





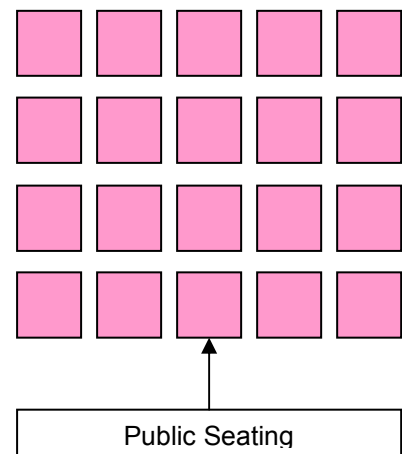
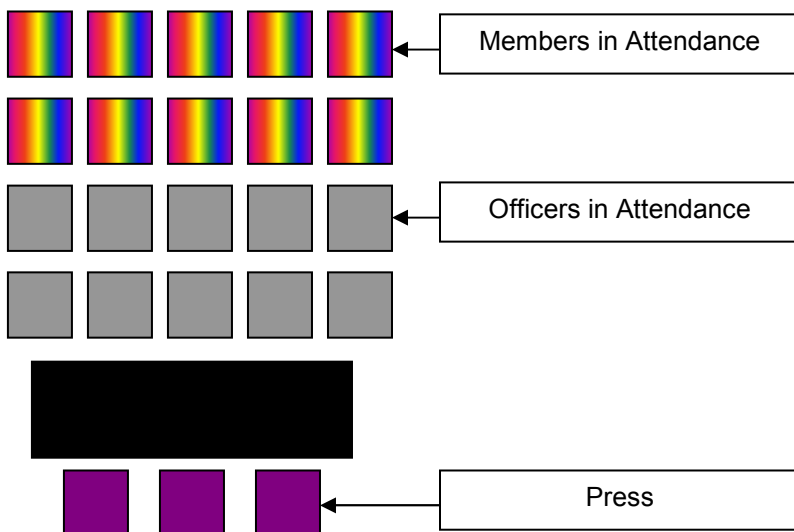
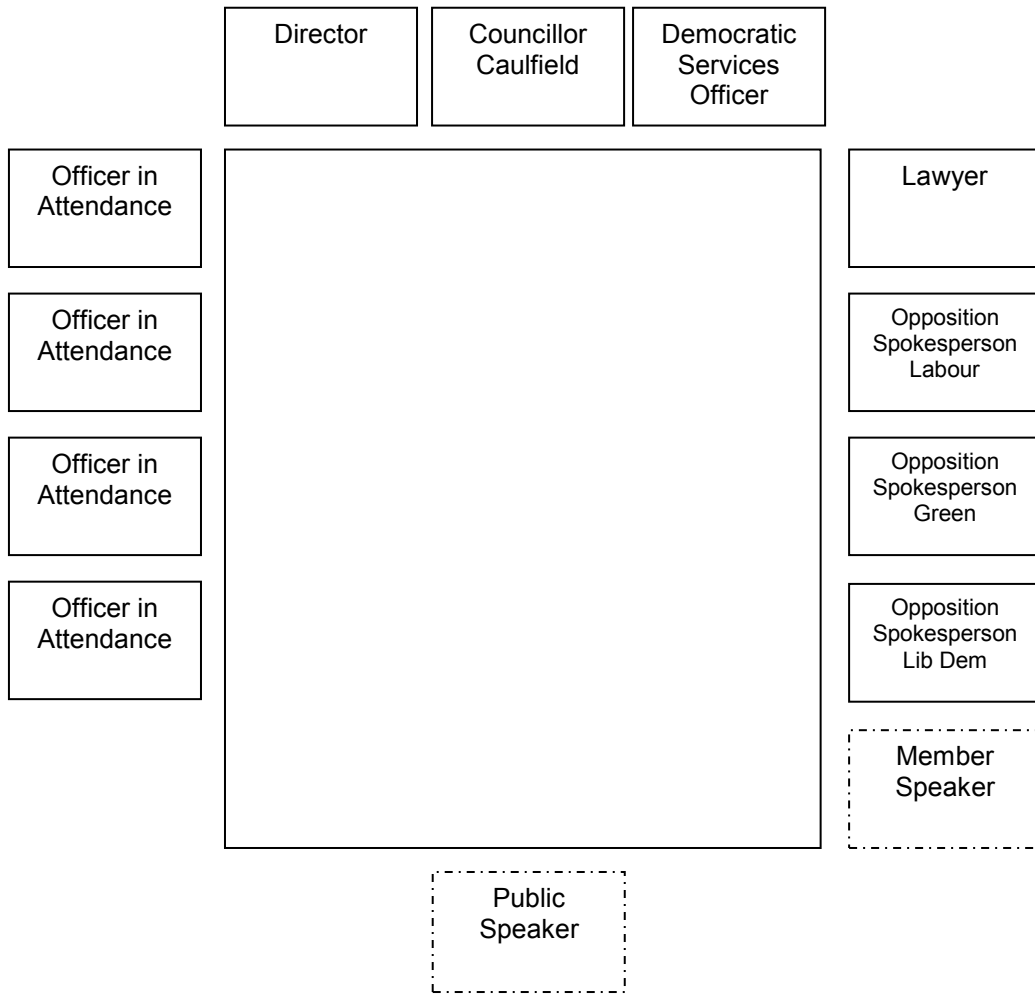
**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Cabinet Member Meeting

Title:	Housing Cabinet Member Meeting
Date:	7 July 2010
Time:	4.00pm
Venue	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillor: Caulfield, Kennedy and Simpson
Contact:	Caroline De Marco Democratic Services Officer 01273 291063 caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk

	The Town Hall has facilities for wheelchair users, including lifts and toilets
	An Induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter and infra red hearing aids are available for use during the meeting. If you require any further information or assistance, please contact the receptionist on arrival.
	FIRE / EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by council staff. It is vital that you follow their instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts;• Do not stop to collect personal belongings;• Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building, but move some distance away and await further instructions; and• Do not re-enter the building until told that it is safe to do so.

Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



AGENDA

14. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

- (a) Declarations of Interest by all Members present of any personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
- (b) Exclusion of Press and Public - To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part 2 of the Agenda states in its heading either that it is confidential or the category under which the information disclosed in the report is exempt from disclosure and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the categories of exempt information is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1 - 6

Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 May 2010 (copy attached).

16. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

17. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- (a) Items reserved by the Cabinet Member
- (b) Items reserved by the Opposition Spokespersons
- (c) Items reserved by Members, with the agreement of the Cabinet Member.

NOTE: Public Questions, Written Questions from Councillors, Petitions, Deputations, Letters from Councillors and Notices of Motion will be reserved automatically.

18. PETITIONS

No petitions have been received by the date of publication.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(The closing date for receipt of public questions is 12 noon on 30 June 2010)

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

No public questions have been received by the date of publication.

20. DEPUTATIONS

(The closing date for receipt of deputations is 12 noon on 30 June 2010)

No deputations have been received by the date of publication.

21. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

No letters have been received.

22. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No written questions have been received.

23. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

No Notices of Motion have been referred.

24. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 7 - 26

Minutes of the meetings held on 10 May 2010 & 14 June 2010 (copies attached).

25. SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2009-10 27 - 50

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Narinder Sundar Tel: (01273) 293887
Ward Affected: All Wards

26. REPORT ON THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2007 -2010 AND INTERIM ACTION PLAN FOR 2010-2011 51 - 84

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Rachel Howard Tel: 01273 296949
Ward Affected: All Wards

27. REFRESH & UPDATE EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY UPDATE 85 - 112

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Ward Affected: All Wards

28. PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL & HOUSING ADAPTATIONS 113 - 118

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Ward Affected: All Wards

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

29. TENANT HANDBOOK REVIEW

119 -
178

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Contact Officer: *Diane Hughes*

Tel: 01273 293841

Ward Affected: *All Wards*

30. CESP - COMMUNITY ENERGY SAVING PROGRAMME

179 -
184

Report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise (copy attached).

Ward Affected: *All Wards*

The City Council actively welcomes members of the public and the press to attend its meetings and holds as many of its meetings as possible in public. Provision is also made on the agendas for public questions to committees and details of how questions can be raised can be found on the website and/or on agendas for the meetings.

The closing date for receipt of public questions and deputations for the next meeting is 12 noon on the fifth working day before the meeting.

Agendas and minutes are published on the council's website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. Agendas are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

Meeting papers can be provided, on request, in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or on disc, or translated into any other language as requested.

