and CH

On 'Studentification' in Hanover, Brighton: A Plea for help.

The house opposite mine in Hanover Terrace was a very smelly, very refuse littered and intimidating property with rude aggressive occupants until the letting agency took responsibility by making it an anti social behaviour watch house. I still do get kept awake though, mostly by parties taking place behind me by people in the student HMOs in Coleman Street. This is less frequent now but it is still very unpleasant to sometimes be kept awake all night.

The situation at the Phoenix Halls of residence has got a little bit better now. I live a good distance away from the Phoenix but nevertheless since it's been built, would frequently be kept awake by screams and shouts and very, very loud music coming from there. All night parties were a very regular and sometimes nightly occurrence both at the Phoenix and in the street and gardens backing onto mine. Party houses would effectively duet leaving the poor noise patrol officers asking me which one of 2 or 3 I wanted them to visit. As a result of the noise my kids would often be exhausted. It was worse at certain times of the year. When there's a noisy party I realise that I have to go and identify where it's coming from for the noise pollution and environmental teams. This month I've only had to do it twice which is unprecedented for this, normally very bad time of year. However it's still pretty upsetting having to get up – as one time recently, at 4 in the morning and more recently, a little bit after eleven. The reception I get is mixed. The 11 0'clock lot were very nice the other night and hadn't realised, quite genuinely I think, that they were disturbing me. They quickly turned their music down, but the other one at 4am was too scary looking for me to approach – a crowd of stoned looking youngsters were going in and out. That affair ended I learned from neighbours, with the police being called to deal with an ugly situation. I certainly believe that drugs may have been involved.

There are a nice bunch of residents around here but quite a few people have moved away to escape the difficulties and I'd include some of the students among the nice – but, a very vocal and aggressive minority cause all the problems here. Neighbours have got together and some of these in the organised form of Podium. Podium has done a massive amount of work to improve the conditions at the Phoenix and environs and there is an improvement: but I wonder how long such groups can keep up this level of work before the universities, who have some responsibility for the students in their care, apply the sanctions which, according to the students' contracts which are signed at the beginning of courses, they are able to. These can be applied if a student behaves in an anti social manner and disturbs and distresses fellow occupants where they live and/or local residents who are innocently trying to work and play at home. Perpetrators would then feel the

consequences and be made, either to stop, or surrender their right to study at the university. Or perhaps the university may feel that the answer is to move the noisy ones to somewhere else where they are away from communities and diligent students.

Refuse and hygiene is another issue. The pavements outside some multi-occupancy student houses are filthy with waste. A minority put out their rubbish consistently on the wrong day and 'unbagged' or bagged poorly. Elderly people and young children, and indeed the rest of us, living in the area, do need not to have this sort of problem around us.

The council have done what they can and some people there in Environmental Health and the Refuse dept have been helpful and proactive - but it depends who you get on the phone line as to how much help you get. It's difficult for them to deal with the scale of problem we have in this area and beyond.

The police are doing their best now too. All the agencies need better resources to cope with the situation. Again I do feel that the responsibility does rest with the university and the students themselves. The discipline of living among others in a reasonable way is a part of the education of any young person I think. As a parent I feel very strongly about this. I ask now, what are the university going to do for us? How will they address our troubles? How much of the money they make from the students will be made available to sort this horrible mess out?

I hate to feel afraid at home here. Some of the sounds that come from the street are intimidating. I know that the police don't usually manage to come out when these things go on: they have too much to do. I'm also aware that the noise masks drug dealing and the general commotion and disorder provide a mask for other elements to come in and commit crimes.

My children have grown up and moved out now and as a single woman living on my own I've spent more time than I'd like to think about feeling scared out of my wits. Please help us. Please put a package together which will improve things. We've done a lot of work but it has been the case that whenever we've relaxed a bit, taken a rest and said 'things are better a bit better now' the old problems seem to redouble. As a community we shouldn't have to do all of this ourselves and nor can we.

There's a campaign at the university at the moment: the **ssh** campaign and it's a great idea. It has been having some impact but this has been somewhat undermined by the decision of the Phoenix halls to require smokers to smoke outside their building. We get the noise of squawking smokers at night now. On Gumtree website agencies are promoting Brighton as a party town for student lets and the street backing onto mine is nick - named 'Party Alley'. It is not a party town for residents, who suffer and have no energy left for their own family celebrations!

Many local residents are afraid to complain because the law penalises complainants by ensuring that 'neighbour dispute' is put on documents relating to any sale of a house. There would be much more reporting of incidents were this not the case. This means that on failing to get students to behave well a resident may be condemned to live unhappily in an unsalable property and so people keep quiet about their problems. No escape! I intend to stay put and will take anyone who perpetrates this bad behaviour to court if need be. I know growing numbers of us are willing to do the same.

I understand that we are particularly badly affected in our part of Hanover. Can we rely on the university to keep up this education process for the students and, when there are problems, I ask again, will they use the powers that they have to bring perpetrators of this ASB, to book? I'm sure that whilst this may mean a short term loss of some income for the university as some expulsions will occur, in the long term it will surely benefit these institutions to have students who will undertake their studies to the end of their courses, gain their qualifications and make a wonderful contribution to our lovely city.

JP, Hanover Terrace.15-10-2008

Whilst appreciating that students are not liable for Council Tax I believe that because of the demands they make from rubbish collection etc if they do not pay then if they live in private rented accomodation-H.M.O's etc,then these premises should be re-classified as Business or Commercial Properties & the Landlords required to pay a Business rate of tax on the premises.

I am a single person on a low wage, but just over the threshold for any C.T. rebate, and have to pay £70 per month, the majority of which goes on schools something which I do not use & I believe this to be unfair when these private landlords are raking in the money & contributing nothing to the local community.

Sincerely,

Shanklin Road Street Contact
Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group

Subject: Impact of student halls and houses in Hanover, Brighton

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Date: Thursday, 16 October, 2008, 1:11 PM

I am a member of a group of residents in Hanover Street and Hanover Terrace who has been involved in an exchange of correspondence, and in a series of meetings, with Brighton University over the massive impact on our neighbourhood of the Phoenix Halls, and satellite student housing. I am not intrinsically anti-student, being once again a student myself. But I have also lived in the area for over 20 years and have witnessed the great and distressing impact of the Phoenix on the surrounding residential community. [I should, by the way, like to express my reservation about the apparent use by the Council press office, in a press release of 1 October 2008, of the word 'resident' to include students in general. For me the word 'resident' means someone who lives in a place permanently, or for a considerable length of time. Although some students may do this, in the process becoming residents, I think it only causes confusion in discussion if the word 'resident' is used in general to include the word 'student'.]

IMPACT OF THE HALLS: I have seen how the Phoenix Halls, which accommodates 300-plus students (potentially up to 600 at weekends), has transformed the area from one which had a balanced mix of older and younger residents into one which has been gradually saturated by students. This was, indeed, the fear of some Council planners at the outset, although the building of the halls went ahead anyway, with little consultation with local residents. They were, in effect, presented with a *fait accompli*. The building of the Halls - not only a very ugly Kajima building, dominating what is, in part, a conservation area, but a traumatic and even abusive event in itself, causing huge stress to the residents and the collapse of one or two cellars - led to an unremitting increase in buy-to-let properties, or properties bought for students by their parents and used for multiple occupancy.

This process continues. The Council insists that 'everyone' understands the benefits of having two universities in the area. But I have to say that, as an individual living in the immediate vicinity of the Phoenix Halls, and surrounded by what is now student housing, what strikes me above all is the sheer extent of the noise pollution, the added traffic, the accumulation of litter, and the general widespread anti-social behaviour of young people who may not intend any harm whatsoever, and are naturally high spirited, but who do not have any long-term stake in the community around them. The exponential growth in student housing in the area has led many students (indeed some have told me so) to see the area as 'theirs' - a *de facto* campus. The properties adjoining my house are now occupied by large numbers of students. The yard immediately below my window, once daily swept and cleaned by its owner occupiers, became a pile of rubbish, which raised health fears and was a real eyesore. (This inner yard was cleared for the start of term but could become a tip again at any time).

NOISE SHEETS: Until recently I had to commute to London, starting out early every morning. With the amount of noise generated every night by students returning from pubs and clubs and hanging around in the street outside or within the Phoenix precincts throughout the night, this became increasingly difficult, with constant disturbance of sleep. Although I had to pay for secondary glazing to reduce noise disturbance, this still penetrates. Some while ago I diligently filled in noise diaries at the Council's request. In these reports, often written in the small hours of the morning, I noted times and dates of disturbances and what I had done about them, such as communicating with the night security guard or with other personnel the following day. I pointed out that there was a certain pattern to the noise disturbance, which was worst from between 11 p.m. to midnight, and then again between 3-4a.m.- 5a.m., with the return from the clubs of rowdy groups of people who then lingered outside or called up to or down from windows. During the summer months the problem naturally increased, and with the change in the licensing hours, the noise levels became more extended. The kind of noise included drunken shrieking and yelling, and occasional hilarious (to them) skateboarding or cycling over speed bumps, frequent calls to the Fire Brigade, etc. Even small groups of people standing around talking relatively quietly is very disruptive when it happens during the early hours of the morning, when the street traffic has ceased. Moreover, the building

appears to magnify sound to some extent.

Although my noise sheets, and those filled in by other residents, were sent to the Council, and Council staff attended meetings with residents and university staff, nothing seems to have been done by the Council to address the problem so far. I suspect that these noise sheets were simply filed. One wonders, in any case, whether they can be a practical tool when applied to something like the Phoenix, where students are transitory and personally unknown to residential neighbours.

LINKS WITH UNIVERSITY: The group of residents formed to address the above issues (informally called Podium, after the word technically used to describe one area of the Phoenix Halls which overlooks Southover Street and often acts as a focus for noise disruption) took part in a series of meetings with University staff over the last couple of years. Our group did not confine itself to making negative complaints, but suggested a number of ways in which the situation could be improved. These included: employment of more than one permanent night guard to help reduce noise levels and disruptive conduct throughout the night; the moving of the night reception area to a place at or near the podium or main Southover Street entrance, so that disruptive behaviour could be more easily monitored and prevented; and the 'greening' of the building to help reduce sound magnification. The University undertook to consider these and other proposals.

At a last informal meeting between members of this group and a member of the University staff, we were given to understand that nothing substantive would be done to help solve our problems as residents (possibly for financial reasons), and it was suggested that we should look elsewhere to bring pressure for a solution, such as attendance at 'lats'. It seems, therefore, that we are back to square one. Although there is a plan to move the reception area to an area which looks onto the main entrance, and to install better cameras, these would only cover a small part of the site, and the will to act does not seem to exist. I understand that there is no plan to increase the numbers of permanent staff policing the place at night beyond the one guard, who is clearly unable or unwilling to act. In my opinion (and, I know, tht of others), one night guard, who has primarily to deal with student problems, and does not want to be seen as an interfering busybody by the students, is simply not enough to keep the night-long noise under control. What we have continually asked for is a sort of porter's lodge at the gates or on the podium with an overview of the site. This would be dedicated to ensuring that there is no or minimal noise between midnight and 5/6 a.m., and to dispersing groups that continually assemble and re-assemble on the precincts during this time.

At present the problem is further exacerbated, since a no-smoking policy within the Halls has led to student spillage onto the streets throughout the night. But the fundamental problem would remain, smoking or no smoking. The University makes continual reference to a mobile patrol, based at Falmer or elsewhere, which descends on hotspots when notified. This, however, is no good for us, since the damage has already been done. What we need, and have constantly pointed out, are preventive measures.

Finally, as far as I can see, the University treats the Phoenix Halls in the same way as it treats the campuses that it has in largely non-residential areas. I strongly feel that, if the Halls are not to be closed down altogether, or their function altered, as I personally think they should be, on grounds of environmental health, the Council and University should AGREE ON SPECIAL MEASURES THAT DEAL WITH STUDENT HALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS. Students who manage to obtain a room at the Phoenix, so close to the town centre, are well aware of the benefits. It seems only fair that there should be some return to those who must live with them. Anyone who knows the Hanover area can see just how close this massive building is to residential housing (just a yard or two) and how it dominates and towers over the streets below it. Universities may bring advantages to any town or city. But, in the situation of those who live directly in the shadow of their halls, such advantages remain distinctly academic!

Thank you for your attention
Ms F, Hanover Street

Date: 15 October 2008 23:15:14 BDT
Subject: Re: 'Studentification' Scrutiny Panel

Thank you for inviting me to take part in the panel. However, I am afraid I can't make it on Friday, so here's what I've got to say:

I don't really feel that the students around me actually intrude on my life in a negative way, any more than any other neighbours (which, pubs aside, isn't a lot, for the record).

Most students are young people living away from their homes for the first time. They need a little looking out for. If they leave their rubbish out early / have wild late parties, often all they need is to have the impact of their behaviour on their neighbours pointed out to them, as we would to our own young people. They are here learning all sorts of things, including how to be part of society.

If the houses look shabby and uncared for, it's usually the landlords and letting agents that are at fault for making a quick buck without taking care of their tenants' environments.

If you make an effort to befriend your student neighbours, this will pay back dividends. If they prove rude and unco-operative it's not because they are students, it is because they are rude and unco-operative (and there are a few neighbours in their fifties, sixties and beyond that fit that bill too).

Generally I think that Hanover has a good solid longer term residential core that can absorb the students. I have no sense of being 'invaded'. I like the younger demographic of the area. I like the diversity it brings. I like to go past windows and hear guitars being played, people laughing. (OK, perhaps not

drumming practice all day, but the kid needs to learn about what is acceptable...).

Sometimes the sight of girls staggering home from a good night out as I set out on my morning jog makes me feel a little nostalgic about my own student days...

However, there are a few things around here that do get my goat:

- Pubs that leave their doors and windows open with shouting clientele smoking and swearing on the street outside until well after the time they should be shut up inside (it's ridiculous that local neighbourhood pubs can do this - the new licensing laws combined with the smoking ban are a nightmare, but don't get me started on that).
- Drivers who use the area as a speedy rat run/parking lot.
- People who let their dogs mess all over the place.
- Awful graffiti artists who daub on people's houses (I can forgive the lucid poet who has written on some paving stones).
- Car vandals and burglars and 'adults' who insult my teenage son as he walks home from college.

This is all willful anti social behaviour, none of it restricted to students. If I have the time I would be happy to come along another time and talk about all that!

And there is room for public education about the unique nature of Hanover houses - 'if you stand here on the street right outside my front room window, you are 50cm away from me and I can hear everything you say (and smell your fags as if you are smoking in my house)' is, in my experience, something that can't occur to many people. Something I'm apt to forget myself sometimes!

I think more street parties and local get togethers would do a great deal towards breaking down the 'us and them' barriers between longer term residents and students/more transient populations.

Anyway, best wishes and thanks for getting in touch. Please don't hesitate to do so again!

JC

Dear Councillor Meadows,

Please consider this letter as evidence to present to the scrutiny team examining the impact student housing has on communities in Brighton and Hove.

I am a journalist who has lived and owned a property in the Coombe Road area of the city for about five years.

Several years ago, me and my neighbours experienced a six month period of anti-social behaviour from a group of students which resulted in the council's environmental health team having to take action. Their work was fantastic and supportive and took up a huge amount of council resources and no doubt valuable budget, which is ironic when the people who caused the problem were not paying any tax, nor were the people (the landlords and letting agents) who refused to tackle the issues which we tried to resolve before they reached criminal levels of anti-social behaviour.

As a journalist this lack of responsibility and action in the months prior to the council stepping-in prompted me to carry out a report into issues related to student accommodation in this area, particularly as Caroline Flint MP had launched a unit to examine the issue of student housing and its impact on communities throughout the UK.

The following points are my findings from both personal experience and my investigations into the problems which are replicated throughout the city.

1) The panel need to consider that the students living in rented accommodation in this area not only attend the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex, but the Brighton Institute of Modern Music, Sussex Downs College and other further and higher education establishments including the language schools. Student accommodation is flourishing as it is a very lucrative investment for landlords as I will explain further into this letter.

2) The Lewes Road residential area was ideal for families and first time buyers from the city. Many people I know in the street, including my partner are in key worker roles. The small family homes were more affordable compared to the more expensive areas of Hanover, Preston Park etc. The homes offered small gardens and a reasonably safe environment for children due to the 20mph home zone restrictions. There are also plenty of facilities such as schools, shops all available on foot with links to public transport. There is also the promise of the new Falmer Academy and some excellent outdoor sports facilities.

3) However, in the past few years, there has been a proliferation of "student only" houses to let in this area, which are unavailable to anyone who is not in education. Other houses in this area are increasingly being converted into flats making them unsuitable for families.

4) Landlords now advertise properties in this area as "student let" only, and in the past two years, estate agency boards erected outside homes, now state this fact. This is so that the landlord can rent three to four rooms in one property to students and then avoid paying any council tax, despite gaining a healthy income and his/her tenants receiving council services. This student accommodation point is stated in point 'n' of the council's council tax exemption rules. This makes renting to students a very lucrative investment to landlords.

In addition to this, the practice of excluding anyone else from renting a

property unless they are a student is blatant discrimination and I would expect a council such as Brighton and Hove to challenge this.

5) Refuse services - The majority of students in this area do not recycle and an audit of refuse/recycling in this area and tonnage will undoubtedly confirm this. A simple walk around this ward will also confirm this. Plastic bags of rubbish spill over the top of wheelie bins and are often dumped next to wheelie bins and remain uncollected as Cityclean do not remove plastic bags outside of the wheelie bin. I have had to shovel up bags of rubbish myself from outside my home which remain uncollected and are inevitably ripped open by foxes. This must be dealt with before the council introduces fortnightly collections.

At the end of summer term, the whole contents of homes are thrown onto the streets of this area including mattresses, tvs and any other rubbish students or their landlords do not wish to visit the nearby waste recycling point in Wilson Avenue. Of course, this then encourages fly-tipping and a small pile of broken bookcases and mattresses soon turns into an extremely unsightly mound of waste. It often remains on the pavements and roads for weeks. This summer was an absolute disgrace to the city. Visitors to my home who live in other counties were shocked by the mess on the streets in this area could not believe this behaviour was not promptly acted upon when landlords whose names and addresses are available on the Land Registry and can be dealt with.

6) Crime - Students' homes in this area are targets for crime and I have received a number of door-to-door enquiries from the police who have told me this. The students' house next to me, which was lived in by a student whose father is a senior former Government cabinet minister, was burgled at 10pm on a weekday. I disturbed them as I arrived home and found them cutting a hole in the front door glass.