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Caroline De Marco, (01273 291063, email caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Date of Publication - Tuesday, 29 June 2010

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 26 MAY 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Apology: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson – Labour)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1 (a) Declarations of Interests

1.1 There were none.

1 (b) Exclusion of Press and Public

1.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

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

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 21 April 2010 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

3. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Private Rented Sector Letting Agents

3.1 The Cabinet Member referred to the Notice of Motion referred to full Council on 18 March concerning the findings of the national Citizens Advice report “Let Down” on the activities of private rented sector letting agents. It had been agreed at Council that a

cross party working group be set up to look at issues raised and that this group fed back to the Strategic Housing Partnership.

- 3.2 The Head of Housing Strategy and Development was organising dates for the cross party working group and group leaders had been asked to nominate members.

4. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 4.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion.

5. PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were none.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member reported that a public question had been received.

- 6.2 Ms X asked the following question on behalf of Ms Y:

“Given that Parliament Minister for Housing (reference Hansard) commends LEASE Mediation:

Re: matters ADR it states “often develop to the point where recourse is to the law, LVT’s or court a simple resolution is capable much earlier” that is LEASE Mediation. It is: low cost non adversarial aiming to find a mutually satisfactory resolution as long as both leaseholder and local authority are willing. LEASE will advise if the matter is not suitable for its mediation.

- Confidential
- public body funded by government
- highly geared for Local Authority ADR

Will BHCC be promoting and using with equality LEASE Mediation and when?”

- 6.3 The Cabinet Member gave the following response:

“As you are aware, LEASE is the name for the Leasehold Advisory Service. LEASE offers a mediation service, known as the LEASE Mediation Service.

The Council already has a policy of considering alternative dispute resolution, such as mediation, in cases where it has not been possible to resolve a dispute through our three-stage internal dispute procedure. However, the majority of our leaseholder disputes are resolved satisfactorily through the 3-stage internal dispute procedure without the need for recourse to either mediation or the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (LVT).

In the summer of 2009, Brighton & Hove Council used the LEASE Mediation Service for the first time. This helped to bring a satisfactory resolution to a protracted dispute. This case was the first time that a leaseholder had actively requested mediation.

Our Leaseholder Handbook is aimed at helping council leaseholders understand the rights and responsibilities of both themselves and the council, and provides information on resolving disputes, including the use of mediation. The Leaseholder Handbook clearly states that the council will consider mediation where appropriate.

Our three-stage internal dispute resolution procedure has been praised and recognised as good practice by the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal. The council's policy is to consider mediation in circumstances where resolution to a dispute has not been reached via the internal procedure.

We also actively promote the LEASE mediation service via a link to the Leasehold Advisory Service website from the Council's website. However, in response to recent enquiries about the use of mediation, the housing service has completed a review of the information that is provided to leaseholders mediation. The report was discussed at the committee meeting of the Leaseholders Action Group on 20th April 2010. The group endorsed the recommendations and as a result information about Mediation is now included in all Stage-3 dispute letters to leaseholders and greater promotion of mediation will appear in the new edition of the Council Leaseholders Handbook, on the council website and in a revised version of the leaflet for Leaseholders. There will also be an article about the use of mediation services in disputes in the next edition of the leaseholders newsletter.

It is important to note that Mediation will not always be considered by the Council, or by a leaseholder, as an appropriate way of resolving a dispute. Although mediation can be useful in some cases, some disputes revolve around a question of fact. For example, many disputes relate to whether a service charge is payable or not under the terms of the lease. Questions such as these can sometimes only be determined by a court or a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal. In some cases, the Council may therefore advise the leaseholder that mediation may not be a helpful way of resolving the dispute. Mediation also only works when both parties are willing to participate and explore a solution. The council therefore does not feel that mediation should be adopted by default, but it should be considered and promoted in all cases where the internal dispute process has not found a satisfactory resolution to the dispute.

It is also worth noting that the LEASE Mediation Service is not the only form of alternative dispute resolution available. Whilst the LEASE Mediation Service is a specialist service and appears to offer good value for money, some leaseholders may wish to seek alternative forms of dispute resolution through e.g. a private mediator.

I hope that this helps to clarify the Council's position and has reassured you that we do promote the use of LEASE mediation and have improved the information that we give to Leaseholders to further promote mediation."

6.4 Ms X asked the following supplementary question:

"In relation to ADR, particularly lease mediation, will the council keep statistics and publish/publicise statistics of lease mediations versus LVT or other ADR's if they reach that stage?"

- 6.5 The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy replied to explain that the council had not published this information. However, the council did publish the results of complaints received. The council would be happy to provide details of the numbers of disputes resolved in mediation.
- 6.6 Ms X requested that information should not just be published online and suggested that leaseholder magazines should be used for publishing information. The Cabinet Member concurred and accepted that the internet was not always the preferred method of communication.

7. DEPUTATIONS

- 7.1 There were none.

8. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 8.1 There were none.

9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 9.1 There were none.

10. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

- 10.1 There were none.

11. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

- 11.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee held on the 29 March 2010.
- 11.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

12. BEVENDEAN COMMUNITY GARDEN PROPOSAL

- 12.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out a proposal to lease land in Bevendean for food growing to the Bevendean Community Garden Project Group. The report outlined feedback on the various consultations that had taken place, along with possible responses to them.
- 12.2 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement explained that the council wanted to support community groups to use land for growing food. The land had been identified and there had been a number of consultation meetings and one to one meetings with residents. The result of the consultation had been evenly split. Residents with gardens backing onto the land were unanimously against the proposal. Residents living further away from the land were generally in favour of the proposal. Officers had considered the objections to the use of the land and had tried to draft the heads of terms in a way which would address issues raised during the consultations.

- 12.3 The Cabinet Member explained that she had attended the public meeting and had received correspondence from residents whose gardens backed on to the land. She had visited the residents this week. The Cabinet Member appreciated that officers had done a great deal of work on the proposal and accepted that the community as a whole supported the scheme. However residents close to the proposed site were very opposed to the idea and she would therefore like to defer a decision in order for a meeting to be set up with the Bevendean Community Garden Project Group to investigate alternative sites.
- 12.4 Councillor Smart was in attendance at the meeting and expressed his disappointment that the matter was being deferred. He asked if Bevendean Primary School had been consulted. He was informed that the school had been consulted and that they had replied in support of the proposal.
- 12.5 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That a decision on the proposal to lease land in Bevendean for food growing to the Bevendean Community Garden project Group be deferred for further consideration.
 - (2) That a meeting be set up with the Bevendean Community Garden Project Group to look at alternative sites before a decision is taken at a future Cabinet Member Meeting.

13. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

- 13.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out the research findings from the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Survey carried out in December 2009. It also highlighted some ways in which the surveys would be used.
- 13.2 The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of encouraging as many people as possible to become actively involved in their local tenant and leaseholders association or playing a role in influencing the services they receive. She stressed that online services were not necessarily accessible to all tenants and leaseholders.
- 13.3 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the findings of the survey be noted.
 - (2) That approval is given to the potential ways in which interested people can become more involved than they are at present.

The meeting concluded at 4.19pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 10 MAY 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Caulfield (Chairman); Barnett, Carden, Fryer, Mears, Pidgeon, Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson) and Wells

Tenant Representatives: Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Chris Kift (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Pat Miles (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Beverley Weaver (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group), John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network)

Apologies: Councillor Davey, Beryl Snelling, David Murtagh, and Muriel Briault

PART ONE

85. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

85A Declarations of Substitute Members

85.1 Nicola Proud declared that she was attending as a substitute for Muriel Briault.

85B Declarations of Interests

85.2 Councillors Simpson and Wells, Heather Hayes and Ted Harman declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

85C Exclusion of the Press and Public

85.3 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.

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

86. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

86.1 Councillor Simpson referred to paragraph 83.9 of the minutes. She again raised the case of an elderly couple in poor health who had asked to downsize to a two bedroom property. They had now been informed that they could only bid for a one bedroom property. The couple needed a two bedroom property for medical reasons. An estates warden had visited and listed 6 items of works that needed to be carried out to their present property. These works had been carried out in spite of their health problems. Councillor Simpson considered that the couple should receive an apology and compensation and a swift decision on the number of bedrooms to which they were entitled.

86.2 The Chairman replied that it was not appropriate to discuss an individual case at the committee meeting. The Assistant Director, Housing Management agreed and stressed that officers had reviewed the case since the last meeting. There were special reasons why works were required and the case was complex. He would ensure that Councillor Simpson was briefed on this case, and that further action would be taken to resolve the issue.

86.3 Stewart Gover referred to paragraph 73.20 of the minutes. Chris Kift reported that he had still not received a reply from John Denham, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. As a result of the General Election, it would be necessary to wait until it was known who would be Secretary of State before a further letter was sent.