The police told me that criminals scour the area for student homes as they are often obviously unoccupied at certain times and now student let homes are now advertised as such by the estate agents boards, they have become easy targets. The police informed me that the criminals often return a few weeks later as students' parents replace their laptops and electrical equipment very quickly.

7) Graffiti - It would be unfair to blame students for graffiti, this is an anti-social activity carried out by many individuals. However, the removal of graffiti is the property owner's responsibility and therefore, it remains on walls in this area for eternity as the landlords are often absent and never visit their investment homes. They just take the money. We have large tags plastered throughout the streets which have been here for years as no-one will take responsibility for ordering landlords to remove them and landlords do not live in the street so do not care about the environment we live in.

8) Anti-social behaviour - Approximately two years ago, me and my

neighbours suffered more than six months of the most appalling behaviour by students from the Brighton Institute of Modern Music which resulted in the council's environmental health team installing noise equipment in my home, and issuing me and my neighbours with noise and nuisance diaries.

The students would sit in the back garden all night playing bongo drums, guitars, lighting fires and sitting on the flat roof kitchen extension playing guitar until 7am in the morning. Up to 20 young people in cars would arrive at all hours with musical equipment and they would stay up all night almost every night. A games console was being used for days on end with groups of lads cheering and whooping all night. I booked into hotels and slept at friends' homes as some weeks I averaged three hours of sleep a night.

We would knock on the door and repeatedly ask them to turn it down, but we were told by one student to "move out as this was student town." One morning as I left for work I found a set of ear plugs had been pushed through my letterbox. My neighbours were sworn at and threatened.

I sent letters to the landlords asking them to intervene without a response. The council did not receive a reply when they contacted the landlords asking for the tenants to be managed. When we called the letting agent to ask them to deal with the tenants, Parks stated that they only collected the rent and did not manage the property. When I telephoned them to report a problem in the street, they asked me what house number was causing the problems as "they get loads of complaints about students in this area."

Eventually the fantastic work of the council's environmental health team, and the neighbours contacting the college to request a meeting with the college managers, the noise abated and they finally left. However, more students moved in and we have been subjected to the same issues at intervals from nearby properties. It is impossible to contact the colleges as we do not always know which colleges they attend or have their names. No-one is interested in managing these homes until the behaviour becomes so extreme the council has to spend its budget dealing with a private landlord's problem.

Please note that some full time students have as few as three contact hours of study a week, which means that although they are in full time education, they are at home for most of their time and from my experience in five years, not keeping the same hours as families and working people.

All of the above points make it difficult for anyone, including families to move into this area or remain here as we are at odds with a population of young people who have very different lifestyles and living hours.

There are however, solutions to these issues, which include stronger management of student landlords, letting agents and the students themselves. Problems should not have to reach the Environmental Health Office at crisis point before they are dealt with. This costs money.

Re-examine the student only lets and the council tax exemption point "n".

When I was a student in the 1980s, the landlord paid full rates on the property which he/she included in my rent and then the council refunded me if I could prove I was a student. This meant students shared properties with full time working people, who reigned-in anti-social behaviour to an extent as they had to get up for work.

Create a robust student liaison/landlord service, whereby residents affected by all student issues, from landlords failing to clear refuse from their properties and graffiti from their homes, have enforcement notices issued and action taken. A few prosecutions with costs paid to the council will re-coup the cost of employing such an officer.

Perhaps you could consider some sort of local city tax on these landlords, who should register their homes with the council before being allowed to let them. This would pay for the refuse collection, the road repairs and the graffiti removal from a very significant group of people who live in the city, yet are not contributing to the council's budget. Yes, they pay into shops, retail and leisure services but the council is providing essential services they are not being paid for. These costs are being spread among the working council tax payers.

As we move into a period of economic uncertainty, these issues will become more relevant as residents become increasingly dissatisfied at paying £124 a month council tax to live in neglected areas which will become unnecessarily unwelcome to families or working people.

Please remember, these student homes are making money for landlords otherwise they would not continue to rent them out. This is not an area of deprivation which needs Government funding as East Brighton received. There is a revenue stream here, that the council should tap into which in turn would make homes available to families and long-term city residents waiting for homes on the council's register.

Failing any action to remedy these issues, I too will rent my home out to four students, exploiting the council tax loophole and be able to afford to work part time and live in a nice mews property off Hove seafront.

Thank you for taking time to consider my points.

Regards, KH

Please mention the rubbish and noise too. We have had all night parties on a Tuesday, and they do not take a blind bit of notice about the rubbish collection day, when their bags get ripped open by seagulls they just leave it on the pavement. We live in a community, not a student ghetto!!

Thanks,
AD, Hanover Street,

Kevin Mannel gave me your email address, as I've just had a long chat with him about the awful problem we Hanover Residents have with students and their cars.

I live on Hanover Street, and whilst the parking problem is terrible (why we still haven't got permit parking is beyond me), it has become even worse since the students have come back. So many have cars, and I'm not sure why, as their place of learning, shops, the town centre are all within walking distance or a short bus ride away.

To give you an example, a car was parked outside my house for 3 months last year, and when I spoke to the Police about it they said it was registered in Bristol. Lo and behold, the day after the end of term the car was gone, so this must have been a student, so you can see my point.

My wife and I have one car, which is a company car for her work, as she travels all round the country on a weekly basis. It is very hard for me as someone who works from home to see my wife so stressed out after a hard day at work, driving round in circles past cars that haven't moved for weeks.

I would like this complaint to be logged, and some sort of response to it please.

Regards, Adrian.

Reference: Council seeks views on students in the city
Mr and Mrs A
Bernard Road
Brighton BN2

Dear Sir or Madam,

With this e-mail we would like to stress our concerns regarding the growing influx of students into the Elm Grove area and the affects this has on local residents.

Especially in Bernard Road more and more properties have been converted into HMO's over the last few years which is causing a lot of noise, parking, litter and other problems. We often have student parties starting at ridiculous hours during the night keeping residents awake for hours with people shouting outside in the roads. Firedoors which create noise day and night. We have litter all over the front gardens and pavements as not sufficient bins are supplied by landlords. Sofas and mattresses are kept in front gardens and not disposed of for months on end.

The increase of students in Bernard Road is also affecting parking for everybody, the road simply can not cope with 4 or 5 cars per household.

Houses owned by private landlords are not maintained and cleaned properly which affects the overall cleanliness of the area.

To sum up our issues:

No parking due to increase in population per household as HMO can house up to 9 people in an otherwise 3 bed family house

The fact that Noise Patrol is only available on Friday and Saturday nights is no support to local residents as most noise from parties are happening place during the working week.

Litter on pavements and front gardens

Lack of maintenance on facades / gardens by private landlords

Growing number of conservatories being used as communal areas. With all negative effects such as extra noise, light pollution etc.

Most houses around Elm Grove area were built over 100 years ago when sound insulation was not thought of, these houses are just not suitable to be refurbished into flats nor shared accommodation.

Sussex University in particular selling off houses in batches of 5 which obviously attracts private landlords and not families.

We would like to see some quick actions being put in place by Brighton and Hove council to stop the current developments which destroy the area where we live.

Kind regards,

Dear Scrutiny Team

As a resident and street representative of the Elm Grove Resident Action Group who was present at the meeting held in Elm Grove school on Wed 16th, I am writing to put forward my views on students living in this area.

I live in a 3/4 bedroom house with my husband and two small children, over the last 7 years our lives have been blighted by anti social behaviour of students. We are sandwiched between two student houses, one of which has seven students, every room has been made into a bedroom apart from the kitchen and bathrooms. We also have two further student houses directly opposite. We have continual problems with noise, litter and parking, we also at times feel that we are living in student halls.

The owners of these properties do not live within the local area e.g. Devon and Weston Super Mare and any issues that arise are very difficult to resolve as both the owners and letting agents act on the interest of making money only, hence more and more students having to live in properties that were built not as student hall but as family homes. We are left being verbally abused and on occasions feeling frightened and isolated within our own home.

I would like to see the council working more closely with the universities to find a suitable site (the old barracks on the Lewes Rd) to build more accommodation for students, making the universities take responsibility for their behaviour. This will also allow the universities and students to feel proud and valued by the city when they have fantastic accommodation. Has the city not already got enough luxury apartments? This will then allowing the Elm Grove area to once again be a lovely part of the city for families to live, bond and make communities that the city of Brighton can be proud of.

I wish the scrutiny team every success with this but would also like to point out that it is swift action that is needed and not just talk! This needs to happen before our lives in Brighton are destroyed for ever and we more away from the area feeling angry and let down.

S. O.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you regarding houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) I've only recently been made aware of this term since a house opposite ours has been converted into one of these 'Student hostels'. Now that term time has begun I believe the owners of the properties either side of the recently converted one have been suffering with noise problems from the house.

I am fortunate enough to live in Bonchurch Road where HMO's have not yet taken over, but neighbours in the streets behind us (Brading Road, Whippingham Road, Bernard Road etc) tell me of feeling like they are virtual prisoners in their own homes because they are surrounded by HMO's.

Many of these have conservatories built out into the gardens, so there is no escaping their presence. The HMO's bring issues of noise, litter and exacerbate parking problems in an already crowded area. These buildings were not meant to house six adults and the only people who could possibly benefit from the situation is the property developers who rent out the houses.

I would propose that planning legislation is put in place to limit the amount of HMO's in one area, I think we would all welcome a mixed population in this area, but the lifestyles of students and those with young children, such as myself, are often incompatible. No one wins in the current set up except those who rent out these houses.

There is a huge building lying empty on Lewes Road (I am told it was a barracks at one time), is there a way this could be converted to student accommodation? I want to emphasise that I'm not against students in any way, but I am very much against greedy developers making a lot of money and leaving very bad feelings in the community, a community in which the developers themselves don't live.

I know a great many people in my street, we've built a real community with the Friends of the Patch group, and I hear from some that they want to leave this area now because of these HMO's. I know this is all anecdotal, but the people themselves will tell you the same at any meeting you care to arrange.

Thank you for your time

Yours Sincerely,

RG
Bonchurch Road
Brighton
BN2

I am writing to you about this thing with the student houseing in Brighton that you had in the Argus paper last week.

I live in Lower Bevendean and we have students liveing on both sides of us and around Bevendean.

I think and Im not the only one that something has to be done,

Me and my fellow neighbours in Bevendean are fed up with the problems that they bring, like allways playing loud music, having partys, being loud into the early hours of the morning, their cars blocking up the street and and taking away the REAL neighbours parking places.

Whenever we say anything we just get a foul response back.

I think there needs to be some kind of law saying that you can only have so many student houses in a area or something along them lines.

Please take my words into account and please keep me updated with any news you have that comes out of this debate.

Thanks.

JA

To the Members of the Scrutiny Panel re: Students in the Community.

We live in Queens Park Road and both of the houses to either side of us have been turned into student lets. One houses 6 male students and the other has 4, the noise from these houses has had a dramatic impact on our lives. The owner of the house with 6 students has built a communal room in the back garden, which he apparently did not need planning permission for. The noise from this room when several of the students are in it can be intolerable, especially during the warmer months, so much so that we were unable to sit in the garden or have our french windows open, not only because of the loud talking but the language at times was dreadful. Often the students have several friends in and this makes the noise even more disturbing. We are a retired couple and our life style is so different from these young people, they often go out in the evening anything from 10.30pm onwards and then are returning home in the early hours, which can be very disturbing to us with the banging of taxi doors and doors within the house. It is not unknown for this

noise to go on until 4 to 5 am in the morning.

This has been my home for 25 years and my partner and I feel that not only has the quality of our lives been affected by this situation, if we did feel that we were unable to continue living here the value of the house has probably dropped as we would have to be honest and say that both sides were now student lets, (if we could sell the house in the first place).

We have made the effort to have contact with the boys and I'm sure some of them do try to be quiet, but a situation like this puts the onuse on us to complain if the noise does get unbearable and that can be quite a stressful thing to have to do.

I would appreciate the panel taking these comments on board.

Regards JT & MD
Queens Park Road.
Brighton.

We attended the LAT meeting at Coombe Road School.

We are concerned at the increase in student houses in Ewhurst Road. There has been a large proportion of students houses at the Bear Road end of the street but in the past 3 years the Coombe Road end has gained 6 new student houses, nos. 61, 71, 79, 58, 60 and 60a, these within a very small section of the street. There are student houses in the middle section of the street as well. We think that this increase in student houses needs to stop or reverse for the wellbeing of the area.

We do not object to students living in our street providing they are considerate to their neighbours, but feel that the maximum number has been reached in Ewhurst Road.

Our concerns include RUBBISH – generally the students leave their wheelie and re-cycle bins on the pavement, often spilling over. These open bins lead to rubbish being blown around and to passers by depositing their own mixed litter in the re-cycle bins, which means the council does not empty them. At the end of the academic year we often find huge piles of 'clearance' rubbish, which can be left on the pavement for weeks. Is there any way that the landlords/letting agencies, who are making huge profits from the students, be made responsible for clearly advising the students that wheelie and re-cycle bins are kept within the boundaries of the property and for those landlords/lettings agents to pay for prompt clearance at the end of the academic year?

PARKING – we seem to have a group of more affluent students this academic year, as, for the first time, parking has become a serious problem after 5pm. We have a good bus service here and students should be strongly advised by the Universities that they do not need a car if they are living in the city.

UPKEEP OF STUDENT PROPERTIES – some landlords are not ensuring that their properties are maintained to a reasonable standard and gardens are unkempt and overgrown. This is leading to a downgrade of the area. Students do not have a long-term commitment to the neighbourhood and this brings about a lack of community cohesion and impacts on property prices. Some residents have already moved out of the area due to the impact of student houses, and those of us left are beginning to feel in the minority.

NOISE – hasn't been a major problem, not many parties, but when they do happen they are very loud and can go on most of the night. We are, however, disturbed by the students returning home in the early hours of the morning, either to their accommodation in Ewhurst Street, or en route to other streets. This is particularly noticeable in the warmer months when we need to open windows.

As a group of residents, we are trying to build, and look at improving, our community. To that end, we held our first ever Street Party in September, students invited, and from that hope to establish a Residents Group.

We hope that our views will be incorporated and presented to the meeting you are chairing very shortly.

Thank you.

A M

When I spoke to your colleague on Friday to give my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting in person, I was told it would be ok to still offer my feelings relating to the students in my area.

I live in an area that has a very high percentage of students and other sharers, mainly due to its position - Baden Road is at the top of Coombe Rd and is in the Lewes Rd corridor convenient for both unis. The sharers are not confined to students, however, and with the increasing difficulty in getting a mortgage for young people, it seems that many are sharing well into their 20s. I would say that almost 50% of the houses in my street are now rentals, including the house next door to us, which we bought 3 years ago.

Over the past few years, I believe buying property has offered people a way of saving for their retirements, rather than a get rich quick option. However, with current housing markets, that may prove to have been a mistake. Our own property breaks even, but that's all. It was a rental property for several years before we bought it, and it offered us the chance to control our neighbours amongst other things.

Not speaking as a landlord, simply as a resident, I believe there are positives, but also things that could be improved.

On the positive side, the area has become much younger and more diverse, which makes it a more vibrant area to live in than it was 10 years ago. There are also several small local shops that would not, I believe, survive without the large numbers of sharers. The flip side of the younger resident profile is that the primary school, Coombe Rd, has struggled to build numbers, and a local pre-school in the church on Coombe Rd had to close, due to lack of pre-schoolers. There are also wider issues, which I believe are relevant, and have created a vacuum in the area allowing so many properties to be bought up by developers - the fact that anyone with school age children is unlikely to move into the area because all children are now forced to attend a poorly performing secondary school. Coombe Road primary is a good school, but parents are always looking ahead, and secondary school catchments are a big deciding factor when people decide where to move to. As soon as the Falmer catchment was set, it was almost certain that families would not be moving into the area for the foreseeable future. If the academy becomes successful, this may change, but that is a big if.

Cars are slowly becoming more of an issue - many sharer households have 2 or 3 cars, which means pressure for parking spaces is becoming greater, but it is still easier to park here than in most of the city.

Rubbish is an issue, and one that I believe could be quite easily improved:

1. The council rubbish collection dept needs to align itself far better to the rental calendar. Changes in collection days, do's and don'ts of recycling, and issues such as black bags and seagulls, etc, etc, are posted through the house doors as and when there's a change, but if additional notices were posted through in early September annually, each set of new tenants would be made aware. Otherwise it is down to how pro-active the landlord is about telling tenants. We are, because we live next door and a) are familiar with the routines, and b) have to put up with the mess personally if they get it wrong, but many landlords do not.

2. A council large rubbish collection service around areas with high density of student properties would make a huge difference. During the months of July/August (primarily) the streets in our area look like a tip because students are moving out and often leave anything they don't want to take stacked up on the street. Also, landlords clearing properties leave things piled up. Consequently the area becomes a real eye sore. This could be easily changed I believe. I would be happy to lose the 10% discount I get on the council tax when I'm paying it in the summer, if it meant that additional rubbish collections could be put on.

The other thing that really blights the area is To Let signs that are allowed to be left up for months on end. I know this is trivial, but it adds to the general un-cared-for atmosphere that helps make the area seem a less desirable place to live. I am certain that the Council could require estate/letting agents to remove the signs as soon as the property is let - it's not as if they don't know who to contact.

There is no reason why having lots of rental properties should make the area less desirable, but if the area looks shabby, it influences people's attitudes when they are looking for places to move to, and makes those of us who do live here less inclined to stay.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding these comments.

Best Regards

MC

I am writing in the hope that my comments will be included in the evidence needed for the Scrutiny panel into studentification and the effect of HMO's in Brighton and the Elm Grove area in particular.

I was present at the meeting of the Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group and would like to reiterate most of the complaints, comments and observations made by most of the people present ie:-

- The rapid increase of student accommodation in our area – many houses were sold as 'a job lot' to mainly one developer (different owners we believe) but mainly one developer.
- All of these properties were formally 3 or 4 bedrooomed family or student accommodation, next to one of which we have lived comfortably for 12 years – always had 4 students next door with no problems
- These properties are now all 6 or 7 bedrooms, each with sinks and most have a conservatory built on the back leaving derisory, useless garden space.
- They all have been built into the roof with 2 bedrooms in each roof
- No permissions were sort before building on any of these properties commenced and many residents are confused at how easy it has been for the developers to have obtained planning permission on so many properties in a very short space of time, with absolutely no consultation with any of the adjoining properties
- All neighbours of these particular properties are complaining of excessive door slamming, all doors having been fitted with special doors for fire regulations. The noise and vibration from over 6 people going in and out of rooms all day and night and the resulting slam of each of the doors is intolerable – it sounds ridiculous but it is not just a bang of a door and ear plugs do not work as all our windows rattle and the furniture shakes. We have been promised for a month that something would be done – so far nothing.