86.4 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

87. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

City Assembly

87.1 The Chairman explained that the next City Assembly would be this Saturday, the 15th May 2010. The agenda included a presentation from the Tenant Services Authority, and would provide an update on a mobility scooter storage project, and a presentation on the law around succession. There would also be a panel discussion and an opportunity to meet other residents' representatives from across the city.

87.2 Chris Kift reported that there would be stalls at the City Assembly. Mears Limited, the Mediation Service and the Fire Service were some of the services to be represented.

Meeting with the LDV Board

87.3 The Chairman reported that Members of the HMCC had been invited to a buffet lunch to enable them to meet with members of the Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes Ltd Board. The lunch would be held on Monday 24 May 2010 at 13:30 at the Thistle Hotel, Brighton.

- 87.4 Councillor Simpson mentioned that the meeting would be an opportunity for members to meet the Board rather than a discussion about the specific offer. The Chairman agreed but stressed that members would like to raise issues with the Board.

Choice Based Review Meeting

- 87.5 The Chairman reported that the first Choice Based Review Meeting had been held and had been excellent. The next meeting would be held on 17 May 2010 at 11.00 am to 1.00pm in Brighton Town Hall.

- 87.6 Councillor Simpson asked if other councillors could be invited. The Chairman replied that this was a tenant led group and was not a cross party group. Councillor Barnett would be in attendance as the new Deputy on Housing matters. Meanwhile, the Chairman was happy for members of the Allocations group to attend the Choice Based Lettings Group if they wished. As some members had not received invitations to the new group she asked the Assistant Director, Housing Management to investigate.

88. CALLOVER

- 88.1 The Chairman asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.

- 88.2 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for debate and determination.

89. PETITIONS

- 89.1 There were none.

90. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 90.1 There were none.

91. DEPUTATIONS

- 91.1 There were none.

92. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 92.1 There were none.

93. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 93.1 There were none.

94. HOUSING REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS REPORT

- 94 .1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which informed members of the progress made on delivering the new Housing

Management Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears Limited which commenced on 1 April 2010. The Committee also received a presentation with slides.

- 94.2 John Melson stated that he was impressed with the presentation and hoped the partnership lived up to its promise. Mr Melson mentioned that he had spoken to the response team at Mears about a problem with his window. The person he had spoken to did not respond satisfactorily and had not known what was meant by a clerk of works or a quantity surveyor. He stressed that these problems with the front desk staff needed to be resolved.
- 94.3 Members were informed that Mears Limited were carrying out training on the front desk. This would take a while to sort out. There would be a move away from surveyor teams. If a property was in a mess but did not need repairs carried out, a Customer Care Manager would visit. A team of supervisors would manage properties. The Head of Repairs and Maintenance reported that Brighton & Hove Council had a Clerk of Works, not Mears Limited.
- 94.4 Councillor Mears asked if it would be possible to have an update report to monitor the contract in 4 to 6 months. The Chairman replied that she had been assured by the Assistant Director Housing Management that there would be quarterly monitoring reports.
- 94.5 Beverley Weaver expressed concern that the system was not reporting complaints registered on the old system. The Mears representative replied to explain that routine jobs had not been issued to Kier in late March. Mears Limited had inherited these jobs. If they were not on the list, he would be happy to investigate the matter. He hoped his team could investigate historically and see which jobs needed to be completed.
- 94.6 Ted Harman asked about the Estate Development Budget. He was told that this years work was currently being carried out. However, Mears would complete outstanding work.
- 94.7 The Chairman emphasised that the EDB was now part of the repairs contract. There were outstanding repairs but Mears Limited had agreed to take on these jobs.
- 94.8 Councillor Wells asked if there had been positive feedback from mystery shoppers.
- 94.9 The Mears representative explained that Mears employed RICS trained surveyors. The day time satisfaction rates were going well. There needed to be more work on out of hours satisfaction rates.
- 94.10 John Melson requested that in future, tenants representatives should be given one months notice if there was to be a further presentation on the progress of the partnership. This would enable tenants to raise issues before the committee meeting.
- 94.11 The Chairman thanked The Head of Repairs and Maintenance and the Mears representative for their presentation.
- 94.12 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the progress made on delivering the new Repairs & Improvement Partnership be noted.

95. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

- 95.1 The Committee considered a report of Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out the research findings from the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Survey carried out in December 2009. It also highlighted some ways in which the surveys would be used.
- 95.2 The Head of Housing Management reported that officers were keen to give information in a variety of ways. The survey had shown that there was an underrepresentation of involvement from people who were under 25 and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. There was overrepresentation from people who were 45 or over and from people with disabilities and long term illnesses. There had been a low response in relation to electronic media but it was still higher than expected.
- 95.3 John Melson was pleased with the results of the survey. He was surprised that the results relating to electronic media were considered higher than expected as this form of communication had been around for the last 20 years. He made the point that there had been an attempt to interest younger people over many years and this had not been successful. Mr Melson suggested concentrating on the things that could be changed rather than looking at matters which could not be changed.
- 95.4 Chris Kift stated that there was a need to nurture young people who were interested. He pointed out that people who responded to questionnaires did not always respond to follow up letters.
- 95.5 Stewart Gover referred to paragraph 5.5 which stated that the survey results had shown that anti-social behaviour was one of the main concerns of residents. He made the point that most noise was experienced at weekends or in the evenings when there was no-one available at the council.
- 95.6 Chris Kift mentioned that the ASBO Focus Group would be meeting on Monday 17 May for the first time. There would be discussions on antisocial behaviour and access to CCTV systems.
- 95.7 **RESOLVED** - That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to:
- (1) Note the findings of the survey.
 - (2) Approve the potential ways in which interested people can become more involved than they are at present.

96. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 3)

- 96.1 The Committee had before them a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out the third quarter for Housing Management Performance for the financial year 2009/2010. The report included comparisons with the first and second quarter figures for this year, the end of year performance for the last financial year and targets for future years. The areas covered included key Best Value (BV) performance indicators, by which the government measure and compare the council's performance in key service areas.

96.2 **RESOLVED** - the report be noted.

97. PROCUREMENT OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT - HOUSING MANAGEMENT LAND

- 97.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which reported on the way the Housing Management parking controls were enforced and the outcome of the recent parking enforcement process. Clamping had been the preferred method for parking enforcement on housing land since 2004. Parking control by clamping was the recommendation of the Car Parks and Garages Working Group. The current contract expired at the end of 2009. Following the parking procurement process, the evaluation panel agreed that Ethical Parking Management had submitted the most advantageous tender on the basis of both quality and meeting the expectations and aspirations of residents.
- 97.2 The Housing Manager reported an error in paragraph 7.1. The report had been submitted to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting on 21 April 2010.
- 97.3 Stewart Gover stated that he did not agree with clamping as a way of controlling parking. He considered clamping counter productive.
- 97.4 The Chairman reported that the council was looking to amalgamate the contracts for housing land with on street charges in the future. There would be discussions with the Car Parks and Garages Working Group about ticketing issues.
- 97.5 The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that a transfer of the land out of the HRA and a Road Traffic Regulation Order would be needed in order to have the existing on-street ticketing system. A decision to proceed with clamping was taken to enable parking enforcement on housing management spaces. Staff in the car parks team had received complaints from people who were renting spaces and were not able to access them. It was necessary to ensure these spaces were made available. Renting spaces released a significant income which could be used to spend on peoples homes. Meanwhile, officers would be looking at the feasibility of moving to the ticketing system in the course of the contract.
- 97.6 John Melson considered that ethical parking and clamping did not go together. He asked if associations would be able to opt in or out if a ticketing system was introduced. The Chairman replied that there would be discussions about these issues.
- 97.7 Councillor Fryer reported that she had received complaints in her ward from people who had been clamped. Sometimes people were not clear on the regulations. For example, a disabled driver had been clamped for not displaying the correct information. She considered that clamping was discriminating against people on low incomes. She felt it would be better to have a ticketing system.
- 97.8 Chris Kift mentioned a car park near St James's House which used to have a chain across it. This was now clamped. He asked why Amex staff were able to use this facility. The Chairman stated that this could be investigated. A number of tenants spaces were rented out to people who were not tenants.