All of the above are facts about various properties in our area – the resulting problems of noise, litter and parking are obvious with the quick increase of so many extra people in crowded conditions with little experience of independent living and inadequate facilities, such as bins for instance. Feelings are therefore running high as the streets are now strewn with litter, people are being kept up all night and feel frustrated as to how to deal with it all.

I personally appreciate all the stake holders at the meeting last night being so acknowledging of residents' predicaments and giving us all so many supportive ways to help us with noise etc.

However, I feel the ultimate issue is trying to change the planning legislation for the extreme developments of future properties in the whole area. Developers were absent of course from the meeting but I believe they must be made accountable for the problems that they, ultimately, are causing. I am not anti-student and appreciate their need to be young and have parties. I am, however, anti developer, landlord and agency – these are the people who are making huge profits out of squashing students into over-developed accommodation, forcing them to have potential problems with neighbours before they even start living there, due to their sheer numbers, the unnecessary conservatories which even if quiet, cause light disturbance and noise pollution at the best of times and the inability of agencies to inform them about or provide adequate refuse facilities.

Some agencies and landlords, as we heard last night, work closely with the Universities and abide by contracts etc but the majority do not and seem to have absolutely no interest in the welfare of the students in their properties after monies have been paid and even less interest in the effect they may have on neighbouring properties. For that reason, most complaints are not dealt with and residents and students alike can be left feeling hopeless and frustrated.

Is there any hope of legislation being brought forward quickly to change the planning rules for HMO's and over development of modest properties into what can only be described as hostel accommodation?

Can legislation be brought to bear on agencies/ landlords to ensure they can be held accountable for the upkeep of their properties, ensuring their tenants behave responsibly etc?

Can the universities be allowed to move more quickly in having new building work approved when providing student accommodation in Halls as was also mentioned last night at the meeting?

These points are the most important at this stage as we hope to have a LAT worked out fairly soon to deal with day to day problems.

If these points are not acknowledged and planning legislation not altered to accommodate these development loop holes then I fear it will too late in a year or so – all available property will have been sold to the only buyers who have cash and do not need mortgages ie. the developers and landlords and the area will be altered beyond recognition. I understand these things move notoriously slowly but this needs to be worked on fast.

I hope my comments are considered and wish the scrutiny team well in working out what is best to manage studentification in the area.

Regards,
FN
Bonchurch Road

Comments for Scrutiny Panel – Student Neighbours

The house next to ours at Bonchurch Road was formerly a Sussex University House for 3 – 4 students. Like an increasing amount of houses in the neighbourhood it has been recently purchased and developed into a HMO. To date we have not had major problems with our neighbours but the increasing influx of students into this area and the nature of the HMO developments are putting a strain on community relations and are eroding the quality of life for everyone (including students). Immediate action is required to prevent the 'ghettoisation' of our streets, particularly where HMO's and other rental accommodation are concentrated. Despite the well documented experiences in other parts of the country, including Nottingham and Headingley, it's a great shame that the policy makers here had not adequately planned for the increase in the student population and the negative impact this is having. Whilst we welcome the measures the Council and Universities are now taking, it's too little too late for many residents who have seen their properties become engulfed by student accommodation, including HMO's with conservatories and loft conversions. Residents, some that have lived here for generations, are feeling so desperate that they are being forced to sell their homes and leave the area and so, the spiral of deterioration continues as more family houses are developed for maximising rental income. Whilst current legislation favours the landlord (and Agencies) who are easily able to maximise income with little or no regard or accountability to the local community, policy makers need to do a lot more for the wider community. The tax payer is, and will continue to, foot the bill for any lack of a coherent strategy. It is in everyone's interest to maintain balanced and sustainable communities. Failure to do so will result in fragmented communities and a bitter resentment continuing to build amongst residents.

As you are aware, feelings are running so high that we have established Elm Grove Residents Action Group to specifically deal with the issues of HMO's and studentification. Our first meeting was attended by 57 residents and the following motions were approved:

Thursday 17th July 2008 Meeting Proposals:

- 1. To formally establish the Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group and take nominees/volunteer Committee members including Street Representatives*
- 2. To set up a LAT (Local Action Team) for the area*
- 3. Call upon the Council to ensure that all planning, HMO licensing and safety regulations are, and continue to be, rigorously monitored and enforced.*

4. *Call upon the council to take immediate steps to ensure that our neighbourhood is not saturated by further studentification and the over development of properties by implementing a strategy to ensure the community remains both balanced and sustainable e.g. implement a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), tighten up local HMO Licensing requirements and, allocate the former barracks on Lewes Road to student residencies.*

5. *Call upon the Council to ensure that residents are easily and readily able to access support services including Street Cleaning, Environmental Health, Noise Abatement Team etc when they are needed.*

We have subsequently had a further meeting attended by 87 residents and the relevant policy maker's including the Leader of the Council, Police, and University Reps etc. The overwhelming feeling from residents is that the problems we are facing include:

- Increases in noise and anti social behaviour,
- More litter and rubbish left on the streets and in gardens,
- Parking problems,
- Devaluation of homes,
- Loss of family housing,
- Concentrations of run down houses with multiple occupants,
- Blighting of gardens and views with the increase in loft conversions and conservatories'
- HMO's are a means by which landlords are exploiting legislation to maximise rental income;
- Landlords over develop houses, taking stock out of use for families;
- Residents have experienced problems with loud banging doors and do not feel that these properties are being properly/adequately regulated;
- Council and Police services do not deal with noise and anti social behaviour problems e.g. the Noise abatement team is not often available when required during the week or in the early hours of the morning;
- Residents feel vulnerable and frustrated and are faced with little option but to leave the area;
- Agencies continue to show little regard for the community.

We would like the policy makers to do a lot more, including properly supporting residents to deal with anti social behaviour and noise. However these measures only deal with symptoms, immediate and progressive action is required to resolve the causes of our problems.

It's time for you to take some action!!!

We attended the residents' meeting recently at Elm Grove School and we very

concerned to see how much of neighbouring street are suffering, as we are, with high multiple occupancy houses, particularly those marketed towards students. We thought our street was alone in its problems.

We whole-heartedly recommend the capping of HMO license issued to keep the mix of housing at the right balance. I would say the level we have now in Bonchurch Road is at its maximum.

We currently have a house full of students (6 but often plus boyfriends) to one side and have a house on our other side that is mostly likely to be sold to a landlord in the very near future. I've lived in Bonchurch Road for most of my life and am extremely attached to the area. I run my business from home. It's taken us a very long time to save the deposit and then to actually afford a house in this area. All the way we have been bidding against landlords for properties which has been expensive. The most disheartening thing that happened was when we made enquiries about 99 Bonchurch Road to be told that Sussex University was selling it in a block of 5 houses released to the market. I found this to be absolutely unacceptable and made my feelings known to the relevant parties.

These houses are not that big and just aren't built for the capacities they are having to hold when granted an HMO. Couple that with boisterous student tenants ...PLEASE NOTE: not just parties...day to day noise but such things as very loud fire doors and noise from rooms in the roof. We regularly have interrupted sleep which affects our work (we are both self-employed) and therefore our income. We would like to start a family but have reservations about if this is practical with the prospect of having twice the noise if number 96 is granted an HMO as well.

Our students had a party on Friday night (24th), which they admit got rather out of hand with the numbers and people they didn't know. When I asked them to drop the volume of the music, the party died down and they vacated but the nuisance then moved to the street. We had people using our front wall as a latrine. Our potted plants were stolen or damaged. Cans were thrown in gardens. In fact my parents' who live three doors down found cans in their front AND back gardens!! It was very unpleasant and upsetting. We were told the party was going to happen and we have a good relationship with the student neighbours but this is the sort of thing that is so very likely to happen when a house is occupied purely by students. We are not against parties when they are on Friday or Saturday night like this one. But the numbers concerned and the hanging around afterwards really caused the problems and upset.

As well as the issue of high occupancy, the other issue is the landlords themselves. Little money is spent in the upkeep of houses. HMO houses are easily identifiable by their scruffy exterior and over-flowing bins in front gardens. The streets are full of all the additional cars a HMO house brings. The landlord of 98 so far refuses to cut back the full-sized tree which cuts off light to properties around and he also seems not to be sorting out the banging fire doors. Our landlord lives in a different town and is at a safe distance from the problems. It's very easy for him to dismiss our complaints.

We ask you to take note of our comments and consider how many more HMO licenses can possibly be granted in densely student populated areas like ours.

Evidence for impact of student households enquiry

We have lived at XX Bonchurch Road since the late 1960s. The attractions of living in this area include it being a lively area with neighbours of all ages, including students. But there are limits and questions of balance. Our immediate neighbours, No. 106, is a rented property, currently to young people who have been no trouble to us at all, although some past tenants have been less easy to live alongside. But like many of the rented properties in Bonchurch Road, the outside decoration and garden are looking very run-down. Our concern at the moment is that the house on our other side, No. is up for sale and we are worried lest it become multi-occupied after being sold to a landlord or developer. Our daughter and her partner have recently bought No. as owner-occupiers.

Some of the problems are illustrated by what happened at No. 100 last night - and especially early this morning. The 6 (young women) students who live there had a large party. We are not opposed to parties - even noisy ones - but some features of this one were just not acceptable. We were far enough away not to be seriously disturbed by the noise, although we were certainly woken by people departing noisily en masse at about 3am . But this morning we found empty beer cans in both our rear and front gardens - two doors away - and other rubbish on the pavement outside the house. Other neighbours suffered disturbance, but we will leave them to report their experiences direct if they decide to do so.

The scale of these problems has surely something to do with the sheer density of occupation. These are not very large houses - accommodating 6 tenants is really 'packing them in'. With, say 3 or 4 occupants, which would be a reasonable number, one would anticipate that - on average - the number of guests at parties and consequently the potential for disturbance of all kinds would be less. Numbers would be more manageable. More of the problems associated with 'studentification' can be laid at the door of unscrupulous landlords who overcrowd and neglect the appearance of their properties than the students occupants themselves, who are in many ways joint victims with their neighbours.

At a recent public meeting at Elm Grove School representatives of both local universities were anxious to reassure residents that they took very seriously the problems resulting from allowing an imbalance to develop - so that whole areas were in danger of becoming run-down ghettos occupied almost exclusively by students during term times and deserted zones during vacations - and were determined to play their part in avoiding such undesirable outcomes. Much of what they had to say was helpful, but our daughter pointed out that when she was still looking for a house in the area, she made enquires of the estate agent about the possibility of buying one of the four houses owned by Sussex University which had just come on the market and was informed that they would only be sold as a block.

Clearly the inevitable outcome in such cases is purchase by 'developers' intent on turning them all into multi-occupational use. All the Sussex University

representative at the meeting – clearly embarrassed by this – could say in reply was that they had been advised by their experts that this was the best way to sell the properties. It does seem either that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing or that assurances of concern are simply warm words. The minor 'villains' of the piece plainly include some anti-social students; the major ones include unscrupulous landlords who overcrowd their property and, in part at least, a local authority that allows such things to happen without taking effective measures to manage changing communities in an acceptable way.

My wife recently attended the meeting at Elm Grove Primary School which you also attended in relation to the rise in the student population in the Elm Grove Area. I believe at that meeting that the issue of noise created from the slamming shut of fire doors was raised by a number of people. This was I believe addressed by Nancy Platts who from her experience of working in the Fire Regs Dept of the council stated that the fire doors in these HMO's should have self closers of the type which can be adjusted so that they close quietly, ie they have arresters on them. This morning after a night of my neighbours fire door's slamming, sometimes so violently that the walls shook in my house, I rang the Private Sector Housing Dept of the council to query as to whether this was the case and whether a landlord can be instructed to fit this type of closing mechanism.

They informed me that there is no requirement for this type of closer to be fitted and that as they are significantly more expensive some landlords, my neighbour being one, do not fit them. I find the financial argument rather pathetic as with 7 tenants at something like a market price of £400 each a month my neighbour is making a good return for his money. I wondered if you could clarify the position on which closers are required in HMO's and I wanted also to suggest that the requirement to fit self closers with arresters be put forward as a proposal to the Scrutiny Team.

Thankyou for your time in this matter. I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

SE

I was unable to attend your meeting on 17th October but would like to put forward my views.

Students bring a lot of positive aspects to the city adding to its vibrancy and creativity and also the local economy as they spend in shops and pubs. I was a student myself and lived in the community in Leeds many moons ago.

However, housing students within the community needs to be done so with care to avoid student ghettos which rob a community of its heart.

I am all too aware of this effect, which I observed during the 14 years that I

lived in St Pauls Street Brighton. This is where my husband and I bought our first home and at that time there were a handfull of student properties in the street but the majority were owner occupied and there was a fantastic sense of community. You knew your neighbours and much socialising was done and a strong community spirit existed.

Over the following years as families expanded and moved to larger properties or out of Brighton almost exclusively the houses were bought up by landlords who converted them to student houses.

Problems with drugs and litter followed, we had our flower pots stolen or used to dump kebab wrappers in them and the appearance of the street seemed to go downhill.

I can't say I had any problems with the students being noisy or unfriendly but most were just not interested in getting to know their neighbours. It was great when some of them did introduce themselves or return our cheery hellos but on the whole they did not and the net result was that one day I realised that I had no idea any more who my neighbours were. At that point we'd had our first child and were thinking of our second and didn't want to be living in that kind of environment.

Two years ago we moved to Bonchurch Road and unfortunately that area now seems on the edge of a similar transition.

I would strongly urge the council to consider measures adopted elsewhere such as

1) A cap on the % of student accommodation. I understand a 25% cap on HMOs is proposed nationally but that is useless - the limit has to include all student accommodation not just HMOs otherwise at 25% HMOs you could easily have a 50% or higher level of student accommodation and then you get the ghetto and all the issues associated with studentification. I would suggest that a 10% figure is more realistic.

2) Student/let accommodation should be licensed in the same way as HMOs. Strong controls should exist to stop properties being left to go to rot and therefore unlikely to ever be bought by families again but just passed from one student landlord to the next.

3) Landlords of student accommodation should have to pay council tax otherwise, as the students themselves are exempt, its down to the rest of the community to pay higher council tax bills to maintain amenities.

I hope you will consider these measures in the hope that a more harmonious community can exist in which residents welcome rather than resent students.

Regards
JA, Bonchurch Road

There is no doubt that various neighbourhoods have very high densities of

student housing assuming that this is thought of as a problem then what is the solution.

Firstly reducing demand for student housing by encouraging the Universities to build more student halls on their own land and ensuring that the Universities do not expand further or if they do expand further that their expansion is more than met by their increase in their student housing on campus. There is currently a planning application for 700 units of student accommodation as long as this is not wholly taken up by an expansion of the university this should see a net reduction in the demand for private rented accommodation.

Secondly increased regulation of student housing through the Local Authority adopting further Licensing Powers to make it less appealing for landlords to specialise in this type of housing.

These factors taken together would help decrease the concentrations of student housing; of course there are many vested interests in this that must be considered and I wish you well in your deliberations on this matter.

I telephoned you the other day about the forthcoming Scrutiny meeting. I have digital video footage which shows the type of problems we're having but I can't download them in a format I can send to you. I'll keep trying, but I regret it won't be for Friday.

In the meantime here's a statement I did recently which one of the residents may already have forwarded to you; I hope it's useful.

I've written to the University and just receive stonewall responses. They always claim to be doing something about the noise, that they appreciate the needs of the local community etc etc but in reality, the problem is getting worse and nothing effective is being done.

On Tuesday night for example there were about 20 or so students standing in the Podium area shouting to each other and up to windows in the building before going out. This was at around 11.45. Then at around 02.30 some of them were coming back and were singing and shouting in Southover Street. They don't seem to have any idea at all of the impact of their behaviour on people who have to get up and work. I have been told to my face by a student that she 'doesn't give a **** ...' and that if I didn't like it here I should just **** off.

I really hope the University can be pressurised to do something effective about this.

Regards,
MC

The impact of the Phoenix Halls of Residence on the vicinity

Noise levels from students at night have become intolerable. Noise from them

in Southover Street seems to be amplified by the narrow street and relatively high buildings; it echoes down the street in which we live, Hanover Street and along a lane leading along the backs of our houses so at night, trying to sleep on the third floor up, we can hear every word.

Noise starts at around 11.00 pm when they leave the Halls to go out. They gather outside and shout from one building to the other, then move down Southover Street, calling to each other as they go.

Noise continues at any time from 12.00 midnight, when some return from pubs, then around 2.00 a.m., then 3.00, then again at around 4.00 a.m. as they return from clubs. They shout to each other in Southover Street and this wakes us up.

Another issue is their standing outside the Halls smoking at any time throughout the night, every night of the week. The area some use is just opposite our back lane and as their conversations are not quiet, this wakes us up. On Saturday night last, 11th October one group in particular were smoking from around 3.00 a.m. Sunday morning every 30 minutes or so until about 7.00 a.m., the sound of their somewhat excited conversations kept waking us up.

The impact on our lives of this continual sleep interruption is increasing tiredness. My wife gets up at 5.30 a.m. every day, drives over an hour each way to The Royal Marsden Hospital where she is children's cancer nurse specialist. She is becoming so tired there is too much risk of her making a mistake with the complex chemotherapy dosages, or falling asleep at the wheel driving home at 7.00 p.m.

I'm up at 6.00 a.m. and do physical work outdoors with dangerous cutting equipment. I'm also becoming very tired and irritable as a result of lack of sleep. So, we have no choice but to move house and are preparing to sell after Christmas, completely against our wishes.

M.C, Hanover Street, Brighton

Hi,

I have just seen the information on the council website regarding student housing.

I have lived in the Hartington Rd - Elm Grove area for the past 25 years and have noticed a considerable change in recent years. There are now several student houses in close vicinity to my house and have found that several problems have become more noticeable

- 1- excessive noise , usually late night parties going on till 2 or 3 in the morning but also in summer from loud stereos and open windows
- 2 - drunkenness stemming from the parties
- 3- bins and rubbish left out for the seagulls to scatter
- 4 - Lack of street parking as each student house may have several cars and there is no off street parking in this area.

I have 2 friends who have recently sold their houses and moved out of Brighton due to student house related problems, particularly noise and lack of sleep. One of these friends had a student house each side of her, one at the back and one opposite her in the street. The constant noise and interrupted sleep over the past few years have caused her to relocate her family to Burgess Hill despite having lived all her life in Brighton.