- 97.9 Councillor Mears stated that she would only support the decision to award the contract if it were noted that she had concerns about the contract. Councillor Mears wished to see regular update reports presented to the Committee on the progress of the contract with Ethical Parking Management. Councillor Wells concurred with Councillor Mears and asked for his concerns to be noted.
- 97.10 John Melson mentioned that there was an underuse of some high rise car parks and he would be happy for these spaces to be rented out as it released revenue for the HRA.
- 97.11 The Chairman acknowledged that people did not want clamping. However, it would not be possible to combine the contracts for on street parking and housing management, until the on street parking contract was renewed in 18 months time.
- 97.12 Pat Miles informed the Committee that she had sat on the interview Board for the tendering process. Ethical Parking Management had submitted the best tender. The Car Park and Garages Working Group would set up a meeting with Ethical Parking Management every two months to review the contract. She questioned why concerns about the contract had not been raised during the tendering process. Beverley Weaver concurred. She stated that she was a member of the Car Park and Garages Working Group and she also questioned why concerns had not been raised earlier.
- 97.13 **RESOLVED** - That the contents of the report be noted.

98. VOTE OF THANKS

- 98.1 The Committee agreed that they wished to give a vote of thanks to the Chairman, for her work as Housing Cabinet Member and Chairman of the HMCC. They were pleased to note that she would be continuing to work in these roles.
- 98.2 Councillor Wells informed the Committee that he had welcomed working with the members of the Committee. After his year as mayor he would look forward to working with the Committee once more.

The meeting concluded at 4.59pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 14 JUNE 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Caulfield (Chairman); Allen, Kennedy, Marsh, Mears, Pidgeon, Randall, Simson and Smart

Tenant Representatives: Stewart Gover (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), John Stevens (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Pat Miles (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Beverley Weaver (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group), Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network) and Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel). Chris El-Shabba was invited to attend to make a presentation on the Tenant Handbook Review. Chris Kift attended to provide assistance/cover for John Melson on some of the items.

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A Declarations of Substitute Members

1.1 Councillor Marsh declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Simpson. Councillor Kennedy declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Fryer. Councillor Smart declared that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Barnett. John Stevens attended as a deputy as there is currently a vacancy for a representative from the Central Area Housing Management Panel. Trish Barnard attended as a substitute for Beryl Snelling. Chris Kift attended to provide support/cover for John Melson on some of the items.

1B Declarations of Interests

1.2 Heather Hayes, Ted Harman and Trish Barnard declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

1C Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 John Melson made the following observations. Paragraph 94.2 – He made the point that he was referring to problems with windows in a nearby block. Paragraph 94.10 – He had asked for Members as well as tenants representatives to be given advance notice if there was to be a further presentation on the progress of the partnership. Paragraph 98.1 – He wished this to be changed to read “vote of thanks to the Chairman for her long and dedicated service to this Committee and the Council in general.”
- 2.2 Ted Harman made the following observations. Paragraph 87.5 - He reported that the meeting held on 24 May 2010 had been successful and that Baker Tilley had been appointed as financial consultants. Paragraph 87.5 – A second Choice Based Review Meeting had been held and had gone well.
- 2.3 Chris Kift referred to Paragraph 87.3 – He reported that he had attended the lunch on 24 May to meet with members of the Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes Ltd Board. He stated that he would like to see all Board members at the HMCC.
- 2.4 Stewart Gover referred to Paragraph 97.12. He stressed that the Committee had asked for inappropriate clamping to be reviewed and for Robert Keelan to ensure that he did not arrange the meetings of the Car Parks and Garages Working Group on the same day as the HMCC. John Austin-Locke confirmed that the Car Parks and Garages Working Group had originally been arranged for 14 June. The meeting had now been re-arranged to a date next week.
- 2.5 John Austin-Locke confirmed that a diary of tenants meetings was on the Council website. This would be kept up to date. He stressed that paper copies could become out of date very quickly as meeting dates changed frequently. However, paper copies could be made available to tenants without internet access.
- 2.6 Councillor Mears referred to Paragraph 87.1. She thanked the tenants for organising a very successful and professional City Assembly. With regard to paragraph 86.3, she made the point that there would be no need to write any further letters to John Denham, following the General Election.
- 2.7 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**Council House Building**

- 3.1 The Chairman reported that the council was planning to build more council properties. Officers were in the process of mapping land. The Ainsworth House site was vacant and was being investigated. Martin Reid would work with tenants and would set up a Working Group to discuss the project.

Gas Meters

- 3.2 The Chairman reported that there has been a comment at an Area Panel that when gas meters were installed, there was no regard to people with disabilities or the elderly. They were installed at a low level and many people could not bend down to read the meters. The Chairman asked the Assistant Director, Housing Management to arrange for a letter to be sent to all relevant energy suppliers regarding this problem.

Cut Backs

- 3.3 Stewart Gover asked for tenant representatives to be kept informed on how tenants might be affected by future cut backs. The Chairman replied that it would be a few weeks before it would be known if there were to be any changes. She suggested that there could be a briefing for September 2010.

4. CALLOVER

- 4.1 The Chairman asked the Committee to consider which items listed on the agenda it wished to debate and determine in full.
- 4.2 **RESOLVED** - That all items be reserved for debate and determination.

5. PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were none.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 6.1 There were none.

7. DEPUTATIONS

- 7.1 There were none.

8. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 8.1 There were none.

9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 9.1 There were none.

10. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT FROM DCLG: COUNCIL HOUSING: A REAL FUTURE

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance & Resources & the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which provided a summary of the proposals to reform the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system as set out in the consultation document 'Council Housing: A Real Future' issued on 25 March 2010 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The report highlighted the likely financial implications, risks and benefits to the council from the proposal and provided the council's draft response to the consultation as attached in Appendix 1.
- 10.2 Councillor Allen welcomed the report and hoped there would be cross party agreement on this matter. However, he queried the current government's position and wondered how much of the current proposals would survive. The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that the Housing Minister had written to all Local Authorities urging them to respond to the consultative process. The Government had indicated support for the end of the subsidy system and were in the process of reviewing the consultation responses.
- 10.3 Councillor Allen referred to paragraph 3.39. He asked how the LDV would fit in with the proposals. Would it become redundant? The Assistant Director, Housing Management explained that if the council moved to self financing, it would still have significant expenditure. If the council did not have the LDV, it would have to borrow money. The current position was that the LDV was very positive for the council.
- 10.4 Councillor Mears made the point that self financing would not produce enough money to improve homes. The LDV would serve its purpose and would bring in extra revenue for housing. Meanwhile, she encouraged members to embrace the proposals set out in the report. There was a need to invest in housing stock.
- 10.5 The Chairman welcomed the report and stressed that the council still needed the LDV. The money was needed for improvements to council housing. The proposals would give the council control over the money that it spent.
- 10.6 Councillor Randall welcomed the proposals. However he agreed that the LDV should be kept ongoing as there was no guarantee that the proposals would be implemented. He suggested that the LDV could be used for other purposes such as helping private owners as well as council tenants.
- 10.7 Councillor Kennedy considered that in principle the proposals were good news. She hoped that employment for building new council houses would remain local. The Chairman concurred and stated that this issue could be discussed at the new working group.
- 10.8 Councillor Mears stressed that the new housing contract with Mears Ltd had secured local apprenticeships and local jobs.

- 10.9 Stewart Gover mentioned that Wokingham Borough Council was financially in a similar position to Brighton & Hove. Right to Buy had affected them badly. He supported the proposals.
- 10.10 Beverley Weaver asked how self financing would affect rents. The Chairman referred to paragraph 3.32. The assumption was that councils would keep to the national rent policy.
- 10.11 Chris Kift stated that he hoped that new council housing would be built to high standards.
- 10.12 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the proposals for self financing of the HRA as set out in the DCLG Consultation paper ‘Council Housing: A Real Future’ issued on 25 March 2010, be supported.
- (2) That Cabinet is recommended to approve the council’s formal response to the consultation, as attached at Appendix 1, supporting the proposal to move to self financing for the HRA.

11. HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

- 11.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise concerning the progress made in the delivery of the Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009-12.
- 11.2 Councillor Marsh remarked that Turning the Tide was proving very positive and useful. Resident participation was important. She asked about the next steps involved in rolling out Turning the Tide to other areas of the city. Councillor Marsh stated that she hoped that the Super Centre would meet the timetable and be opened on 10 September.
- 11.3 The Chairman reported that some of the Turning the Tide work had already been rolled out to other areas. The plan was always to introduce the scheme across the city. The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that certain elements of Turning the Tide were city wide, for example the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the Tenancy Sustainment Team. The pilot would be coming to an end in July and would be evaluated. A report would be submitted to the HMCC in the autumn. However, what was appropriate to Moulsecomb and Whitehawk would not necessarily be appropriate to other areas. Meanwhile, a surgery approach with reception areas had been successful elsewhere.
- 11.4 Chris Kift stated that Turning the Tide was a brilliant idea. However, it was a diverse city and one size would not fit all. A number of problems needed to be addressed.
- 11.5 Heather Hayes expressed concern about how some of the council’s properties could be brought up to decent home standards when many families were in band C and the conditions were very cramped. The Chairman replied that there were not enough large family houses. She was pleased to hear that housing targets would be scrapped. This would provide an opportunity to deliver family sized housing.
- 11.6 Heather Hayes asked about work in progress to help people downsize when their properties were too big for them. The Chairman mentioned that the Under Occupation Officer was working with people to help them downsize. However, the supply of suitable

housing was not becoming available. The use of private sector housing had increased substantially.