The problem is the concentration of student houses in certain areas, lack of awareness of their impact on working families and lack of anyone to take responsibility for the problems.

Regards
DS

Submission to the Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee Inquiry into “Studentification”.

David Lepper MP for Brighton Pavilion

Further and Higher Education are an important part of Brighton and Hove life, adding to the City’s vitality and providing jobs of all kinds for hundreds of local people. Of course, as well as students at our 2 universities and City College, we also host thousands of English Language students of all ages each year – although most of this latter group are here for shorter periods of time.

Students add to our City’s vitality. They spend money in our shops, cinemas, theatres, clubs, cafes and pubs, at sports events, on public transport and as rent! Many take part in local community groups, join churches, etc.

About one third of the 7,000 graduates per year stay in Brighton after graduation contributing to our local economy and helping us to maintain one of the most highly qualified workforces in the country. Over the years this has helped to attract and retain major employers to the City.

However, as an MP I have been dealing with individual cases of problems related to some isolated student households for a number of years in various parts of my constituency from the City centre off Western Road to Bates Estate on the Lewes Road.

What has changed over the last few years is that the issues which complainants highlight are now more often associated with greater numbers of houses in particular areas and so when problems arise they can be on a greater scale. Hollingdean, Hanover/Elm Grove, Coldean and Roundhill are some of the areas affected from which I have had

complaints.

These are areas where there has been extensive “buying-to-let” in recent years with, what is seen by many residents to be, a loss of housing stock for first-time buyers and a proliferation of properties which are now HMOs or student lets which would once have been sold or let as self-contained flats for young couples and single people.

Problems mentioned by the 87 residents who met on 15th October to consider setting up an Elm Grove/Hanover Local Action Team are typical. They include –

- Increasing noise - especially late at night
- Over-development of properties with neighbours feeling they are being overlooked
- Low levels of maintenance, especially externally – neglect of windows, painting doors, fixing garden gates, maintaining gardens, lack of basic provision for storage for rubbish and recycling
- Rubbish left outside, especially end of term dumping
- Parking
- Loss of a sense of community - because the student tenants are not in any one place long enough to become part of it - with empty streets during holidays

Of course, many of these problems are not specific to student households in a City which has one of the highest proportions of privately rented homes in England outside London. (Nationally 48 per cent of [heads of household](#) in the private rented sector are under 35, compared to 20 per cent in social renting and 13 per cent in owner occupation).

Many young people who are not students may also have difficulties managing their own homes for the first time away from the family home. And students are not the only private sector tenants who can find themselves living in badly maintained properties because of irresponsible landlords or letting agents who fail to carry out essential repairs, etc.

On a related issue in January the Government asked Julie Rugg and David Rhodes of the Centre for Urban Policy at the University of York to carry out a review of the Future of the Privately Rented Sector.

The review was presented to government on 23rd October. It looked at a range of issues including the professionalism of landlords, the quality of properties, and problems in private renting. The Government says that it will now carefully consider the recommendations before deciding next steps.

Among the recommendations made in the report were to introduce -

- “a light touch licensing system for landlords and mandatory regulation for letting agencies, to increase protection for both vulnerable tenants and good landlords.
- “a new independent complaints and redress procedure for consumers, to help end long drawn out disputes.”

I hope that the Council will give serious consideration to all the recommendations including these 2 and respond to any forthcoming government consultation on the report. Indeed, the Council might consider that, in the light of local experience, a “light touch licensing system” might not be sufficient” and then lobby accordingly.

The Universities.

A central issue is the need for both universities to provide more purpose built student accommodation on and off campus, although, of course, there will always be a number of students who will prefer not to live in such accommodation.

The University of Sussex – in 2007, completed two new housing schemes providing 714 study bedrooms and has plans to develop further student housing. It is reported that the University of Sussex has sold a number of properties it owned in the City to private developers and that they are now used for student accommodation. This, of course, distances the University from any responsibility for problems.

The University of Brighton – included the need to increase student halls of residence in its corporate plan for 2007-2012. Major new areas for development such as the Preston Barracks site might provide potential for more student homes.

The universities’ representatives at the Hanover/Elm Grove meeting (see Appendix) provided information about how their institutions advise on and monitor student accommodation issues.

Consideration should be given to putting that on a more formal basis with a common system adopted by both universities in conjunction with the Council and letting agents/ landlord’s organisations for minimising the chances of complaints and dealing with complaints where they arise.

University representatives should liaise regularly with Local Action Teams and other residents groups across the City and ensure that their contact details are known to residents and provide clear and consistent advice to students about avoiding neighbour disputes, as well as

informing them of their rights as tenants and providing support for them to enforce those rights where necessary.

Brighton and Hove City Council

Many residents query whether or not the Council is using its powers to the full and I hope this is an issue which the Scrutiny Committee will consider.

The Housing Act 2004

- Provided a general framework of powers and approaches for the police and other agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour
- Housing Act 2004 introduced a package of measures, that amongst other things, seek to improve the management of HMOs
- HMOs of three or more storeys and that are occupied by five or more people who form more than one household, will require a licence from their local authority. They can then impose conditions such as a maximum number of occupants.
- Local authorities have the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of HMOs to address particular problems that exist in smaller properties.

I was told in April 2005 that the Council would be reviewing its discretionary powers under the Act.

The Council should clarify what resulted from that review.

A frequent complaint I hear is that the prosecution process in relation to noise nuisance is often so long drawn-out that the offending neighbours have moved on before the process is over – and another set of noisy neighbours have moved in, meaning a new prosecution process must be started.

Is the Council using powers which I believe were given by an amendment in the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 to Noise Act 1996 which will allow local authorities to issue fixed penalty fines of £100 without having to provide the other services provided for in the Noise Act? I believe Fixed Penalty Notices can only be given between 11pm and 7am, that the noise must be measured from the complainant's premises. Their value seems to be that no prosecution is needed.

The Hanover/ Elm Grove meeting is not alone in suggesting that the Council's "noise patrol" service should provide a more extensive service which is more responsive to resident's needs. (See appendix.)

Landlords and letting/managing agents.

This, of course, leads back to the question of the responsibilities of letting agents or landlords where there is a succession of tenancies which cause a disturbance.

Should tenancy agreements always include clauses about neighbour disturbance and should the law provide for greater sanctions against landlords and letting agents who are reluctant to take action themselves? (See references to the Rugg/Holmes Report above.)

The universities, students, landlords and letting agent's organisations, the police and residents groups, including Local Action Teams, all have a role to play in improving the current situation in terms of quality of life for established residents and students and fostering community cohesion.

The prime responsibility must rest with the City Council as

- **the local housing authority**
- **the planning authority**
- **having responsibility for a wide range of environmental services through powers given to it by government to take action.**

The City Council, directly and through the Local Government Association and the City's MPs, is best placed to lobby government for new policies and powers if it believes they are necessary.

There was an opportunity for such lobbying this year. Caroline Flint MP, then the housing minister, asked ECOTEC consultants to gather ideas from councils about non-planning solutions to the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation in certain areas which focused on student housing.

I have asked the City Council for details of any contributions it made to that review but the reply I have received gives no details referring only to the Council being "aware of government indications of changes that may be introduced to the Use Classes Order to try and give English planning authorities greater control over "studentification". There was no indication that the Council had made any attempt to influence policies by submissions to this review.

It is regrettable if that is so.

ECOTEC HMO Report to investigate non-planning solutions consulted local councils, universities and student unions

The report was delivered to government in early October. The independent

research sets out a series of measures that could tackle and stop the complex causes and symptoms of concentrated student neighbourhoods.

The measures suggested include new planning mechanisms and the widespread adoption of a number of the best common sense local solutions that can be easily adopted.

- Prevent new enclaves by considering changes to the Use Classes Order planning rules allowing for HMOs to be brought under greater council control. This has already been adopted in Northern Ireland.
- Capping and controlling the distribution and the dispersal of HMOs by using the local planning system to set up 'areas of restraint', which have been shown to help balance communities. Nottingham has already established a threshold of 25% per neighbourhood.
- Universities and student unions should develop housing and community strategies that include: community liaison officers; student codes of conduct; neighbourhood helplines; and use of authorised student accommodation agents to help protect students from bad tenancy deals. Many universities have already invested heavily in new student halls which could help ease pressures.
- Councils should target resources such as refuse/letting board collections, street cleansing, fly posting controls at key times in the academic year; establish landlord accreditation schemes; link the demand with regeneration opportunities; work with universities to consider purpose built accommodation; and make better use of their HMO licensing and empty property powers.

In a reply to a Parliamentary Question from me on 18th November the Housing Minister Iain Wright MP told me, *“Brighton is a fantastic place, but its large proportion of privately rented properties creates an issue. On studentification and its associated problems, he will be aware of a range of possible planning and non planning proposals. He also mentioned the ECOTEC report, on which I am hoping to consult later this year.”*

Where these proposals recommended by ECOTEC do not involve new legislation our Council should give serious consideration to them. Where new legislation is needed the Council should consider its appropriateness to conditions in the City and, where necessary lobby for it with the LGA and the City’s MPs.

My thanks to Nancy Platts, Hanover resident, for her research on this issue and for representing me at the Hanover and Elm Grove residents meetings when I had responsibilities in Parliament.

Appendix

Note of 'studentification' meeting – Elm Grove residents – 15th October

The meeting which was attended by 87 residents, representatives of the Council, Councillors, representatives of the police, universities and a student union. I hope that consideration will be given to the issues and recommendation discussed at it.

Students and residents

- Suggested that residents introduce themselves to student neighbours and find out where they are from so they know who to contact if problems occur
- Leaflet all residents with all the information they need to tackle the problem
- Issue a welcome pack of rights and responsibilities to students when they move in (Council and Universities have produced and A4 sheet headed 'Don't be a noisy student, be a good neighbour' for residents to put through student houses)
- Information leaflets issued at meeting included tackling noise nuisance, cards on crime stoppers, useful contact sheet.
- Residents starting to move out of area because of problems

Landlords

- Where are private landlords and agents (main agent seems to be Parks)? Landlords not interested or not contactable.
- Residents need to be able to contact landlords – have panels outside houses (this is the case for some, but not all)
- Include clause on noise in contract (I think this already exists – not to be a nuisance to neighbours)
- Residents requested a list of all licensed HMOs from Council – Council agreed to supply

Universities and colleges

- Not always Brighton or Sussex University, some post-graduate or from language or music colleges.
- Contact details for local colleges, universities and councillors should be circulated to residents
- Brighton have a liaison officer, Sussex have accommodation officer to contact – Brighton Officer is trained in mediation techniques
- Sussex have a list of student addresses in Brighton, Brighton University don't have a database they can search but will visit properties where there are problems
- It was said that Sussex University sold properties to developers. Local residents believed this prevented families from buying and the target market was developers. Feelings ran high about this and Sussex University defended their right to get best value from the properties. Issue of selling to ethical landlords was raised. University housing and

liaison officers were prepared to act on problems and have stopped students finishing degrees and courses due to complaints about noise problems.

Over-development

- Houses over-developed – conservatories and dormers
- Conservatories – light pollution all night and residents could see into the property witnessing sights they'd prefer not to!
- Is there potential to limit size and number of HMOs as Notts Council and Northern Ireland are proposing ?
- Need student housing strategy

Noise abatement

- Currently available only on weekends until 3am. Cheap drink during the week in clubs, clubs close at 3am, noise abatement stops at 3am
- Noise abatement service needs to be available on weekdays – show of hands was asked for and looked unanimous!
- Noise is more of a problem during the week – people coming home late, taxi engines running, car doors slamming, people shouting, front and internal doors banging
- Noise service is not adequate – different houses in the same street are noisy on different days. Diary system not suited to this, the policy needs to be more flexible. Council have the powers to deal and residents need to report every incident so that Council have a full picture of all incidents. Residents complained that Council Officers just wanted to get them off the phone asap and issue a noise diary whether this was suited to the problem or not.
- Doors in HMOs are changed to fire doors – bang all day – door closers need to be adjusted so that doors don't slam, but agents need to be accountable for implementing fire regulations
- Residents not complaining because of the need to declare noise problems on selling the property will affect their ability to sell at the right price

Other issues raised

- Loss of community
- Rubbish – divan bed left in the street
- Could Council introduce a by-law to tackle people living in vans parked on the roadway? Wellington Road - people living in camper vans outside the old Children's Society building.
- Level – drinkers and drug takers
- Double parking
- No-one pays Council Tax on student housing
- Poorly maintained student properties

Recommendations

1. A student housing strategy is developed by the Council in conjunction with the universities, colleges and private landlords.
2. Sussex University and other colleges to take the problem seriously, take responsibility and make a commitment to tackle the issue, nominating a community liaison officer etc.
3. The Council set out a plan to tackle the problems caused by 'studentification' to include clear information and useful contact details for residents and students, measures to address the different noise problems by improving the times the noise abatement service is available, targeting problems of rubbish at particular times of the year when students are on the move, contacting the fire service or landlords to adjust door closers etc.
4. As a result of the plan, the Council should be able to establish what powers it already has under existing legislation and what, if any, additional powers are needed and to inform Communities and Local Government.
5. That any action is taken as quickly as possible before the situation and relationships between the various parties deteriorate further.

Appendix Three – Minutes of the Public Meetings

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

2.00pm 17 OCTOBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman); Councillors Janio and Wrighton

PART ONE

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1a Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were none.

1b Exclusion of Press and Public

1.2 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A, Part 5A, Section 100A(4) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

1.3 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES (of Previous Meeting)

2.1 There were none as this was the initial meeting of the panel.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chairman explained that this ad hoc panel had been established following examination of the council's draft Housing Strategy by the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ASCHOSC).

3.2 Whilst the council's draft Housing Strategy was formulated with extensive reference to issues relating to student housing, members felt that there was nonetheless an opportunity for a more focused piece of work on the issues relating to students living in the local community: hence this scrutiny panel, which will seek to take evidence from local residents (including students) and from a variety of expert sources, including officers of the City Council, Brighton and Sussex Universities, the police and city landlords.

4. EVIDENCE FROM WITNESSES

4.1 Panel members heard evidence from a number of city residents with points to make about the issue of students living in the local community.

4.2 Evidence from Sheila Rough, Milner Road

4.2(a) Ms Rough made the following points:

- The Milner Road area had now reached saturation point with students, and that additional accommodation on campus was therefore needed urgently;
- Privately rented housing occupied by students ('student houses') now outnumber other types of housing in the area;
- There should be a cap on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)* permitted in one street;
- The number of student houses in the area has a negative impact on general property values;
- The number of houses occupied by a number of adults (many of whom have their own cars) causes severe parking problems, exacerbated by anti-social behaviour in relation to parking (i.e. double-parking) which has the potential to impede emergency vehicle access;
- There is a major issue of noise nuisance (esp. late night parties);
- Rubbish is a major problem, with some students not adhering to collection days, not recycling etc;
- The universities should accept more responsibility for their students living in private sector housing;
- The universities should take responsibility for informing students of appropriate behaviour in terms of living in the community;

- Noise problems are constant, with particular problems at or after 3am;
- She had tried in the past to talk to individual students about these issues, but had been discouraged by negative responses;
- She had tried to involve the police, but had been discouraged by the police response (not attending incidents etc.);
- She would suggest key areas for improvement were: imposing a street-by-street cap on student numbers; provision of more on-campus accommodation; better guidance from the universities on appropriate student behaviour.
- NB: 'HMO' has a particular meaning in planning law – referring to housing with three floors or more/six or more occupants not living as a family unit. However, it is also frequently used more generally to refer to privately rented housing shared by several adults – e.g. to 'student houses', although relatively few student houses in the city are, technically speaking, HMOs. It seems sensible to assume that non-expert witnesses to the panel use the term HMO to refer to shared private sector rented housing in general.

4.3 Evidence from Ted Harman, Chair of Coldean Tenant's Association

4.3(a) Mr Harman made the following points:

- There are some problems with students in Coldean, particularly in terms of the number of adults living at some properties and in terms of parking;
- Although there have been isolated problems with student behaviour (including urinating in front gardens), most students are polite and do not cause trouble;
- Bus stops in the area can become very crowded with students queuing to go in to town etc. Sometimes the sheer number of students waiting for buses can pose a problem, particularly for older people/people with young children who can feel intimidated (even when no one intends to be intimidating);
- Given the very large numbers of people in the city on the shortlist for family homes, can it be a sensible use of resources to house students in homes more obviously suited to families?

4.4 Evidence from Mr Wright, Southall Avenue

4.4(a) Mr Wright made the following points:

- The major problems with students involve noise and rubbish;

- There is also a problem with absentee landlords who do not upkeep their properties;
- Clear guidance from the council and from universities (particularly in terms of refuse collection dates etc) might help;
- Furniture is frequently dumped in the front gardens of student houses for long periods of time. More pressure should be placed on landlords to ensure that this does not happen;
- Stickers placed on rubbish bins (giving details of collection days) would be useful. (This was endorsed by other audience members).

4.5 Evidence from Anna Hunter, Hanover

4.5(a) Ms Hunter made the following points:

- There was a growing feeling amongst Hanover residents that problems associated with students had reached an unsustainable level and that things needed to change;
- Hanover residents recognised the value of a vibrant and mixed community which welcomed students, but feared that the mix of the community had become unbalanced;
- Residents (both students and long-terms residents) could make an effort to get to know their neighbours;
- Most students are reasonable enough, but a minority cause very major disturbances; the problem is particularly centred around the Phoenix Halls of Residence and surrounding streets;
- Noise is the biggest problem in Hanover; a fact recognised by many students themselves;
- There have been positive changes in recent months, with local pubs enforcing drinking inside after 10pm and less graffiti appearing;
- The 'SSHH' campaign has had some effect and is much appreciated by residents;
- It is not always clear who people should contact with noise/ASB complaints. In particular, council Environmental Health services need a clearer pathway for complaints and all council staff need to be aware of and able to refer into this pathway. Too often, council staff offer conflicting advice to complainants;

- The situation at Phoenix Hall could be improved by Brighton University ensuring that: two security officers are present (and on duty) at nights (one officer cannot police the entire Halls effectively); that residents do not play loud music with their windows open; that more of an effort is taken to remind residents of the need to be considerate to neighbours; that firmer action (including academic sanction) is taken against persistent troublemakers.

4.6 Evidence from Trevor Wood, Coldean Residents' Association

4.6(a) Mr Wood made the following points:

- That students are normal people, often living away from home for the first time, and shouldn't be blamed for everything;
- Giving houses with 5 or 6 adults a wheelie bin the same size as that allocated to normal households does not make sense, as there is inevitably more rubbish produced than the bin can hold (which means the extra rubbish goes in black bags which are then pecked open by seagulls etc.);
- There are problems which CityClean needs to address, such as unacceptably long waits for recycling boxes and CityClean operatives who refuse to pick up recycling which hasn't been left in precisely the correct place. Such actions tend to discourage students from recycling when the council should be working hard to encourage them;
- In terms of noise problems, the Residents' Association makes a point of obtaining landlord details whenever possible and contacts landlords should problems arise. This is an effective way of dealing with noise nuisance;
- Members of the Resident's Association make a point of welcoming new students to the area and trying to work together with them to address any problems which might arise (advising people where they should park etc.);
- There should be a cap on HMOs, and the universities must take some responsibility for housing their students;
- Coldean is a community which welcomes students, but it is also a pleasant area for families to live and it is very important that the family nature of the area is not lost through an excess of student housing.

4.7 Evidence from Richa Kaul-Padte, Sussex University Students' Union

4.7(a) Ms Kaul-Padte made the following points:

- There is a tendency to view all problems associated with young people sharing houses as being student related, but by no means all young people in shared accommodation are in fact students;
- Sussex University houses nearly all its 1st year students on campus (or students live with their families);
- There are also large numbers of part time and mature students who do not necessarily fit the stereotype of students;
- There should be a properly functioning accreditation system for landlords, to ensure that student housing is of an acceptable standard: both in terms of the quality of accommodation which students should expect to find, and in terms of the impact of student housing on the broader community (e.g. landlords should be discouraged from using conservatories as living spaces);
- The council should work together with the universities and the Students' Union on refuse and recycling issues in order to encourage student recycling;
- Students should be seen as part of the local community; students do lots of volunteering and do make practical contributions to community cohesion;
- Landlords and Lettings Agents could do much more in terms of refuse/recycling – ensuring that students have up to date information, advising on bulk waste disposal etc,

4.8 Evidence from Gillian Fleming, Hanover

4.8(a) Ms Fleming made the following points:

- That she does not feel the universities do enough to tackle problems caused by students – particularly in terms of noise;
- That Phoenix Halls of Residence is a particular source of problems, with more needing to be done by Brighton University to minimise the disruption caused to local residents (for example by placing tighter controls on students congregating on the 'Podium' at night-time);
- That many students are very pleasant, but the annual churn of people in and out of student housing means that developing good relations with neighbours does not necessarily provide a permanent solution to neighbour problems.

4.9 Evidence from Tanya, former student

4.9(a) Tanya made the following points:

- Universities are in a 'catch-22' situation with regard to student accommodation: if they build halls of residence, they risk being accused of concentrating noise/ASB problems; if they rely upon private sector housing across the community, they risk being accused of not addressing the problem of housing their students;
- Universities can only fund new halls by increasing the student intake (which means increasing the future number of 2nd and 3rd year students seeking privately rented accommodation);
- Brighton University has no campus; it therefore has no option but to build halls in densely populated residential areas;
- A restriction on HMOs/student houses would only work if there was sufficient non-student demand (e.g. from young professionals) to replace students in particular areas. The risk would be that such restrictions would lead to empty homes;
- The 'problem' of students in the community may not be amenable to a single 'big-fix', but rather to a number of small scale interventions on issues such as refuse, recycling etc.

4.10 Evidence from Tom Wills, near Lewes Road

4.10(a) Mr Wills made the following points:

- He was shocked to hear of the behaviour of some students: such behaviour is by no means universal;
- In his experience local residents have been very reasonable and patient with students;
- Many students could manage quite happily without cars; perhaps the Students' Union could do more here to promote public transport;
- More campus accommodation is needed at the University of Sussex, particularly for 2nd and 3rd year students who would prefer to remain on-campus;
- Campus accommodation must be affordable; recent campus building has focused on the 'luxury' end of the student market (with en suites etc.) and such accommodation is beyond the means of many students;
- There is a basic lack of supply of student accommodation in the city; this means that landlords are not encouraged to bring rental properties up to an acceptable standard as they know that demand outstrips supply and that they will therefore find people who have no option other than to rent from them.

4.11 Evidence from Julia Pilgrim, Hanover

4.11(a) Ms Pilgrim made the following points:

- Noise is a major problem, even when the degree of noise does not reach a level at which Environmental Health (EH) services can take action;
- Noise problems are not just about students; non-students living in shared accommodation can cause just as many problems;
- Not all students cause problems; it's very much a minority;
- If the universities' contracts with students include sanctions for persistent ASB, then these should be enforced. If no such sanctions exist, they should be introduced;
- Noise can be very frightening: it's not just an issue of inconveniencing people;
- Preston Barracks should be considered as a possible site for dedicated student accommodation;
- A central point of contact for student-related problems (for people complaining about student behaviour, but also for students to use) would help, but only if it had real 'teeth';
- Given the size of local universities, they should really do more to manage their students' behaviour;
- Before EH will act on a noise problem, they require the perpetrator's exact address. Obtaining this information can be frightening, as it may involve going out on one's own in the early hours and possibly encountering the people who are making the noise who may well have been drinking heavily/taking drugs.

4.12 Evidence from Adam, Sussex University

4.12(a) Adam made the following points:

- That if city public transport was more affordable, fewer students might keep cars. As it is, it can be considerably cheaper to drive across the city than to take a bus;
- Students do not need to be singled out for special treatment: ASB should be treated as such whether students are its perpetrators or not;

- The universities have barred one landlord from advertising on their property lists, but that landlord is still doing business in the city, so it is not clear what effective sanction the universities actually have to ensure their students are housed by responsible landlords.

4.13 Evidence from Sam, Brighton University

4.13(a) Sam made the following points:

- He lives in Hanover and loves the area; he feels part of the community;
- Students should be encouraged to take an active role in the community, particularly in terms of engaging with Residents' Associations. This would help integrate students with long term residents and provide a means to address minor niggles before they escalate;
- The National Union of Students is currently running a Neighbourhood Pride campaign to encourage students to engage with their communities;
- Brighton University currently runs the SSHH campaign (silent students, happy homes);
- Housing density and inappropriate conversions of homes are essentially planning issues and the city council should take responsibility for them;
- Brighton University employs a full-time officer to liaise between the university and local communities.

5. Future Meetings

5.1 The Panel plans to hold additional meetings in public on 07 November, 21 November and 05 December. Witnesses at these sessions may include officers from Brighton and Sussex Universities; officers of the City Council (including senior officers from CityClean , planning and housing strategy); police officers; academics who have studied the issue of 'studentification'; city landlords and representatives of student letting agencies.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

2.00pm 7 NOVEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman), Janio and Wrighton

PART ONE

6. Procedural Business (copy attached).

6a Declarations of Interest

6.1 There were none.

6b Exclusions of Press and Public

6.2 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

6.3 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

7. Minutes of Previous Meeting

7.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17.10.08 were approved as an accurate record.

8. Chairman's Communications

8.1 The Chairman informed members that future meetings of the ad hoc panel would be held in Brighton Town Hall, to allow for wider public

access. An additional meeting of the panel has been scheduled for 05 December 2008.

9. Evidence Gathering

9.1 The panel heard from a number of witnesses.

9.2 Evidence from Dr Darren Smith, Reader in Geography, University of Brighton and from Jo Sage, University of Brighton

- a) Dr Smith and Ms Sage introduced themselves, explaining that they had studied the impact of increasing student numbers on a number of cities.
- b) In answer to a question regarding student/resident 'charters', the panel was told that these charters had been trialled in several locations, including Leeds, Nottingham and Loughborough. Such schemes could be difficult to implement as they required consistent engagement from Student Unions, something which was hard to guarantee, given the high turnover of Student Union officers. However, students are typically under-presented on residents group and associations, and any work which encourages greater engagement should be welcomed.
- c) In response to a query concerning the concentration of student households in the city, members were told that the situation was very fluid. Mapping from 2002-2007 showed the greatest concentration in the 'traditional' student areas of Hanover, Hartington Rd and Moulescoomb. Recent years have seen significant numbers of students around London Road station and in Regency Ward, with future movements into Hollingdean anticipated.
- d) Members were told this fluidity in student housing was not entirely due to the market expanding; there were also 'fashions' within the market, with some areas of the city seeing an expansion in the number of student households and others a contraction.

This was a very significant issue, as it was not necessarily clear whether former student housing tended to revert to family use or whether it stayed in the private rented sector (e.g. let to 'young professionals'). In the latter instance, the impact of student housing on family housing on the city might be considerably greater than in the former.

Members were informed that, in some other parts of the country such as Leeds, an expansion of student housing in one area of a city (e.g. from newly built Halls of Residence) had seen a matching reduction in the private rented sector for students, but little or no improvement in the availability of family housing, as the great majority of former student

housing had been re-targeted at the young professional sector rather than at families.

- e) In answer to a question concerning the relationship between student numbers and national economic performance, the panel was told that the relationship was very complex. However, even if student numbers fell nationally as a result of an economic downturn (and this was by no means guaranteed), 'de-studentification' of Brighton & Hove was unlikely, as the city was considered a particularly attractive destination for students. Recent estimates for both the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex saw stable or rising student figures until at least 2015.
- f) In response to queries about Planning issues, members were informed that there was currently no requirement to report or obtain permission for plans to convert family accommodation for student use (unless the accommodation in question was designated a 'Home in Multiple Occupation' – an 'HMO'). Although there was widespread support for the notion of introducing some kind of 'class order' for such changes of use, this could not apply retrospectively, so even if it was to be introduced, it would apply to only a small percentage of student housing.

Members were told that a more realistic approach to the issue might be to ensure that all existing management techniques were being employed efficiently in order to manage particular areas of city housing.

- g) In answer to a question regarding negative student perceptions of areas such as Bevendean and Moulescoomb, members were informed that such perceptions may have originated from surveys undertaken in 2002, when there was relatively little student housing in either area. In recent years, student concentration in Bevendean and Moulescoomb has increased considerably, and perceptions have changed for the better.

Members were also told that, in recent years, students had begun to favour proximity to their place of study above proximity to city centres, so this might also lead to improved perceptions of these suburban areas.

- h) In response to questions about student Halls of Residence, the panel was told that a recent University of Brighton Needs Assessment identified 90% of 1st year students preferring Halls to the private rented sector, with up to 20% of returning students also expressing a preference for Halls. Similar figures could probably be assumed for the University of Sussex.

Members were advised that if there were sufficient capacity for this volume of students in attractively sited Halls of Residence, there could be a very significant impact upon the private rented sector in the city.

9.3 Evidence from Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer, University of Brighton

- a) In response to a question concerning what the University of Brighton did to ensure that its students were aware of appropriate behaviour, members were told that this was covered in the compulsory induction for all first year students. Printed guides were also available, and the Student Union was extensively involved with this issue.
- b) Members were informed that a joint council/University of Brighton information pack for students would be useful, particularly if landlords/letting agents were encouraged to distribute it (as many students take up accommodation in advance of their university induction, meaning that landlords are a better initial contact than universities or student unions).
- c) In answer to a question about accessing student addresses, Mr Mannall told members that he did not have direct access to students' address details, although he could often confirm which students lived at which addresses by informal means.
- d) Mr Mannall told members that the majority of his time was not spent in dealing with complaints about students, but with liaising with a variety of city agencies. Mr Mannall noted that he had received very positive feedback from city organisations, glad that they had a liaison officer to deal with.

9.4 Evidence from Simon Newell, Head of Partnerships and External Relations, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Mr Newell explained aspects of the role of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and of the city Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP) and gave members some background as to what the SHP had done in terms of examining the issue of studentification. Mr Newell noted that the LSP and SHP brought key city partners together and facilitated high level discussion of issues; consequent practical measures would typically be taken by individual partner organisations rather than by the strategic partnerships themselves.
- b) Mr Newell noted that the LSP focused on the overall impact the city's universities had, not just upon any negative aspects of studentification.
- c) Mr Newell was asked to provide some examples of actions arising from the SHP's work. Mr Newell offered to produce a briefing paper for the panel.

9.5 Evidence from Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) In response to a question regarding Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), the panel was told that the legislation governing HMOs was quite restrictive, both in terms of defining an HMO (a property of more than two storeys and/or housing more than 5 people not living together as a single household), and in terms of the powers it granted to local authorities (which tended to focus on ensuring the quality of accommodation provided by HMOs rather than on managing their impact upon the local community).
- b) In answer to a query as to whether more Student Halls of Residence were required, members were told that this was an issue currently being examined by the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP). The issue was not a simple one, as Halls could themselves impact upon the local community and it was not necessarily the case that increasing the number of places available in Halls would mean that an equivalent amount of private sector student housing was returned to more 'desirable' uses such as family housing.
- c) In response to a question on landlord accreditation schemes, members were told that these could be useful, but that most city landlords already provided good quality accommodation. This situation might perhaps be best improved by closer co-working with the universities and by greater encouragement of university 'head-leasing' rather than via formal accreditation schemes. In any case, the ultimate guarantor of housing quality was demand: if demand for a particular kind of housing outstripped supply, then accreditation could never be wholly effective, as non-accredited landlords would still find customers.

9.6 Evidence from Paul Allen, Director of ebndc, Head of Neighbourhood Management, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Mr Allen stressed the positive contribution that the city's universities and their students made to local communities, much of which went relatively unheralded.
- b) Mr Allen noted that both city universities were heavily involved in community work, although he had less direct work undertaken by the University of Sussex than by the University of Brighton.
- c) Mr Allen told the panel that it was his understanding that the University of Sussex was considering introducing a compulsory element of community engagement into its undergraduate degree courses.

9.7 Evidence from Members of the Public

The panel heard additional evidence from members of the public attending the meeting.

- a) **Mr Richard Scott**, a city resident, directed the panel's attention to the issue of the availability of city private rented sector accommodation for

young people who were not students, noting that competition from students could drive rents beyond the reaches of many young working people, and that the conversion of bedsits into (more expensive) studio flats could exacerbate this problem.

- b) Mr Scott also noted that the ongoing scrutiny review into Dual Diagnosis (of mental health and substance misuse problems) had addressed housing issues, and that the work of the two panels might usefully be co-ordinated.
- c) **Mr Mike Stimpson**, a city resident and landlord, informed the panel that there was in fact no legal or planning reason why student accommodation should not revert back to family use.
- d) Mr Stimpson also queried whether the problem of studentification was really as major as was being supposed, noting that some research had suggested the problem was concentrated in a few localised areas rather than being a broader urban issue.
- e) In addition, Mr Stimpson questioned whether useful comparisons could really be made between Brighton & Hove and large cities such as Leeds and Nottingham where there was typically a citywide oversupply of housing.
- f) The Chairman responded to Mr Stimpson's first point (9.7(c) above), explaining that references by witnesses and panel members to student housing not reverting to family use referred to an observed tendency, on average, for such use not to revert, rather than to any legislative bar on such a reversion.
- g) Dr Darren Smith challenged Mr Stimpson's assertions (in 9.7(d) and 9.7(e) above), arguing that the evidence Mr Stimpson had quoted on studentification was based on 2001 census data which was insufficiently sensitive and which largely pre-dated the rapid growth of student numbers in Brighton & Hove and many other cities. Dr Smith also noted that while it was true that direct comparisons of Brighton & Hove with much larger Northern cities were of limited value, a good deal of work had been done on the impact of students on comparator towns and cities such as Loughborough, Bath and Canterbury.

9.8 The Chairman thanked all the witnesses for their contributions.

10. Future Meetings

- 10.1 The Panel plans to hold additional meetings in public on 21 November and 5 December. Witnesses at these sessions may include officers from Brighton and Sussex Universities; officers of the City Council

(including senior officers from CityClean and planning); police officers;
city landlords and representatives of student letting agencies.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

2.00pm 21 NOVEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman); Councillors Janio and Wrighton

PART ONE

11. Procedural Business (copy attached)

11a Declarations of Interest

11.1 There were none.

11b Exclusion of Press and Public

11.2 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

11.3 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

12. Minutes of Previous Meeting (held on 7 November 2008)

12.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7.11.08 were approved as an accurate record.

13. Chairman' s Communications

- 13.1 The Chairman informed members that she was aware that a number of residents still wished to make submissions. The Panel welcomed all submissions, to be received by the deadline of 5 December 2008.

14. Evidence Gathering

- 14.1 The panel heard evidence from a number of witnesses:

14.2 Evidence from Sergeant Matt Belfield, Neighbourhood Specialist Sergeant, Sussex Police

- a) Sergeant Belfield introduced himself and explained his remit: he manages the Neighbourhood Policing Team that covers Hanover, St Peters and the North Laine areas of the city.
- b) In answer to a question regarding the types of issues that his team had experienced regarding students, the panel was told that students generally caused very little trouble in the city centre. The Neighbourhood Policing Teams tended to be contacted regarding noise complaints, for example, when students returned to residential areas or when a house party over-spilled. Incidents tended to be more public disorder incidents rather than criminal offences. The Teams would deal robustly with any criminal matters.

At the beginning of the current academic term, the Neighbourhood Policing Team in Hanover had stayed at work until 5am to try and address some of the noise complaints, as it had been recognised that complaints escalated at the start of new academic years.

Sergeant Belfield told the panel that the police worked closely with Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer at Brighton University and gave examples of some of the positive joint work that had taken place.

- c) Members heard that dealing with noise complaints was generally not within the police's remit; it would generally be the case that details would be passed to Environmental Health on the next working day. However if the Neighbourhood Policing Team had resources available, officers would respond and talk to the household about their responsibilities as neighbours. When the police attend an incident, they will forward the case details to various agencies including the universities.

The panel heard that the police had the powers to arrest people for being drunk and disorderly but that this would be used as a last resort. There was also separate legislation to tackle alcohol being drunk in the street.

Sergeant Belfield said that in his view, he did not think that students often realised that they were causing problems. Sergeant Belfield felt it important to raise students' awareness with students and suggested it might be useful for students to attend residents' meetings so that they could gauge the scale of the problems and the upset to other residents.