- 11.7 Beverley Weaver mentioned that an 82 year old living in a three bedroom flat in Park Court was struggling to cope, but felt he was too old to move. There needed to be a system in place to help elderly people down size. The Chairman replied that people could not be forced to move and suggested that details of the case be given to the Assistant Director, Housing Management.
- 11.8 Councillor Randall thought that there were many positive aspects to the report. He liked the Turning the Tide approach. Councillor Randall mentioned that the Netherlands had a system of community safety assessment of estates. This was a way of helping the police distribute their resources. Councillor Randall stated that he thought the government should stop the sale of council houses.
- 11.9 John Melson supported the LDV. He agreed with Councillor Randall about the sale of council houses, and considered that more council housing needed to be built.
- 11.10 Stewart Gover raised a number of concerns and issues that had been discussed in Homing In. He mentioned that a number of tenants from other authorities were being sent to Brighton & Hove. He reported that the Asset Management Panel was not tenant led. He thought that there needed to be a meeting of the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group. He raised concerns about the frail occupants of Patching Lodge. The Chairman explained that Patching Lodge was a care issue rather than a council house issue. She suggested Mr Gover spoke to The Assistant Director of Housing Management about this matter.
- 11.11 Councillor Mears considered the report to be excellent. She stressed that people did receive help in downsizing and that the Empty Property Officer provided a good service.
- 11.12 Councillor Simson stressed the importance of treating each tenant as an individual when considering downsizing. Each tenant had different needs. She suggested that older people could be offered a personal service. Councillor Simson also made the point that people did not like moving out of area.
- 11.13 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the progress during year two of the improvement plan be noted.

12. TENANT HANDBOOK REVIEW

- 12.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which presented the results of the tenant led Chairman's Working Group review of the tenant handbook for tenants living in council housing. Members received a presentation from Chris El-Shabba and Adrian Channon, Housing Manager on the proposed draft of the new tenant handbook, which was attached to the report.
- 12.2 Chris Kift commended the draft but asked for trimming to be included under Grounds Maintenance on page 29 of the handbook (page 89 of the agenda). He stressed that there also needed to be an update of the Repairs Handbook.

- 12.3 Stewart Gover noted that a great deal of work had gone into the production of the draft handbook. He mentioned his concern about the current succession rules. The Chairman stressed that the council had to work within the law. Meanwhile, there was an incentive scheme available to help tenants downsize set out on page 41 of the handbook (page 101 of the agenda).
- 12.4 Councillor Marsh commended the people who had compiled the handbook. It was a good comprehensive guide. She asked how the handbook would be accessed by tenants who were blind or partially sighted. The Assistant Director, Housing Management reported that the handbook would be provided in different formats, including an audio guide. Tenants could also request a translation.
- 12.5 Councillor Smart referred to page 48 (108 of the agenda) and expressed concern at the number of 292929 phone numbers. The Chairman agreed that this was an issue that needed to be addressed.
- 12.6 John Stevens asked for clarification on the advice given in the section on Fire Safety. For example, under *Fires in the Home*, the advice was to 'get everyone out of your home and close the door after you'. In the section *If a fire breaks out elsewhere in your building* it advised "If there is a fire elsewhere in the building you are usually safest in your own flat'. The Chairman asked the Housing Manager to check this section before printing the final version.
- 12.7 Stewart Gover expressed concern about the right of officers to enter tenants' homes. The Chairman stated that this could be checked by the council's lawyers.
- 12.8 The Housing Manager stated that the comments of members would be taken on board. The handbook would be reviewed on a regular basis. For example, changes in legislation would be needed to be taken into account.
- 12.9 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the conclusions of the working group outlined in the report and the tenant presentation be noted.
- (2) That the new version of the tenant handbook attached at appendix 1 be endorsed and forwarded to the Housing Cabinet Member for approval.

13. CONSULTATION DRAFT OF RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

- 13.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which provided a copy of the consultation draft of the Resident Involvement strategy for council housing residents, as agreed with the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group (TCMG). Following approval, a wider process of consultation would begin throughout the City. The Policy & Performance Manager thanked the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group for their help in developing the consultation draft.
- 13.2 John Melson considered the report to be sequential and clear. However he stressed that although there was a strategy, there was a need for a policy and money to fund a policy. The present participation strategy did not work. He recommended that the report should be accepted on a conditional basis. He suggested it was revisited after the work had been completed on the Annual Report. Mr Melson considered that one

strategy would not fit all areas, and the work should be done piece by piece and developed to fit all areas.

- 13.3 The Assistant Director, Housing Management stressed that this was the first draft of the strategy. It was the period for tenants to say what they wanted done differently. It was an important piece of work which would ensure that tenants were more involved in the running of their service. He wanted every member of staff to work with tenants in improving the service.
- 13.4 Councillor Simpson mentioned that at the Area Panels it had been suggested that the strategy should be renamed Council Residents or Tenants and Leaseholders Involvement Strategy, in order to avoid confusion. Pat Miles stated that she thought it should be Tenants and Leaseholders Involvement Strategy. She stressed the need for more leaseholders to get involved.
- 13.5 Pat Miles asked for more information about the Focus Group and stated that the West area representatives had not been informed about this group. The Chairman explained that John Austin-Locke co-ordinated the Focus Group. She stated that there needed to be a proper system in place to ensure all residents were involved. The Chairman agreed that West representatives should have been kept informed. The Policy and Performance Manager agreed to talk to all groups and to investigate this matter.
- 13.6 Councillor Pidgeon asked for the strategy to be available in Braille and audio. The Assistant Director stated that the strategy would be available in Braille and other formats.
- 13.7 Councillor Allen referred to the second bullet point of page 131 – *Also you would like to be involved in.* (Page 8 of the document). He considered that more needed to be done in relation to involvement. The Assistant Director of Housing Management reported that as a result of the resident survey, the council now held a data base of 2000 residents. The Chairman referred to the report on the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Survey brought to the last meeting of the HMCC. She asked for this to be forwarded to Councillor Allen.
- 13.8 Councillor Allen referred to page 140 (page 17 of the strategy). He asked how grants allocated to Residents Associations and the Resource Centre compared to grants allocated in the last few years. The Assistant Director replied that he would obtain the historical figures for Councillor Allen.
- 13.9 Councillor Mears stressed that the council valued the work of the Resource Centre and their grant had been increased.
- 13.10 Stewart Gover stated that he would like to see more involvement from residents as long as their views were funnelled through the tenants' elected representatives.
- 13.11 John Melson asked for a restoration of the members' vote on the HMCC. The Chairman stated that this had not changed. There was a members' vote which had been used on a number of occasions. Tenants Representatives could have an indicative vote. The Senior Lawyer confirmed that the constitution allowed elected members to vote as individuals on the HMCC.

13.12 The Chairman asked for any further comments to be forwarded to the Policy and Performance Manager.

13.13 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the process of consultation on the draft of the Resident Involvement Strategy be endorsed to commence, as outlined in the timetable in appendix 1.

(2) That following the period of consultation, a revised document is presented to Housing Management Consultative Committee.

14. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE 2010 ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

14.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which explained that the Council was to produce an annual report to all tenants and leaseholders on its performance as landlord and setting out its plans and service offer to tenants for 2010/11. The report set out the plan and timetable for involving residents in producing and scrutinising this annual report for the year ending 31 March 2010. It also outlined the proposed approach and timetable for involving tenants and leaseholders in developing local service offers.

14.2 The Housing Stock Review Manager reported that she had given presentations on the outline plan and timetable for the annual report and developing local service offers to tenant and leaseholder representatives at the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group, the City Assembly and all four Area Panels. A Special HMCC had been arranged for 1 September 2010 to scrutinise and sign off the final draft before the Annual Report was submitted to the Cabinet Member for approval on 8 September.

14.3 John Melson stated that he would agree the report in principle, subject to further discussion and agreement in September.

14.4 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the plan and timetable set out in Appendix 1 to this report for involving residents in producing and scrutinising the annual report to tenants and leaseholders for the year ending 31 March 2010, be noted.