- d) In response to a query about licensing laws, and whether there was any capacity to impose conditions on premises which had received complaints, the panel was told that legislation was available to close a premises, for example if there was a large-scale disorder. However, noise caused by smokers or people exiting the premises would not be classified as large-scale disorder. If the police received repeat complaints about the same premises, they would discuss this with the Licensing Team.
- e) In answer to a question concerning whether public order legislation could be applied to an incident within a residential property such as a garden party, the panel was told that the police could not use the legislation in this way. It would be more likely that the police would close the party down. If a particular household became problematic and was holding noisy parties regularly, the police would raise this with the various agencies including the council and the universities to consider the best way forward. The students would be advised of the possible consequences of continuing their actions, including the potential to be expelled from university.
- f) Members heard that parking obstructions and double parking offences were targeted on a regular basis and fixed penalty notices issued as appropriate. More permanent measures were put in where possible, for example, on Elm Grove, barriers had been erected to stop on-pavement parking.
- g) In response to a query concerning whether student houses were targeted by burglars, the panel was told that it did not seem to be the case that student households were particularly targeted but that burglaries happened in hotspots. When this happened, the police would offer crime prevention advice to all residents in the area.

14.3 Evidence from Tim Nichols, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Mr Nichols introduced himself and outlined the general duties of the teams that he managed; these included the licensing team and the environmental protection team that investigated noise.

Mr Nichols explained that the teams had a statutory duty to investigate all noise complaints received. The largest proportion of environmental health complaints were about noise nuisance, with over 3200 complaints received in 2007/8.

A variety of penalties could be imposed, with equipment seizure being the most stringent. In 2007/8 149 noise abatement notices had been issued, with 16 prosecutions and two audio equipment seizures. Noise nuisance complaints had escalated by approximately 10% last year, 7% the year before and 1% the year before that. So far in 2008/9, there had been six equipment seizures.

It was hard to quantify why complaints have escalated, but it could be due to a combination of factors including better audio equipment, smoking legislation leading to more people being outdoors, and the removal of artificially early fixed licensing hours.

Mr Nichols explained that the noise patrol was just one way in which the council could gather evidence about alleged noise nuisance. The Environmental Health Team also had the option to interview and correspond with complainants and alleged offenders, install recording equipment, visit the premises during the day or the night, carry out surveillance and stake-outs, and collect statements.

The panel heard that the noise patrol team had carried out customer satisfaction surveys. These had shown a high level of customer satisfaction with the service, although there had been a slight recent decline. The most common comment from residents was that the hours of the service should be extended or operated on other days of the week.

- b) The panel heard about the impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on licensed premises. The Act had a presumption that licensed premises were well managed, and therefore any late-night opening licensing applications would have to be granted unless there were clear reasons against it.

The Act also gave the police stringent closure powers, on the grounds of disorder or likely disorder; to date, the police had used this power approximately 20 times. In addition to the police powers, Environmental Health could close premises on the grounds of public nuisance but this would only be in very extreme circumstances.

The most important balancing powers were within the Licensing Review powers, which could result in modifying a licence including: reducing a premises' opening hours or removing a licensable activity; removing the manager; revoking the licence or suspending the licence.

To date, the Panel had reviewed approximately 25 licences. Of these, the Panel had revoked two licences, suspended four licences and modified several other premises' licences.

- c) In answer to a question about problems in identifying the source of a potential noise nuisance, the panel heard that it was quite common for there to be difficulties in establishing a property's address. Mr Nichols

said that he felt that his team was reasonably effective at stopping recurring problems but it might be less successful in dealing with sporadic incidents.

Mr Nichols said that he felt that addressing the problem of street noise was a gap in protection for residents. Although bylaws could be used by the police, aggrieved residents and others, it would be unrealistic to expect such powers to be effective.

The recent Noise Act had introduced the power to issue fixed penalty notices of £100 fine or £1000 on prosecution which assisted in remedying sporadic, occasional loud parties.

- d) A member raised a resident's concern that they felt that city centre noise complaints took priority over complaints from areas further from the centre. Mr Nichols assured the panel that the team did not prioritise certain geographical areas over others, although they might deal with a clutch of complaints about the same geographical area at one time in times of high demand.

Complaints were categorised into different priorities and responded to accordingly, for instance, the highest priority was given to households where a noise abatement notice had already been served, the lowest priority given to a complaint with no previous history, which had lasted less than an hour and other complaint types being ranked in-between.

- e) In response to a query regarding how complaint numbers were calculated, the Panel heard that each address which was being complained about would be categorised as one complaint, regardless of whether one or a hundred complaints had been received about the address.

It was not possible to calculate what percentage of the complaints received were about student households; this information was not currently collected although it might be possible to look at complaints by geographical area if this was useful.

14.4 Evidence from Rob Fraser, Head of Planning Strategy, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Mr Fraser introduced himself and the role of Planning Strategy. Mr Fraser explained that the current Local Plan had been based on information and data from 2001, at which time the current student housing issues had not been so prominent. This meant that there was little in the Local Plan about student housing policy.

Mr Fraser explained that central government gave local authorities challenging housing targets, with financial incentives if the targets were met, for example, at least 11,000 new homes were needed by 2026. There was no current government target for 'student housing'.

- b) Members asked about the potential benefits of a supplementary planning document (SPD) on the topic of student housing, commenting that one benefit of an SPD would be to highlight student housing as an issue, for which land needed to be allocated.

Mr Fraser explained that his department had scoped what other local authorities had done in terms of student housing including SPDs, but that there did not appear to be any instant solutions.

Most housing within Brighton and Hove did not fall within planning control, for example most housing was too small to require planning permission to be converted into housing of multiple occupation (HMO).

- c) The panel asked whether a local authority had any potential powers to control HMO numbers in a particular area on the basis of the long-term impact on the community's infrastructure. Mr Fraser said that he was unaware of any such mechanism in planning policy, but that he would provide further information to the panel at a later date.
- d) Mr Fraser said that it did not appear that planning controls were the way to tackle the issues. His view was that it would be of greater use to work with the universities and housing colleagues to ensure that adequate student accommodation was built near the universities. However, Mr Fraser was aware that he could not speak on behalf of Housing.

Mr Fraser explained that, due to the competing demands on the limited land available, his department would be wary of allowing student-specific accommodation in the city centre.

The panel heard that the Planning Strategy team worked closely with both of the universities in considering student accommodation needs. Mr Fraser explained that on-campus accommodation did not conflict with any other planning policies. There was room for high-density building along the Lewes Road, much of which was owned by the universities. Mr Fraser said that he would be keen to discuss any plans for university-owned land.

The panel heard that the University of Sussex had submitted a current planning application to build 700 units on their land, but this would be used in the first instance to move students from poorer quality campus accommodation.

Mr Fraser told the panel that there was also potential to work with Brighton University to explore the possibility of campus accommodation, as there was capacity on some of their sites.

14.5 Evidence from Jeanette Walsh, Head of Development Control, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Ms Walsh introduced herself and outlined the statutory role of development control, in making decisions and recommendations on planning applications. The development control team also have a duty to investigate breaches of planning control and ensure decisions are in accordance with the Development Plan.
- b) Ms Walsh clarified the legislation with regard to HMOs and permitted development rights, and referred members to the advisory note that had been prepared by the Planning Investigations and Enforcement Officer (copy attached to agenda papers).

Ms Walsh explained that there had been amendments to the national legislation regarding permitted developments, which would be likely to lead to larger conservatories and more attic rooms being built under householder permitted development rights.

- c) Members queried the Planning Authority's role in controlling the number and the content of signs and billboards. Ms Walsh said that there may be scope for the Planning Investigations team to investigate complaints about multiples of signs although they would not have the authority to control the signage content.

(Mr Fraser added to this point, explaining that there was regulation governing estate agents' boards in conservation areas, but it was not known whether this could be used in non-conservation areas.)

- d) In response to a query concerning enforcement action in Brighton and Hove, the panel heard that it was necessary to take a reasonable approach to planning enforcement matters and to consider the various options available. Since Ms Walsh had come into post, she had created a Planning Investigations Team. In the previous year, only six enforcement notices had been served by the team.

14.6 Evidence from Gillian Marston, Assistant Director, Cityclean and Cityparks and Damien Marmura , Operations Manager, Cityclean , Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Ms Marston introduced herself and explained Cityclean's role in the city.
- b) In response to a resident's concern about students only being allowed small wheeled bins, Ms Marston confirmed that households of five or more people could notify Cityclean of their household size and be issued with a larger wheeled bin.

In response to concerns about students leaving their refuse out on the wrong collection day, Ms Marston confirmed that this was not a 'student' problem but was a citywide problem. Cityclean could write to those households notifying them of the correct collection day. Cityclean

had also installed signs on lamp-posts notifying residents of the correct collection day; this had had a positive impact.

- c) Members asked whether Cityclean ever collaborated with the universities to raise awareness of refuse and recycling issues. The panel heard that Cityclean had attended student fairs in the past and that they had worked with one of the universities to introduce recycling facilities into halls and on a communication campaign.
- d) Members asked whether it would be possible for Cityclean to issue wheeled bin stickers reminding residents of the correct collection day. Mr Marmura explained that Cityclean was in the process of issuing fridge magnets to every household with their collection day but that they would also consider issuing stickers, as they were less likely to be lost or misplaced. Ms Marston explained that Cityclean was also due to issue recycling box information stickers to all households early in 2009.

Members queried whether there was a limit as to how many recycling boxes a household could have. Ms Marston said that, within reason, households could have as many recycling boxes as needed but that the recycling crew would also collect plastic bags of sorted recycling.

Members queried information given at a previous meeting, in which a student household was told by their landlord to leave unwanted furniture on the street as Cityclean would come and clear it. Ms Marston said that this was not the case and that Cityclean did not provide a house clearance service. Cityclean would be reluctant to put skips out at the end of term, as this was contrary to the sustainable waste agenda of 'reuse' and 'recycle'. Mr Marmura confirmed that Cityclean had the power to issue fixed penalty notices to a landlord for refuse being left on the wrong day.

- e) Members commented that a key part of the process seemed to be about information flow going to students and said that they were keen to help this process. It was noted that, although student households might change on a regular basis, landlords were fairly constant and perhaps more could be done through landlords.

Members asked whether there might be a phone number that residents could use to tell Cityclean about households that were causing problems. Ms Marston welcomed this suggestion, explaining that Cityclean employed enforcement officers that would be able to investigate such reports.

14.7 The Chairman thanked all the witnesses for their contributions.

15. Any Other Business

- 15.1 The final panel meeting will be on 05 December at Brighton Town Hall. Witnesses at this session may include officers from Brighton and

Sussex Universities; officers of the City Council; city landlords and representatives of student letting agencies.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

2.00pm 5 DECEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman); Councillors Janio and Wrighton

Procedural Business (copy attached)

16a Declarations of Interest

16.1 There were none.

16b Exclusion of Press and Public

16.2 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

16.3 **RESOLVED-** That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

17 Minutes of Previous Meeting (held on 21 November 2008)

17.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21.11.08 were approved as an accurate record.

18 Chairman's Communications

18.1 The Chairman informed members that this was the final ad hoc Panel meeting on the subject of students in the community. The Chairman explained that the next stage would be for the Panel to meet and consider the evidence that had been gathered, in order to make recommendations. The draft report would then go to full Council in order for the recommendations to be considered and ratified.

- 18.2 The Chairman anticipated that the report would be available by the end of January 2009 and suggested that any interested parties should email their contact details to the Overview and Scrutiny Team at that time.

Evidence Gathering

- 19.1 The Panel heard evidence from a number of witnesses:

19.2 Mark Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance and Procurement, and Valerie Pearce, Assistant Director, Customer Services, Brighton & Hove City Council

- a) Mr Ireland and Ms Pearce introduced themselves and explained their remit with regard to Council Tax.
- b) The Panel heard that students were exempt from paying Council Tax (CT) under two exemption codes, one which applied to halls of residence and one for properties occupied only by students.

There can be problems in identifying student households. Student households might assume that they were exempt automatically and might not inform the council that they were students; they might ignore letters from the council. The council must chase up each of the households until contact is made; this incurs costs that would be avoided if the student households informed the council of their status more promptly.

Ms Pearce explained that Council Tax officers attended Freshers' fairs at both universities in order to complete exemption certificates and advise students of what they needed to do, but it was felt that more action might be taken in raising awareness of this issue.

- c) The Panel received details of the number of households in the city registered for exemption on the basis of being a student-only household. Mr Ireland explained that, for the purposes of financial calculations, all exemptions were assumed to be a Band D assessed property, which would be liable for CT of £1200 per year.

For 2008/9, to date there had been 2869 properties, with a projection of up to 3080 by year end, giving an approximate cash value of £4.3 million for student-exempt properties. Mr Ireland explained the mechanisms and grants that central Government had for compensating local authorities for the exemptions.

- d) In response to a query about what could help to minimise the costs for Council Tax collection, the Panel heard that it would be helpful if student households registered their exemptions as quickly as

possible, to avoid the council incurring costs in chasing up the bill-payer unnecessarily.

- e) In response to a query about whether it might be possible to have, for example, a local City Tax, the Panel heard that this would not be possible under national legislation.

19.3 Toby Hamilton, owner of MTM Letting Agency

- a) Mr Hamilton introduced himself and his company, explaining that he had been a student landlord for fourteen years, and that MTM had been in operation for five years. MTM owned approximately two hundred properties across the city, with the vast majority being student lets. The properties were predominantly in Bevendean/ Coombe Road/ Lewes Road/ Upper Lewes Road/ Hanover areas. MTM managed 15 properties along The Avenue, which as a whole had a 25-35% student occupancy rate.
- b) The Panel heard that MTM were keen to address student impact issues and that they were aware that noise, refuse and unkempt gardens were the most likely areas of complaint. MTM issued tenants with a three-page welcome pack, which included items on respect, neighbourliness, how to manage your garden, refuse, applying for Council Tax exemptions, informing utility companies etc. Staff talked through the various issues with tenants at the start of their tenancy.

Mr Hamilton explained that MTM had a complaints procedure to be used when complaints were received from residents about student households. They would contact the tenants; carry out face to face visits and take the students to the neighbour's house, encouraging them to apologise, and to start communicating. Mr Hamilton commented that it might not always be apparent to residents that they should contact MTM regarding any problems with tenants.

The Panel heard that, on occasions when it was needed, MTM had worked closely with neighbourhood police officers to talk to households that were causing a more significant problem.

- c) With regard to Council Tax, MTM operated a policy under which they would not return a tenant's deposit until there was proof that Council Tax obligations had been addressed, either through applying for exemption or by paying the tax). Mr Hamilton said that he thought about half of local letting agents did this.
- d) Mr Hamilton responded to residents' concerns that letting agents had access to vacant properties before they went on to the open market, and therefore excluded families wishing to purchase family

properties. Mr Hamilton commented that this might happen on a small scale, but he was not aware of it being a big problem.

With regard to excess refuse being left at a property, Mr Hamilton said that MTM would consider it was the tenant's duty to clear it. If there were excessive refuse, MTM might employ cleaners and re-charge costs to the students. If MTM received complaints about furniture being left in a garden, for example, they would ask the students to remove it within a given timescale. If this was not done, they again would employ cleaners and invoice tenants.

- e) The Panel asked whether the private rented student market might reduce, for example, if more halls of residence were built and/or student numbers decreased; if so, what might happen to the private rented market? Mr Hamilton said supply was already exceeding demand and that it was likely that there would be an increase in empty student properties. He did not think that reductions in rent would necessarily affect student take-up as the rent was often paid by parents. The key factor is the quality of the accommodation.

The Panel then asked whether, if supply exceeded demand, MTM could advise landlords to turn their properties back into family homes. They were advised that this might be problematic as most student homes were six bedroomed properties, and not many families would need that size accommodation.

19.4 Mark Shields, G4 Lets

- a) Mr Shields introduced himself and explained the remit of G4 Lets; they focussed on student lets, particularly in the Ditchling Road area but with properties across Brighton.
- b) Mr Shields explained that G4 gave their tenants a welcome pack, with information on a number of issues, including the contact details for Council Tax in order to register for exemption.

G4 staff would try and visit their properties as much as possible, on average once a month. If they heard about a problem, G4 would ask the student to meet with the neighbour to apologise. The office would keep a diary of any incidents, and include photographs if needed.

- c) The Panel asked Mr Shields to comment on the issue of conservatories being used as living rooms, explaining that a number of residents had raised this element of permitted development as an area of concern due to the noise coming from the conservatories.

Mr Shields said that there were benefits to having a conservatory rather than a garden: for example, students tended not to garden

and so it was better to develop the space more usefully. It was also felt that, if there were a patio or garden rather than a conservatory, students would be likely to gather in the garden and cause more noise problems. Mr Shields explained that their properties were non-smoking; students would have to go outside to smoke, which may inadvertently cause noise nuisance to neighbours. The conservatories help to use outside space and contain noise and those whom wish to smoke. Outside space is still there for barbeques and table and chairs in the summer months.

- d) In response to a query about whether deposits could be used to cover any outstanding Council Tax bills, Mr Shields said that this might be problematic. Under the Deposit Collection Scheme, deposits were not meant to be used for any other means, and they could not be used for paying debts and so on.
- e) Mr Shields echoed MTM's comments about the problems in the letting market; the company had found this a very difficult year - any properties that had not been rented already might be empty for the entire year.

19.5 Shula Rich, on behalf of the National Federation of Residential Landlords

- a) Ms Rich introduced herself and explained her qualifications to the Panel. These included being a past Director of the National Federations of Residential Landlords (NFRL); past Chair of the Private Sector Housing Forum and author of the NFRL Landlord Training Manual. Ms Rich explained that she had been a private student landlord for twenty years.
- b) Ms Rich felt it was becoming more difficult to let to students, because of the lack of power given to landlords. If there was a problem, the only option would be to threaten eviction, but it could take two to three months for the court hearing, in a tenancy that was only six months long, so it was not a practical solution.

Ms Rich did not feel that extending planning controls would be the answer to tackling the problems; it should be about micro-management of issues. Landlords needed the powers to deal speedily with nuisance of any form.

Ms Rich felt that there was a difference between students and non-students in the way that they behaved as tenants; she received fewer complaints about non-students than about student households. She felt that this was largely due to students from the same university living together and having a shared circle of friends.

When she received complaints about tenants, she would write to the household asking them to be more considerate. She would involve the

universities and colleges if she had to send three or more letters to a household. Ms Rich felt that cheaper alcohol was one cause of the rise in the number of parties and related noise complaints. Ms Rich had always had help from Environmental Health when needed, and their service could not be improved.

- c) In response to a query about how Ms Rich made her tenants aware of their responsibilities, the Panel heard that Ms Rich would go through the lease in detail, pointing out all of the tenant's responsibilities. Ms Rich would also check what music playing equipment each student owned.
- d) In response to a query about how Ms Rich dealt with students' refuse, the Panel heard that Ms Rich considered it to be the students' responsibility, although she had arranged for cleaners for her properties. In the past, Ms Rich had arranged for clearance of any excess refuse in order not to inconvenience neighbours.
- e) Ms Rich suggested that one solution to the noise problems could be the introduction of on the spot fines, in the region of £30 per person, to be imposed by the council or police when attending complaints of noisy parties.