(2) That the outline plan and timetable set out in paragraphs 3.4 to 3.6 to the report for involving residents in developing and agreeing local offers for service delivery, be noted.

15. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

15.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which provided a progress report on the review of the grounds maintenance service on housing management owned land. The Committee was informed that the scope of the review was large and complex so the aim was to have the revised service in place by April 2011. A revised service specification for the grounds maintenance would be developed with City Parks using pilot locations to test and cost out the service improvements. The revised service would be benchmarked with other authorities in order to demonstrate that the new service delivered value for money.

- 15.2 Heather Hayes complained that in Hollingdean, banks were full of weeds and that edges were left when the grass was cut. Fences were covered in weeds and weeds were growing across paths which was dangerous for disabled people who could trip over them. She had asked for work to be carried out on banks and had been told it was a health and safety issue as specialist equipment was required.
- 15.3 The Chairman agreed that there was general dissatisfaction with grass cutting. She referred to paragraph 1.3 of the report. It was proposed to have a revised service specification for the grounds maintenance service, and to ensure value for money.
- 15.4 Councillor Randall welcomed the proposals and suggested that it would be an opportunity to work in new areas such as vegetable plots. It would also be an opportunity to look at security on estates.
- 15.5 **RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.
- 16. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT - END OF YEAR (AND QUARTER 4)**
- 16.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise which set out the fourth and final quarter for Housing Management performance for the financial year 2009/10. End of year figures were presented either as a collective figure for the year or as final end of year figure against a previously set target. The requirements of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) would entail a change in the presentation of the report in the coming year. Therefore officers would be reviewing performance reports during 2010 to ensure that they provided tenants and leaseholders a full picture of the council's performance.
- 16.2 The Chairman asked for her thanks to be passed on to officers for the performance result for rent collection. 98.29% represented a large amount of money.
- 16.3 Councillor Allen was pleased to note that all areas were performing well. However, he took issue with the bullet point RIEN: Rental Income Excellence Network. He considered this to be jargon. The Assistant Director, Housing Management agreed that this could be taken out of the next report as it served no purpose.
- 16.4 Councillor Allen questioned why there was not more information from comparative authorities, particularly in relation to those indicators on page 167. The Assistant Director, Housing Management replied that benchmarking data was not available for those indicators at the moment.
- 16.5 With regard to empty home turnaround time, John Melson hoped that officers would not be concentrating on quantity at the expense of quality. With regard to anti-social behaviour, Mr Melson remarked that the figures only related to Turning the Tide. The Assistant Director explained that the figures were relevant to anti-social behaviour across the city.
- 16.6 **RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 5.47pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 25

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Supporting People Strategy – Annual Update 2009-10		
Date of Meeting:	7th July 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Narinder Sundar	Tel: 29-3887
	E-mail:	Narinder.Sundar@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report is the second annual update of the 3-year Supporting People Strategy (2008-2011) that outlines key achievements and progress in implementing year 2 of the strategy, 2009-10. Appendix one details progress made against all objectives and strategic actions of the strategy.
- 1.2 Communities and Local Government announced our Supporting People grant allocation in December 2007 for 3 years, 2008-2011. Our overall Supporting People grant has been reduced by 11.5% over this 3-year period with no allowance for inflation. This grant provides funding to 39 external local providers and a number of in-house services, in total this includes 95 Supporting People contracts that deliver housing-related support to 5171 vulnerable service users that live in the city of Brighton and Hove. All our current Supporting People contracts have been issued for a 3-year period, 2008-2011, and fully commits all the funding available. At the time of writing this report, our future Supporting People grant allocation from April 2011 had not been announced and it is anticipated that future cuts to the grant are likely to be significant in the context of wider public sector deficit and funding reductions. At the time of writing this report, the Supporting People Strategy strategic review process is being completed and future commissioning recommendations will be drafted on the basis of reduced funding of 15% over 3 years to achieve ongoing efficiency savings.
- 1.3 Communities and Local Government announced budget cuts and efficiency savings of £780m required from this current financial year, 2010-11, on 10th June 2010. These cuts from various grants to Local Authorities, included a cut in the 'Supporting People Administration Grant', which for Brighton & Hove is £163,540. This grant covers the cost of administering the programme, which includes staffing and associated overhead costs. At the time of writing this report, work is underway to complete financial planning to achieve in-year efficiency savings and develop a financial strategy to deliver this.

- 1.4 During 2009, the Supporting People Commissioning Team completed a cost benefit analysis of the Supporting People Programme locally in Brighton and Hove. This piece of work measured the impact of housing-related support services funded by Supporting People grant and presents a business case for investment of these services.

A national model was applied to undertake the analysis, which indicated that Supporting People services creates a £36.6million net saving for the city for a spend of £11.3million. For every £1 spent in the city on Supporting People services, a saving of £3.24 is achieved across other budgets. This takes into account reductions in costs for housing / homelessness services, tenancy failure costs, other social costs related to anti-social behaviour and crime and DWP and NHS costs. The methodology is based on examining the financial impact if Supporting People funded services were replaced by the most appropriate, positive alternative service provision.

The analysis indicated that single homeless, substance misuse and older people delivered the highest ratio of benefit locally. For example, the cost of funding Supporting People services for single homeless is £3.3million and the net financial benefit is £15.3million.

- 1.5 Communities and Local Government Select Committee and the Audit Commission both conducted reviews of the Supporting People Programme at a national level in 2009. The key recommendations and findings from these reviews indicated that the Supporting People Programme has successfully:

- Improved quality of services, meeting local needs, delivering better outcomes of service users and more effectively involved service users
- Achieved Value For Money through benchmarking and delivering efficiencies and within an improved commissioning and contracting monitoring framework
- Delivered more personalised, flexible and responsive services
- Established a robust governance structure involving commissioners, providers and service users and that this structure is a good blue print for partnership working

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes the report and progress made on delivering strategic actions of the Supporting People Strategy during year 2 of the strategy, 2009-10.

3. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

3.1 Financial Implications:

The Supporting People grant for 2009/10 was £11.8m with an additional brought forward of £0.3m and for 2010/11 is £11.2m with an additional brought forward of £0.2m. Currently it is unclear what the impact will be on the 2010/11 funding from the recent government announcement on reducing grants to local authorities.

There has been a reduction in the supporting people grant of 11.5% over the 3 year period, which has been managed through the supporting people strategy in appendix 2. Grant allocations for 2011/12 have not yet been announced but there is a possibility of a 15% reduction in grant from 2010/11 (1,687m).

Communities and Local Government announced budget cuts and efficiency savings of £780m required from this current financial year, 2010-11, on 10th June 2010. These cuts from various grants to Local Authorities, included a cut in the 'Supporting People Administration Grant', which for Brighton & Hove is £163,540. This grant covers the cost of administering the programme, which includes staffing and associated overhead costs. At the time of writing this report, work is underway to complete financial planning to achieve in-year efficiency savings and develop a financial strategy to deliver this.

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith

Date: 21st June 2010

3.2 Legal Implications:

There are no specific legal implications which arise from this report which is only for noting. Further, it is not considered that there are any adverse Human Rights Act implications arising from the Strategy or report. Indeed the Strategy actively supports some Convention rights, such as respect for private and family life."

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 23rd June 2010

3.3 Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed in developing the Supporting People Strategy in 2008.

3.4 Sustainability Implications:

The commissioning intentions of housing-related support services as part of the Supporting People Strategy are in accordance with sustainability objectives and housing objectives that aim to reduce the reliance on resource heavy residential services.

3.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

The commissioning intentions of housing-related support services as part of the Supporting People Strategy are in accordance with the local objectives to prevent crime and disorder. The fundamental aim of Supporting People services is to promote independent living, social inclusion and integration, all of which aim to prevent crime and disorder.

3.6 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

The key objectives and strategic actions within the Supporting People Strategy contribute to a number of Council priorities, outcomes and national Indicators as part of our Local Area Agreement.

Our Supporting People services deliver diverse and innovative services to a range of client groups, from people with mental health and substance misuse problems, to older people and single homeless people with support needs. The services are preventative and achieve long-term, positive benefits for service users to maximise independent living. Our external partners have worked well to deliver the programme and any risks to our providers, services, service users and local employment opportunities, need to be carefully managed and mitigated in partnership with our providers.

3.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The Supporting People Strategy contributes towards delivering Corporate priorities and contributes towards achieving a number of outcomes in the local Sustainable Communities Strategy and national indicators as part of the Local Area Agreement.

4. **EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 4.1 This report is an annual update of a current strategy and no alternative options are necessary.