19.6 David House, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton

- a) Mr House introduced himself; he has been Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Brighton (UoB) for twenty years. UoB had submitted a written statement to the Panel.
- b) In response to a query concerning whether there were plans to build more campus accommodation, Mr House said that UoB needed to increase its accommodation offer. If UoB wished to offer campus accommodation to all first years who wanted it, they would have to double the current level of campus accommodation. It was working to expand Varley Hall in conjunction with the council, as well as on a development in Circus St.
- c) The Panel asked Mr House to comment on Phoenix Halls in particular, which presented a particular set of challenges, as they were located in a densely packed residential area. Mr House told the Panel that, in the early years, Phoenix Halls had caused very few problems and that UoB had been surprised by the current level of complaints. UoB was committed to dealing with the problems and resolving them for the benefit of all parties.

Mr House said that a number of strategies had been introduced, including employing a fulltime Community Liaison Officer. UoB was reviewing the adverse impact of the smoking ban in halls of residence, recognising that this had caused significant noise problems for

neighbours. UoB had the discretion to re-allow smoking in private rooms; this was being considered as this might resolve some noise problems. The Panel heard that UoB had tightened up staffing levels at Phoenix Halls. UoB had various disciplinary procedures available, including a fine of up to £250, for action that might damage UoB's reputation.

- d) The Panel asked Mr House whether he thought that the universities appreciated the scale of residents' frustrations with the impact of students. Mr House said that he hoped that the fact that UoB had employed a fulltime member of staff would show there was commitment to resolve the issues. UoB was spending a lot of time working with various partners, including the student union, to tackle the issues presented.
- e) The Panel asked whether the university would ever contact parents directly. Mr House said that this would not generally happen; students were adults so it was not likely that UoB would have the power to contact parents.
- f) In response to a query about whether UoB would look into head leasing properties, the Panel heard that they fully managed the halls of residence, and were interested in head leasing. UoB would not like to wholly own domestic properties as there would be ongoing management issues and costs
- g) Mr House summed up UoB's position on accommodation: campus accommodation would gradually increase where possible, but private sector housing also had a key role to play.

19.7 Charles Dudley, Director of Residential, Sport and Trading Services and Lorinda Holness, Residential Services Manager, University of Sussex

- a) Mr Dudley and Ms Holness introduced themselves; Mr Dudley was in attendance to represent the Vice-Chancellor of the university. The University of Sussex (UoS) had submitted a statement to the Panel. UoS was pleased to note that the positive contribution of the institution on the local community was widely appreciated.
- b) The Panel queried who residents should contact if they had problems with student neighbours, as UoS did not have a designated community liaison officer. The Panel heard that the Housing Team should be contacted, on 01273 678220. If residents were unaware of this, then UoS would need to do more work to promote the service.

The Panel heard that UoS knew where all of their under-graduates lived and that they were willing to deal with problems. Mr Dudley said that a study was underway, looking at a shared services programme with the University of Brighton, and it was possible that

recommendations from this might include UoS having its own Community Liaison Officer, amongst other outcomes. This was also likely to include suggestions for improved channels of communication between the universities and local stakeholders as the current consultation process was too fragmented

- c) In response to a query about how first-year students living in halls were taught skills for living, the Panel heard that a number of initiatives were in place including workshops and information packs for students.
- d) The Panel asked whether UoS knew about potential demand for accommodation in halls from second and third year students. Ms Holness explained that UoS carried out an annual exit survey for students leaving halls, and had asked this question for the first time in this year's survey. Approximately 45% of respondents said that they would prefer to have a second year in halls; of the 45%, a high proportion were international students.

UoS said that it was committed to housing all first-year students in university managed housing, with the majority on campus and had just received outline planning permission for 798 campus rooms. Mr Dudley commented that there was no public subsidy for student housing and it was a major financial outlay for UoS, which he hoped would evidence UoS's commitment to student accommodation. The success of their accommodation strategy could be demonstrated in the fact that there were 1000 less UoS students living in HMOs than last year.

- e) The Panel raised students' concerns that campus accommodation can be too costly for students. Ms Holness said that the exit survey asked students whether they felt that the halls offered value for money. The question always got a positive response. There was an almost 100% occupancy rate for the current flats, which could be taken as an indication that they were not too costly. The rents were inclusive of utility costs, services, broadband connectivity and contents insurance which provided a value for money package. In addition, UoS offered a range of accommodation options including lower priced rooms with less included in the price.
- f) In terms of student complaints, Ms Holness said that UoS did not tend to receive many complaints about its students, so it was hard to say whether it was more prevalent in head-leased properties, or in the private rented sector.
- g) Mr Dudley commented on the earlier discussion of micro-managing problems and the need, as previously stated, to improve channels of communication which were too fragmented. This was an area that both universities would be keen to explore and discuss with partners to assist with issues arising from the concentration of students in particular areas of the city.

20 Any Other Business

20.1 The Chairman thanked all of the contributors for their input.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this day of

Appendix Four - List of Expert Witnesses:

Paul Allen, Director, ebndc (East Brighton New Deal for Communities) Partnership and Head of Neighbourhood Renewal Development and Strategy

Sergeant Matthew Belfield, Street Policing Team, Sussex Police

Charles Dudley, Director of Residential, Sport and Trading Services, University of Sussex

Rob Fraser, Head of Planning Strategy, Brighton & Hove City Council

Lorinda Holness, Residential Services Manager, University of Sussex

David House, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton

Mark Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance, Brighton & Hove City Council

Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer, University of Brighton

Damien Marmura, Operations Manager, CityClean, Brighton & Hove City Council

Gillian Marston, Head of CityClean, Brighton & Hove City Council

Simon Newell, Community 2020 Partnership Officer, Brighton and Hove City Council

Tim Nichols, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Brighton & Hove City Council

Toby Pearce, MTM Lettings

Valerie Pearce, Assistant Director, Customer Services, Brighton & Hove City Council

Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing, Brighton and Hove City Council

Shula Rich on behalf of the National Federation of Residential Landlords

Jo Sage, Researcher, University of Brighton

Mark Shields, G4 Letting Agents

Dr Darren Smith, Reader in Geography, University of Brighton

Jeanette Walsh, Development Control Manager, Brighton & Hove City Council

Appendix Five – Media Coverage about the Scrutiny Panel

All of the articles below have been taken from the website of the Argus (www.argus.co.uk)

Saturday 4 October 2008 Investigation into student housing

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3727681.Investigation_into_student_housing/?action=comment&cid=6874406

An investigation has been launched into how Brighton and Hove's growing student population is affecting housing in the city.

Brighton and Hove City Council's scrutiny team has set up its first investigative panel which will research the issue.

The number of students living outside campus has grown by 50% - from 2,000 student properties to 3,000 - between 2004 and now.

The panel will look at the impact student households is having on long-standing communities within the city.

A council assessment of the housing market showed two thirds of Brighton University and half of Sussex University students take private rented accommodation, meaning about 12,000 live outside of campus and halls of residence.

Students are concentrated along the Lewes Road, Upper Lewes Road, Hartington Road, Coombe Road and Bevendean areas of the city.

A key concern is that students sharing larger homes occupy properties that would otherwise be available to families.

Sussex University has submitted a planning application to build 800 new flats on its Falmer campus.

The panel will be led by Councillor Anne Meadows, chairwoman of the adult social care and housing scrutiny committee, and will also include Councillor Georgia Wrighton and Councillor Tony Janio.

Three public meetings will be held to gather evidence and views.

The first meeting, on October 17 from 2pm to 4pm at Hove Town Hall, is open to all residents.

These opinions and experiences will set the agenda for the second two meetings in November when experts will provide evidence to the panel.

Coun Meadows said: "Everyone living in Brighton and Hove understands the benefits and the value that the two universities bring to the city and we very much welcome their presence.

"This is the first time that overview and scrutiny at Brighton and Hove City Council has studied the effects that students living in the community might have on long standing local

communities and we will be looking to make practical policy recommendations as a result of the panel.

"I hope that residents in the city, including students, will take this opportunity to let us know their views."

Tuesday 21 October 2008 **Brighton 'students are taking over'**

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3777340.Brighton__students_are_taking_over_/?action=comment&cid=7265115

Residents are urging action because they say their communities are becoming "mini student cities".

Problems of noise, rubbish and parking caused by many living in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) were raised at a meeting called to address the issues surrounding student accommodation.

A panel from Brighton and Hove City Council's adult social care and housing overview and scrutiny committee heard the comments at the first of three meetings.

Councillor Anne Meadows, who chaired the panel, said: "We understand that the universities and students help to make Brighton and Hove the vibrant, diverse and thriving community that it is. At the same time it has to be recognised universities and students bring added pressures, not least to local communities."

Speaking before the meeting, Sheila Rough, of Milner Road, Brighton, said: "We call our area 'student city'. It's like living on a time bomb, because you never know who is going to move in each year."

She told the panel local residents would welcome the building of student accommodation on campuses or a cap on the number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in streets.

She said: "We have reached saturation point in our area. We have reached the stage where HMOs outnumber privately owned homes."

Noise was also an issue for many residents.

Anna Hunter spoke on behalf of a group of Hanover residents, who live near Brighton University's Phoenix halls of residence and students living in HMOs, including Coleman Street, which is known as "Party Alley".

She said: "Students are certainly welcome in our community but we are concerned that the mix is becoming too weighted towards students."

"If we are not careful, Hanover risks moving towards becoming a student housing estate."

Jean and Ted Briant, of Southall Avenue, Brighton, said the area looked neglected because of rubbish and overgrown gardens.

Mrs Briant said: "A lot of the blame is to do with absent landlords."

Members of both Brighton and Sussex student unions attended the meeting.

Richa Kaul-Padte, the union's welfare officer at Sussex, said more pressure should be put on landlords to provide acceptable housing.

She said: "It shouldn't be students versus the community."

Both groups agreed they would like to work with the council and residents to address some of the problems.

Monday 27th October 2008

Householders demand action over students

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3794312.Householders_demand_action_over_students/?action=complain&cid=7283227

Residents living in "student cities" have made a desperate plea to council leaders and university bosses to help them save their communities.

Late-night noise, antisocial behaviour, litter and parking problems mean many residents are deserting areas in Brighton that are popular with students.

Thousands of students from the universities of Brighton and Sussex live in residential areas of the city and while they undoubtedly support the city's economy there is growing concern about problems in densely-populated student areas.

As the council begins looking into the issue of "studentification", residents have spoken out about the changing face of their neighbourhoods.

At an Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group meeting, people from 80 households expressed their frustrations to representatives from Brighton and Hove City Council, Sussex Police and both universities.

Jo Roeg, 43, of Brading Road, Brighton, who has three children under ten, said: "I don't want to live in a hall of residence at my age. I feel hemmed in. It's so depressing."

Residents also went to Hove Town Hall to express their views.

Julia Pilgrim, of Hanover Terrace, said: "When there is trouble it is a minority of students. But minority trouble-makers can make a heck of a lot of trouble very quickly."

She said she had called the environmental health team after seeing rats in her road because of rubbish.

She added: "I am frightened sometimes when I hear screaming.

I think, 'Is it the young people or is there a crime out there?'"

The issue of studentification is a growing one for many university cities. At the University of Sussex all first year students are offered places on campus at Falmer. However, most second year students choose to move into private accommodation.

In 2006-07, 4,688 of its students lived in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in Brighton and Hove and in 2007-08 that number rose to 5,292. The number is expected to decrease this academic year, with new buildings opening on campus.

A spokeswoman for Sussex University said: "We are currently able to house nearly 3,500 students.

"In the past two years we have opened two new campus residences – Stanmer Court, which has 463 ensuite rooms and 11 studio flats, and Swanborough, which has 250 ensuite rooms."

The university has also applied to build 800 study bedrooms on campus. The proposals will be considered by the council's planning committee in November.

At the University of Brighton demand exceeds the number of spaces available in the university's halls of residence and it is unable to guarantee all first year students a place.

Most recent figures for the university show that 5,038 students live in private rented accommodation or at home.

YOUR VOTE

Who do you think is most to blame for the "studentification" of Brighton?

Students: **12%**

Landlords: **31%**

The universities: **16%**

Brighton and Hove City Council: **10%**

It's not a major problem: **31%**

A spokeswoman said: "We are looking at options to increase bed spaces to guarantee a place in halls for all students who require it."

Wednesday 29th October 2008

Communities plea for an end to "studentification"

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3802791.Communities_plea_for_an_end_to__studentification/

The Argus reported yesterday that residents living in "student cities" have made a desperate plea to council leaders and university bosses to help save their communities.

As council chiefs start a consultation on how "studentification" affects people living in Brighton and Hove, Emily-Ann Elliott and Annabel Daguerre speak to some of those whose lives are affected by the large numbers of students in their area.

'HEMMED IN'

Marion White, 64, was born in her house in Brading Road, off Elm Grove, and has lived there with her husband Graham, 66, for the past 40 years.

During that time the couple say they have seen the street change drastically, as more families

desert the area and landlords turn properties into houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

The couple no longer know most of their neighbours and say they feel “hemmed in” by student houses, as landlords extend properties outwards and upwards, building conservatories on the back and dormers in the roof.

Mrs White said: “Over-building is a huge problem.

“We’re blocked in, because landlords are putting conservatories in the gardens, to be used as living rooms and students are sitting on the flat roofs in the summer.

“They can see right into our garden. We’ve lost all our privacy.”

The couple believe one solution would be for Brighton and Hove City Council's planning department to limit the number of extensions granted for HMOs.

Mrs White said: “I’ve lived here all my life. We could move but we don’t really want to and why should we?”

YOUR VOTE

Who do you think is most to blame for the "studentification" of Brighton?

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Landlords: **31%**

The universities: **16%**

Brighton and Hove City Council: **10%**

It's not a major problem: **31%**

NOISE IMPACT

Theresa Brookes, a freelance editor, lives in Southover Street, Hanover, with her partner John Thompson and their six-year-old son Luca.

She has lived in the area for more than 15 years, before the University of Brighton's Phoenix halls of residence were built.

She said: “We are completely understanding of student life – we were students ourselves once – but there should be strategies in place to better protect residents who are living nearby.

“The impact on our lives since the halls were built is not to be underestimated.”

Although the site is patrolled by a security guard, residents say noise during the night is still a huge problem.

Ms Brookes said: “It depends on the intake each year. Some years are better than others.

“But every year we have a relatively quiet summer. We live for June, which is when the students all go home and we relax, but by August residents are already talking about them

coming back.

“The big difference between this year and last year is the smoking ban on the site.

“No measures were put in place, so students are coming out at all hours to chat and smoke, as well as shouting and causing a disturbance when they come home from the pubs and clubs.

“We are not being unreasonable.

We accept that there is going to be a certain level of noise but there really is too much.”

Ms Brookes feels unable to allow Luca to have a bigger bedroom at the front of the house, as she does not want him to be subjected to the often nightly disturbances of students returning home.

She said: “I’m woken up in the middle of the night by people shouting and their foul language.

You do kind of wake up shaking, thinking what’s going on.

“It’s a very stressful situation. If things continue, more and more families will leave Hanover.”

'LACK OF RESPECT'

Molly Thew says lack of respect has become a big issue in her street.

Mrs Thew, 42, who works for American Express, lives in Coleman Street, Hanover, with her husband Nigel, 47, and 82-year-old father John Goddard.

She said: "Noise is obviously a problem, although it is not constant every night.

“But for me it is the mess and the lack of respect from the students for the area they live in.

“Rubbish gets put out every day and bags get pecked open by seagulls, so there is mess everywhere.

“The outsides of the houses are not kept very nice, although I know that is down to the landlords.

“There are 90 houses in Coleman Street and I would estimate about 55 to 60 are occupied by students. There are 15 people living in the three houses opposite me.

“There is never enough parking and there are bikes clamped to every lamppost and drainpipe, which obstruct the pavements.

“My father cut his leg on the pedal of one of the bikes which was blocking the path.”

Mrs Thew said she had noticed the changes over the past ten years. She said: “It is just the general attitude.

“The students hang around outside, have parties in the middle of the night and play football in

the road. I have even seen people running over the bonnets of parked cars.

“It used to be such a lovely area and everybody knew everybody.

“Something needs to be done but how it’s going to be controlled and managed I just don’t know.”

EARPLUG NIGHTS

Simon Glaisyer believes the social mix in the area where he lives has changed drastically in the past 15 years.

The 39-year-old lives in Hanover Street close to the University of Brighton’s Phoenix halls of residence and a popular area for HMOs.

He said: “When I first moved here I loved the area’s vibrancy and social mix. There were older residents, young families, young couples, single occupancy, all sharing in the friendly and non-judgmental ‘Hanover-vibe’.

“But over the years all this has changed. I have seen a once vibrant, socially rich community slowly become little more than an enlarged student campus.

“I have lost count of the number of residents that have left over the years as the student timetable, complete with late night noise and disturbances, made living in the area intolerable.”

Mr Glaisyer, who works for a mental health charity, said: “Parents of students started buying houses in the area and landlords started renting them out to as many students as possible. You expect to be disturbed by noise sometimes but the level and frequency has got significantly worse.

“Brighton is a fun place and of course students are going to go out.

When they are returning at 3am, 4am or 5am most days it only takes a few people shouting to ruin your night.”

Mr Glaisyer has resorted to wearing earplugs at night and had to install secondary glazing in his home. He said: “I am glad the council is looking at the issue now. It has started to realise that some areas have changed almost beyond recognition and if they don’t do something soon it will be irreversible.”

'LANDLORDS COULD DO MORE'

Students have hit back at claims they are taking over the city.

Union representatives from the universities of Sussex and Brighton say problems raised by residents during consultation about “studentification” are caused by a small minority of students.

Members of Sussex and Brighton student unions said most students are considerate members of the community, who contribute a lot to the area they live in.

Richa Kaul-Padte, welfare officer for Sussex University’s student union, said: “I am worried students are becoming scapegoats for problems which aren’t particularly their fault.

“It shouldn’t be students versus the community. The community should include students.”

She advised residents and students to introduce themselves to one another when they move into an area to form good relationships.

She said: “Communities change over time as different groups move in.

“We just have to work together to be integrated. A lot of the time problems with students are caused by a very small minority.”

Ms Kaul-Padte added that landlords should be encouraged to sign up to an accreditation scheme, which is currently voluntary, to ensure houses are wellmaintained.