5. **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 To update members on progress and implementation of the Supporting People Strategy 2008-2011 to date.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Supporting People Strategy Annual Update, Progress in Year 2:2009-10 on all objectives and strategic actions

Background Documents

1. Brighton & Hove Supporting People Strategy, 2008-2011

Appendix one: Supporting People Strategy Annual Update, Progress in Year 2: 2009/10 on all objectives and strategic actions

Objective 1: To improve fair access and diversity and ensure that all services are accessible and appropriate for the wider Community

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
To work alongside other relevant strategies (LGBT; BME; Older People) to implement actions to improve fair access and diversity		<p>There is Supporting People representation on all key working groups to develop other relevant strategies to improve access and diversity – e.g. Older People Housing & Support Working Group that has drafted the new Older Peoples Housing Strategy.</p> <p>2009/2010 – involved in implementation of LGBT Housing Strategy via LGBT Housing & Support Working Group</p>	
To continue to support and train all providers to ensure their services are welcoming and appropriate for all sections of the community	<p>All providers to achieve a minimum of level B on implementation of Fair Access, Diversity & Inclusion objective of the Quality Assessment Framework.</p> <p>Monitor and report on people receiving services with 100% of equalities monitoring received</p>	<p>Training workshops have been delivered to providers on equalities monitoring.</p> <p>82% of providers are completing all sections of equality monitoring.</p>	<p>N1 - % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area</p> <p>NI 140 – fair treatment by local services</p> <p>NI 141 – percentage of vulnerable people achieving</p>

	from providers		independent living NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living
To work with the BME mental health Community development workers to take forward work to deliver Race Equality in mental health care		This work has been completed by the PCT.	
Refocus a service to include a dedicated element for young people from the LGBT Community	Support provided to young people from the LGBT Community	New dedicated support worker provides support to young people within YAC service from the LGBT Community. This service started in October 2008 and is well-utilised.	NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living
To provide translated and accessible documents on the Supporting People website		Up-to-date translated documents available on the Supporting People website	
To make available short term funding for providers to meet costs of interpreting while English language skills are developed	Improved access to services to people from the wider community via interpreting	Funding available to providers from September 2008 to meet costs of interpreting. Monitoring indicates excellent performance of	NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living

		interpreting service and significant improvement in access to services.	
--	--	---	--

Objective 2: To enable people living in hostels to tackle alcohol and substance dependency and misuse problems

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
Provide training in alcohol and substance misuse treatment for staff working in hostels and supported housing	<p>All hostel residents with a substance misuse problem to be referred for an assessment</p> <p>Increased percentage of people living in hostels undergoing treatment for alcohol or substance misuse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training delivered to Band 2 workers • Alcohol toolkit launch • Bid for clinical nurse to work in hostels 	<p>NI 40 – drug users in effective treatment</p> <p>NI 38 – drug-related offending rate</p>
To increase number of units available for people with alcohol problems	<p>Reduction in street drinking numbers in the city</p> <p>Reduction in rough sleeping in the city</p>	The Equinox Outreach service has excellent performance outcomes indicating effective engagement with street drinkers.	NI 39 – alcohol-harm related hospital admission rates
To remodel resources and improve referral rates to prepare people living in hostels to enter treatment services		Q2 2009/10: 61% with substance misuse problem; 89% referred to treatment; 70% sustaining treatment for 12 weeks or discharged	<p>NI 40 – drug users in effective treatment</p> <p>NI 38 – drug-related offending rate</p>

Objective 3: To ensure single people are able to move on to maximise their independence

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
<p>To support providers to arrange move on from hostels and from second stage accommodation through improved co-ordination of move-on initiatives, greater incentives for landlords and through rent deposit schemes</p>	<p>Improved performance on Key Performance Indicator for percentage of people moving on, particularly into the private rented sector</p>	<p>June 2009: Band 3 managers meeting set up to focus on moves to the PRS. October 2009: Brighton YMCA placement at BHT PRS Initiatives (working with Band 3) October 2009: Band 3 Co-ordinator held Move On Fair for Band 3 clients Jan 2010: only 8 deposit guarantees awarded. Jan 2010: launch of BHT Firm Foundations project March 2010: Funding for Hove YMCA YAC Private Sector Development Officer ends (funded to Sept 09 from SP short term bid and from Sept 09 to March 10 by RIWG CLG funding) March 2010: Brighton YMCA placement at BHT PRS Initiatives ends</p>	<p>NI 141 – percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living NI 149 – adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation NI 156 – number of households living in temporary accommodation</p>
<p>To work with people experiencing repeat homelessness using</p>		<p>Performance Indicators of Behavioural Support Service sets</p>	<p>NI 141 – percentage of vulnerable people achieving</p>

psychological interventions		targets on 'Number of former service users who have improved tenancy stability' (monitored by reduced number of warnings, reduced frequency of eviction, increased length of stay in stable accommodation, positive move on). To set target to reduce numbers of repeat homelessness.	independent living NI 149 – adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation
To remodel existing services to provide additional work and learning opportunities to tackle worklessness for people in temporary accommodation	Increased numbers of people in temporary accommodation accessing work and learning	Current re-development of BHT First Base & BHCC Palace Place underway – services to focus on basic skills training.	NI 150 – adults in contact with secondary mental health services in employment NI 151 – overall employment rate NI 152 – working age people on out of work benefits
To modernise hostel services and stop funding services that encourage dependency		George Williams: Courses set at entry level OCN level below New Steine Mews. Widening out to other Brighton YMCA services in January 2010 and to other Pathway services later in the year.	NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living NI 156 – number of households living in temporary accommodation
To establish a floating support service for offenders in the	Reduction in re-offending for Priority Prolific Offenders	New service established in June 2009.	NI 18 – adult re-offending rates for those under

<p>community as an alternative to moving into hostels</p>			<p>probation supervision NI 19 – rate of proven re-offending by young offenders NI 30 – re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders NI 45 - young offenders engagement in suitable education, employment or training NI 46 – young offenders access to suitable accommodation</p>
<p>To review the Integrated Support Pathway via the Integrated Support Pathway Working Group</p>		<p>Review completed in April 2009.</p>	<p>NI 141 – percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p>

Objective 4: To reduce youth homelessness

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
Provide short term respite ('crash pads') for young people to reduce homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation	<p>End the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 years olds, except in an emergency, by 2010</p> <p>Reduction in youth homelessness</p>	<p>Good outcomes from Housing Options review</p> <p>Recommendation to continue</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p>
Through the Parenting strategy to develop support and mediation services		<p>Following decommissioning of Impact Initiatives Teenage Parent service, these 16 units were incorporated into the YAC contract (additional funding was awarded to provide facilities/resources).</p> <p>10 units from the Decommissioned In Touch Vulnerable Families service were incorporated into the Support4Housing contract. Family-friendly area, dedicated family drop-in, dedicated worker.</p> <p>There are 12 units of low support</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p>

		<p>for teenage parents provided by In Touch (reduced from 16 to increase support hours per client – agreed Dec 09 CSG).</p> <p>DCSF funding for a two year pilot – 10 unit accommodation-based service with enhanced support package</p>	
Through our youth homelessness strategy, improve integration and co-ordination of support	More care leavers, teenage parents and young people at risk accessing support, housing and care services	<p>Young people can access Basic Skills service and BAOH.</p> <p>Accredited lifeskills at Hove YMCA and Sanctuary Foyer - Skillz for Life.</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p> <p>NI 147 – care leavers in suitable accommodation</p> <p>NI148 – care leavers in employment, education or training</p>

Objective 5: To provide a range of services to promote independent living for people with mental health problems and people with physical disabilities

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
<p>To enable people with physical disabilities to access floating support* (*as part of an overall self-directed support package)</p>		<p>Client Record Forms monitor all new referrals accessing SP services. This form requires providers to give details on any physical / sensory disabilities and mobility needs of new referrals. Analysing information from these forms will start in order to monitor numbers of new service users with physical / sensory disabilities and mobility needs accessing floating support.</p>	<p>NI 130 – Social Care clients receiving self-directed support (direct payments and individual budgets)</p>
<p>To develop short-term resettlement support for people with physical disabilities when they are discharged from hospital, within existing resources available</p>	<p>Reduction in delayed discharge from hospital for people with a physical disability Reduction in homelessness due to physical disability</p>	<p>Temporary accommodation that is wheelchair accessible is currently being developed. Accommodation is available in hostels for people with mobility needs. (New Steine Mews and George Williams House).</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p>
<p>To develop specialist skills /</p>	<p>Reduction in delayed discharge</p>	<p>A new sub-group established</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable</p>

<p>provide training for staff teams to provide for people who have both a substance misuse and mental health problem</p>	<p>from hospital for people with mental health problems Reduction in homelessness due to mental ill health</p>	<p>during 2009/10 to develop joint working protocol between mental health services, BHCC and supported housing providers. New dual diagnosis working group set up with CRI and BHT. Supporting People has been central in the working group developing the dual diagnosis strategy.</p>	<p>people supported to maintain independent living</p>
--	--	--	--

Objective 6: To provide a range of services for people with learning disabilities living in a range of housing types*

*Learning Disability Housing Strategy 2007-2010 and Learning Disabilities Commissioning Strategy 2009-2012 will deliver on this objective and strategic actions below.