She said: “I really want the council to put pressure on landlords to develop a very strong accreditation scheme.”

Speaking about latenight noise problems Sam Forster, vicepresident of the [University of Brighton](#) student union, said: “We are concerned about it. It is a valid issue and one we are working on.

“We rolled out the Sshh campaign last year, which stands for Silent Students Happy Homes, which has been very successful.

“At the university we also have a full-time community liaison officer.”

Mr Forster said many students found themselves living in houses extended by landlords and now with six or seven bedrooms, as they were cheaper.

Landlords could play a part in controlling problem students. He said: “The situation is more people are buying houses and increasing the capacity from a three-bedroom house to six or seven rooms.

“The onus on landlords is also not what it should be.

“We can complain to the students causing the problems but have no real sway.

“But landlords have more sway with students as they are living in their houses and noise policies could be worked into their contracts.”

What steps to take What to do if you have a noise complaint.

Contact Brighton and Hove City Council on 01273 292929, email ehl.environmentalprotection@brightonhove.gov.uk or fill in an online complaint form at www.brightonhove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1112585.

Your complaint should include: Your name and address and a daytime telephone number. Anonymous complaints are not accepted.

The address (or site) where the noise is coming from. The type of noise (such as loud music, barking dog, alarm sounding). When and for how long the noise occurs.

The way the noise affects you (such as keeping you awake).

Anything you have done to try to deal with the problem (such as speaking to the person making the noise).

In an emergency outside normal office hours, contact the council's emergency service on 01273 292229. An immediate response cannot be provided to all noise problems that arise out of office hours.

A noise patrol operates from 10pm to 3am on Fridays and Saturdays to monitor and respond to noise problems. Call 01273 293541.

Both universities have a point of contact for residents who are having problems with students living nearby.

For University of Brighton students contact Kevin Mannall at communityliaison@brighton.ac.uk.

For University of Sussex students email the housing office at housing@sussex.ac.uk.

Thursday 30th October 2008

It's vital that city is student friendly

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/commentandanalysis/3805474.It_s_vital_that_city_is_student_friendly/

As residents, students and Brighton and Hove City Council discuss the impact of “studentification” on the city, Dr Darren Smith, reader of geography at the University of Brighton, who coined the term, talks about the changing face of the city and how he believes the issue should be tackled.

Nationally Brighton and Hove is viewed as a unique place in the midst of expanding student populations – a university city where town and gown relations flourish and where the benefits of the universities and the high proportion of students are highly visible and recognised.

As the first academic to coin the term “studentification”, which describes urban changes linked to high concentrations of students in residential neighbourhoods, I have seen how the term all too often carries negative connotations.

But studentification has many positive impacts including higher levels of spending in the local economy, which is particularly important in today’s economic climate, greater demand for public services, student volunteering, the “cultural buzz” created by students and buoyant local housing markets.

As part of my research at the University of Brighton on studentification across Britain, Brighton and Hove is consistently viewed as a “model of good practice” for integrating students into the city, particularly by those concerned with studentification in other university towns and cities.

I was commissioned by the University of Brighton in 2002 to investigate the impacts of students in the city. By contrast to other small university towns and cities, my research confirmed studentification was not unfolding here.

Instead, students tended to be dispersed throughout the city and that over-concentrations of students in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) were not prevalent. The role of the accommodation offices of the universities was noted as a key factor and in particular, the use of head-leased, university-managed accommodation to manage the off-campus behaviour of students.

The findings also revealed that students did not have a preference to live in “student areas” of the city. This was viewed as a positive part of the “student experience” and a major appeal of the city.

Yet the recent media reports of tension between established residents and students suggest that such community cohesion may be diminishing.

This begs the question “Have student lifestyles and residential preferences changed over the last five years?” and this would appear to be the case.

This has led to the studentification of parts of the city in neighbourhoods such as Hanover and Elm Grove, whereby the population density of students is now viewed negatively by some residents.

One of the key factors is the increased activities of some landlords, letting agents and developers, which have created new “student areas” via the conversion of family housing into student HMOs. As students have moved into neighbourhoods such as Bevendean and Moulsecomb the demographic structure has changed.

As seen in other university towns and cities a decade earlier, well-organised resident groups have formed in the city to contest the changes to their neighbourhoods.

Much of the activity is motivated by the effects of studentification, such as increased refuse and noise.

It is essential not to assume that these issues are linked specifically to student residents.

This is explicitly recognised by the resident groups.

Resident groups stress they are not anti-student and recognise the benefits of the universities for the city.

This broader understanding of the effects of students and universities is vital as the key institutions and local communities work together in effective partnerships to address the challenges of studentification.

With this level of co-operation and mutual working, I am optimistic the challenges of studentification in the city can be mitigated and solutions found.

A student housing strategy has been established for the city and the local authority should be commended for pushing forward this ground-breaking initiative.

The commitment to foster more cohesive town and gown relations led the University of Brighton to appoint a community liaison officer in 2007.

Central to the student housing strategy should be the need to supply more bed spaces for students in university halls of residence or purpose-built student accommodation.

The University of Sussex has submitted a planning application for an additional 900 beds on the campus and plans are under way at the University of Brighton to redevelop the Varley halls site to provide additional bed spaces.

The University of Brighton is also seeking other sites for the development of additional accommodation to serve the Moulsecoomb and Grand Parade campuses.

Ultimately, a student housing strategy must strive to engender sustainable and balanced communities across the city.

The key is to enable a positive “student experience” for both students and established residents, whereby students are responsible citizens motivated to remain here after graduation.

The long-term health and sustainability of the city depends on the annual in-migration of young populations and ensuring cohesive relationships between students, the universities and established residents is essential to maintain the appeal of Brighton and Hove as a “student friendly” city.

Friday 31st October 2008

Debate over 'studentification' intensifies

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3807780.Debate_over__studentification__intensifies/?action=complain&cid=7291655

A landlord has joined the “studentification” debate saying he is being made a scapegoat by students and residents.

As the issue continues to be discussed as part of a consultation by Brighton and Hove City Council, many are blaming landlords for the run-down appearance of some accommodation and for cramming too many students into small houses.

This week The Argus reported student union representatives from both Sussex and Brighton universities believe landlords should take more responsibility for some of the issues.

But the landlord, who asked not to be named, believes businessmen like him are being blamed for issues they have no control over.

He said: “We can’t be responsible for our tenants’ behaviour. They are very well protected by the law and we can’t evict them unless there is something very serious.”

He also agreed it is a minority of students who cause problems and said that after owning three flats, which each house three students, for seven years he has never had problems with tenants.

YOUR VOTE

Who do you think is most to blame for the "studentification" of Brighton?

Students: 12%

Landlords: 31%

The universities: 16%

Brighton and Hove City Council: **10%**

It's not a major problem: **31%**

He said: "It is a tiny minority causing the problems.

"Noise is a common problem and can only be dealt with by the council and the noise abatement team.

"I know from experience that tenants have to record noise over several weeks before the council will act. This is not good enough.

"Zero tolerance should be the reaction in the first instance. Litter and fly-tipping is also the responsibility of the council and antisocial behaviour should be dealt with by the police.

"Universities should also take more responsibility.

"They should hold lessons for freshers on how to behave away from home and there should be consequences for nuisance students, like disciplinary action for bad behaviour that may lead to expulsion for persistent offenders."

Councillor Anne Meadows, who is chairing the council committee examining the issue, said she was confident solutions could be found to some of the problems.

She said: "I am a great believer that very small actions can have a big impact on peoples' lives and I think it will only take a few small actions to help solve a lot of the problems.

"However, I do feel that some areas might have reached a critical mass in terms of studentification and that overwhelms the community. We need to consider how we deal with those situations as well."

Coun Meadows said the first meeting with residents and student union representatives had been "very positive".

Series of meetings planned

A meeting will be held on December 5, which will include managing agents, landlords and universities.

The meeting is in addition to those which will be held on November 7, when experts including Dr Darren Smith, from Brighton University, who coined the term studentification, will speak and November 21 when council officers, including those from CityClean and the planning department will attend.

The November 7 meeting will be at Hove Town Hall at 2pm and the November 21 and December 5 meetings at Brighton Town Hall at 2pm.

Friday 31st October 2008

Friday Inquisition- Councillor Anne Meadows and Brighton universities' Student Unions

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/thefridayinquisition/3808497.Councillor_Anne_Meadows_and_Brighton_universities__Student_Unions_/

Send in your questions about students and studentification to The Friday Inquisition. Taking part today at 12.30pm will be student leader, Sam Forster, the vice-president for education and equalities at the University of Brighton's Student Union, Councillor Anne Meadows from Brighton and Hove City Council, who is carrying out a consultation into the issue and Richa Kaul-adte, the welfare officer for the University of Sussex Students' Union.

YOUR SAY *YourArgus*

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
12:37pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I'm Old Gregg! Can't the SU organise meetings between students and complaining residents? If someone sends a sneaky letter to the council about noise then it just winds everyone up and they would benefit from actually talking about it I feel.

Regards,

Old Gregg

Dear old Gregg, that's a very good suggestion. The University of Brighton has employed a full-time community liaison officer. I attend residents meetings, local action teams meetings and liaise on a regular basis with local councillors and council officials. This has proved an effective way of dealing with complaints at an early stage and has greatly improved partnership working and communications. If the complaint is about University of Brighton students you can contact the university directly at community-team@brighton.ac.uk.

Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer for University of Brighton and Sam Forster

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
12:54pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I live on viaduct road in a student house. My room is freezing because my landlord will not fix my broken window. The kitchen and bathroom look very tired. Plus our communal area is tiny, with no table at which to sit and eat food. Why would I look after a place like this? If we, as students, are supposed to behave as normal residents, provide us with a good standard of housing. What are you doing to make sure landlords do so? Are there any standards that they have to abide by?

Josh

The University of Sussex Students' Union would like to call upon the council and both universities to enforce a compulsory code of standards and accreditation scheme. The current scheme is voluntary. If letting agents and landlords don't sign up they can't advertise their properties through the universities. This doesn't stop them though from advertising through other means, thereby subjecting students, like yourself, to substandard accommodation.

Richa Kaul-Padte

As a council we may be looking to introduce a compulsory accreditation scheme, however, this is dependant on the outcome of the studentification panel. This may have several legal requirements that would need to be considered first and of course consulted upon.

Councillor Anne Meadows

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:06pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I live next door to a house that is rented to students, and am fortunate in that they (and I believe most students) are a considerate lot, who let me know when they have parties and so on. But it seems there will always be a minority of inconsiderate louts who don't care about their community. What can be done to persuade those people to be a bit more public-spirited?

Norman Parkes

Thanks for your question. You do raise an important point which is that it is a minority of students who are causing problems in the local community and I think it is important that something is done to address this. As a university and Students' Union we will be looking to increase our publicity with regard to community engagement through campaigns aimed at raising awareness amongst students of how to live harmoniously with their neighbours.

At the moment we run the Silent Students Happy Homes or SSHH Campaign which encourages students to respect their neighbours when returning home from nights out by asking them to be quiet. The campaign also advises students to talk to their neighbours when they're planning parties to ensure they are aware it will be happening and to take into account their views.

As a union we are looking to add to our campaigns portfolio a new initiative concerning students in the community and we hope to roll this out over the next couple of months.

Sam Forster

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:13pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I agree some students are bad neighbours, but a lot of residents (like our neighbour) complains about everything we do even though we're quiet. She probably had a bad experience with another group which has prejudiced her against all students. Don't you think some literature or something could be sent out to encourage people to welcome students and be friends with them before they adopt some bigoted view before meeting us?

Thanks, Chris

Hi Chris, I think that's a really good idea. I think when talking about fostering good community relations, as well as dealing with potentially anti-social behaviour, the same information and awareness should be provided to all members of the community. Without specifically targeting students, I think it would be a really good initiative for the council together with the universities and students' unions to send out letters welcoming new people into the community and reminding residents of the need to be respectful towards each other.

Richa Kaul-Padte

Over the last few months as a students' union and a university we have been attending an increasing number of local residents meetings and have seen a number of instances where local residents are being encouraged to introduce themselves to student neighbours. But in the same vein there is nothing to stop students introducing themselves when they move into a new house.

Sam Forster

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:24pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I read that students were depriving families of homes in some areas of Brighton. Is this really true?

Why have the universities been allowed to expand without any consideration of the impact of extra students on the town? This seems like irresponsible behaviour.

Colbert

Thank you for your question Colbert. Some managing agents and estate agents have directed sellers directly to property developers and this has created a vacuum of family housing as local families were denied the opportunity to purchase. This has been proven in Bevendean and Moulsecoomb. I understand that investment agents are being directed to a new local area and I would wish the council to take account of this in the new housing strategy for the city.

Councillor Anne Meadows

The University of Sussex currently houses all its first year students on campus, apart from those who are already living in the local area. The university are looking to head lease a number of properties in the city, which would allow second and third year students to live in reliable accommodation spread across Brighton.

Richa Kaul-Padte

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:35pm Fri 31 Oct 08

To Sam Forster, what do suggest landlords should do to change their tenants behaviour?

Jessica

You raise an interesting topic. In my opinion a greater onus needs to be placed upon landlords to make their tenants aware of their responsibilities. I believe that in every tenancy agreement there is a clause relating to anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance, but in a number of instances this part of the contract is not actively monitored. There are a number of absentee landlords who don't live in the city and manage properties from afar. In these cases students see very little of their landlord and the landlord often has no idea of any problems relating to their property whether these be disrepair or anti-social behaviour.

As student unions, universities and the council we actively investigate complaints and seek to find a resolve, and it shouldn't be forgotten that students have responsibility for their conduct. But at the end of the day landlords are the ones holding the legally binding contract. Therefore I would like to see landlords take more responsibility for upholding the anti-social behaviour and noise-nuisance clauses in those contracts. This would go a long way towards improving relations between students and the community they live in.

SF

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:48pm Fri 31 Oct 08

The students in my road are incredibly noisy, and I have complained to the council several times, but to be honest, there isn't much they can do apart from send pointless letters is there? I'm reluctant to get the police involved, but what else can I do?

Eleanor Parsley

Thank you for your question Eleanor. It is a complaint I hear often as a ward councilor for Mouslecoomb and Bevendean. Many residents are asked to complete a diary of noise nuisance and this can be very stressful for a resident as it requires them to wait even longer for a response. One of the ideas that residents suggested at the studentification panel meeting was for the Noise Nuisance Patrol to be extended beyond 3am and also to take account of the fact that a lot of noise is created in the week as well.

The local PCSOs are a useful resource to residents as they can report back to the police without residents feeling fear of reprisals. To find out who your local PCSO is visit the Sussex Police website where that information can be found.

Another resource is of course your local ward councilor. They are very sympathetic and resourceful and will always listen to your concerns.

If you identify which university the students are from then please contact the university direct.

We still have three meetings of the studentification panel and it will be interesting to see what developments will come out of those meetings. I have high hopes we can provide a positive outcome for many residents and their concerns. The three meetings should be listed on the council's website if you wish to attend and listen to the experts' accounts. Residents and students are still able to submit their concerns and ideas in writing to the panel care of the council.

AM

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:51pm Fri 31 Oct 08

Thank you all for your questions and we would like to reassure you that we are working together to try and address your concerns.

Sam Forster, Councillor Anne Meadows, Richa Kaul-Padte and Kevin Mannall

REPORT THIS POST »

bug eye, hove says...
12:21am Tue 11 Nov 08

thanks for not answering my question, maybe it did not fit in with your anti landlord agenda.

REPORT THIS POST »



Left to right: Richa Kaul-Padte, Councillor Anne Meadows, Kevin Mannall and Sam Forster

Monday 10th November 2008

Issue of 'studentification' discussed at council meeting

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3834192.Issue_of__studentification__discussed_at_council_meeting/

The large numbers of students in Brighton and Hove has been discussed by experts as attempts to find solutions to some of the issues caused by "studentification" continues.

Speakers including Dr Darren Smith, from the University of Brighton and who coined the term studentification, answered questions from a panel of Brighton and Hove city councillors about students living in the area and gave examples of other cities which have had similar experiences.

The meeting at Hove town hall on Friday was also attended by residents and representatives from both Sussex and Brighton universities' student unions.

Speaking after the meeting, Councillor Anne Meadows, who chaired the panel, said: "It was more challenging than the last meeting we had, as these people are experts so we were trying to delve a bit deeper into things.

"It was very much about getting extra information on some of the issues and we have now got a lot to take to the next meeting when council officers and police will attend."

During the meeting, the panel heard about how other cities with large student populations have dealt with some of the issues.

Coun Meadows said: "Obviously one of the things we are looking at is best practice elsewhere, like Nottingham and Leeds, but we are also looking at places like Bath and Canterbury, in terms of size in relation to the city.

"The problem with bigger cities is they talk about building extra halls of residence, but they have got a lot of land to do that.

"But one of the challenges for us here in Brighton and Hove is how do you identify new land for halls of residence?"

The panel will hold two further meetings, on November 21 and December 5 Coun Meadows said: "We don't want to rush the process as it deserves to be looked at from every angle."

Monday 24th November 2008

Noise complaints to council soar

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3872322.Noise_complaints_to_council_soar/

Noise complaints in Brighton and Hove are increasing every year.

Last year Brighton and Hove City Council received more than 3,200 complaints from residents fed up with their noisy neighbours.

Tim Nichols, the council's head of environmental health and licensing, said the figure was 10% higher than the year before.

He added that in 2005 the figure had been 7% higher than the previous year and in 2004 it had increased by 1%.

Speaking to a panel from the council's adult social care and housing overview and scrutiny committee, which is looking into the issue of "studentification" in the city, he said: "It is becoming more serious."

Mr Nichols was one of a number of council officers who gave evidence to the panel at Brighton town hall.

He said that last year 159 abatement notices, which ban or restrict noise, were handed out to residents. 16 prosecutions were also made and in two cases audio equipment was seized.

So far this year there have been six cases of equipment being seized.

However Mr Nichols admitted: "Our service is reasonably effective at stopping recurring problems but not that effective at stopping sporadic problems.

"To do that the service would have to be quite different to the one we have."

Sergeant Mark Belfield, of Sussex Police's neighbourhood policing team in central Brighton, said much of the noise suffered by residents from students occurred as they made their way home from nights out.

He said: "I think it is about educating the students, making them see the effect they have in the city and coming up with solutions to combat this."

The problem of rubbish left out in the streets was also put to Gillian Marston, the head of CityClean, the council's waste collection department.

She said households with more than five people could apply for a bigger wheelie bin and that new ways were being explored to highlight bin collection days.