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
To increase the range of housing options available	<p>Reduction in residential care placements by at least 10 per year</p> <p>Increase in people with learning disabilities in settled accommodation - at least 10 per year</p>	We now have 249 people in residential care, down from 257 in 2009. (Our target was 240). 67.5% of people are in settled accommodation, just below the national average (70%). This means 453 people are living at home (Our target was 440)	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p> <p>NI 145 – adults with learning difficulties in settled accommodation</p>
Reuse existing resources to develop floating support services, particularly for those living in the private rented sector and in mainstream social housing	<p>People with learning disabilities to access shared ownership</p> <p>Increased number of people with a learning disability receiving floating support</p>	<p>1 person has been supported into Shared Ownership.</p> <p>We have worked with our Community Support Team to provide a more dynamic service, with increased move on and more flexible support including a telephone support service.</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p>

<p>To enable people with learning disabilities to access self-directed support</p>	<p>Increased number of people with a learning disability receiving a self directed package of support</p>	<p>150 people access services through self-directed support (our target was 120). Accessible information has been developed to support people to understand and access self-directed support and workshops have been delivered for professionals and carers.</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living NI 146 – adults with learning difficulties in employment NI 130 – Social Care clients receiving self-directed support (direct payments and individual budgets)</p>
<p>To develop extra care services and supported living for people with learning disabilities within existing resources available</p>		<p>Two purpose-built Supported Living units (total of 10 units) opened in December 2009 Our Housing Options officer has supported people with learning disabilities to access extra care housing</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p>
<p>Establish a specialist Learning Disability Housing Options officer to help people move through services to maximise their independence</p>		<p>We recruited a Housing Options officer in 2008 and she has supported 18 people with learning disabilities to access a tenancy for the first time in the last year. This is in addition to supporting people</p>	<p>NI 141 – percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living NI 139 – People over 65 who say that they receive the information, assistance and support needed to exercise choice and control to live</p>

		to maintain tenancies, providing support to key stakeholders and producing easy read formats of housing information. This role is now being developed to support move on from residential care.	independently
--	--	---	---------------

Objective 7: To ensure services are accessible to older people with support needs in the wider community

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
<p>To develop the role of sheltered and extra care housing as centres of information, support, events and activities within local communities to minimise isolation of older people</p>	<p>Increased numbers of people in the wider community accessing information and support in the wider community</p>	<p>Our largest provider (BHCC) provides a wide range of community services and activities in partnership with tenants, and third sector organisations. Most of other providers are also developing community activities and support, so that even very small schemes are now offering added value to the wider community. Not all providers have space to host community activities and some have got round this problem by partnering with local community centres and locations.</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living NI 137 – Healthy life expectancy at age 65 NI 139 – People over 65 who say that they receive the information, assistance and support needed to exercise choice and control to live independently NI 138 – satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood</p>
<p>Access to services to be based on an assessment of need, whilst recognising the need to provide a balanced community</p>		<p>The new Sheltered Housing Co-ordinator post has assessed the support needs and eligibility of over 300 vulnerable older people and is helping them to apply for appropriate housing, whether sheltered or general needs. The service works in partnership with sheltered housing partners to</p>	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living NI 125 – achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation / intermediate care NI 132 – timeliness of social</p>

		ensure suitable placements for people needing support.	care assessment NI 133 – timeliness of social care packages
To develop floating support services for older people that are available to the wider community across all tenure-types	Increase in the number of floating support provided	One of the current sheltered housing provider pilots is developing referral routes with local support providers, health care professionals to provide floating support to older people. Other providers are considering approaches to low-level support for non-tenants within their resource limitations.	NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living NI 137 – Healthy life expectancy at age 65 NI 139 – People over 65 who say that they receive the information, assistance and support needed to exercise choice and control to live independently NI 138 – satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood
To maximise potential for services to become extra care through changes to Supporting People contracts to deliver different levels of support		One of the current sheltered housing provider pilots is developing an extra care aspect within their current service. This involves co-ordinating existing care packages within scheme in partnership with Health / Care commissioners to re-model service to provide extra care and higher support needs.	NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living NI 125 – achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation / intermediate care NI 139 – People over 65 who say that they receive the information, assistance and

			support needed to exercise choice and control to live independently
--	--	--	---

Objective 8: To provide preventative services to promote greater levels of independence

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
To develop informal support networks within the community to minimise isolation of older people in the wider community		Community events within and around schemes are fostering and supporting these networks. Some informal qualitative data has been captured indicating benefits both for tenants and non-tenants.	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p> <p>NI 137 – Healthy life expectancy at age 65</p>
Refocus resources to provide floating support for people living in their own homes	Increase in the number of older people receiving floating support	Current Sheltered Housing Pilot re-modelling service to provide floating support to older people in wider community. Further work needs to be done to improve awareness of/access to the service.	<p>NI 142 – number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living</p> <p>NI 137 – Healthy life expectancy at age 65</p>
To promote choice through individual budgets and direct payments	Increased numbers receiving direct payments and individualised budgets	This is being progressed via the wider Personalisation Agenda.	NI 130 – Social Care clients receiving self-directed support (direct payments and individual budgets)

Objective 9: To provide services that are value for money

Strategic Action	Success Criteria	Progress in Year 2: 2009/10	Local Area Agreement PI(s)
To continue to work with providers and other stakeholders to identify efficiencies and to apply fair and consistent costings for services	Provide services according to our priorities within a reduced Supporting People budget	Cost-benefit analysis completed in 2009 on Supporting People services that identify efficiencies and financial savings achieved in Health / Care service budgets as a result of investing in housing-related support.	NI 179 – Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008/09 financial year.
To commission new services through competitive tendering and to achieve further efficiencies		New floating support and ex-offender support services successfully tendered and further efficiency targets met.	NI 179 – Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008/09 financial year.
To continue to undertake 'Value For Money' assessments on an ongoing basis	All Supporting People services to deliver services that provide value for money	Value For Money assessments are part of the Supporting People contract monitoring framework and are completed for all SP-funded services on an ongoing basis.	NI 179 – Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008/09 financial year.

<p>To continue to consult service users, providers and other partners to look at creative ways to provide services within a reducing budget</p>		<p>Ongoing consultation with provider groups and service user groups on providing services within a reducing budget to achieve efficiency savings.</p>	<p>NI 179 – Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008/09 financial year.</p>
---	--	--	--

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 26

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Report on the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010 and interim action plan for 2010-2011

Date of Meeting: 7 July 2010

Report of: Director of Housing, Culture and Enterprise

Contact Officer: Name: Rachel Howard Tel: 296949

E-mail: rachel.howard@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

This report covers the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010, detailing key achievements of the strategy action plan for that period. It also covers the interim action plan for 2010 – 2011

- 1.1 The national policy context of this strategy has been directed by the government white paper 'Every Child Matters' and the Homelessness Prevention agenda.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes this report and approves the interim action plan for 2010-2011.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

The Youth Homelessness Strategy (YHS) was produced by the Housing Strategy Division in consultation with The Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT) the voluntary and community sector and with input from young people. It was launched in November 2006 and covered the period of time up to the end of March 2010. The action plan published alongside it was updated in November 2007, and again in December 2008. The Strategy was highlighted by Communities and Local Government as an example of good practice and used as a case study on their National Youth Homelessness Scheme website. The actions related to working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender homeless young people, especially those relating to the joint working with the voluntary and community sector were also highlighted on the website.

- 3.1.1 In November 2006 the government announced a new target for local authorities to achieve, which was that by 2010 no sixteen or seventeen year olds who were homeless would be placed in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation unless in an emergency. The lack of support staff in this type of emergency accommodation, and the inevitable exposure of young people to adults with complex needs results in them being in situations where risk factors are increased. In Brighton and Hove, our performance around this target has been good. On the 31st of March 2005/6 there were 54 16 and 17 year olds in temporary accommodation. On the 31st of March 2009/10 this figure had reduced to 3

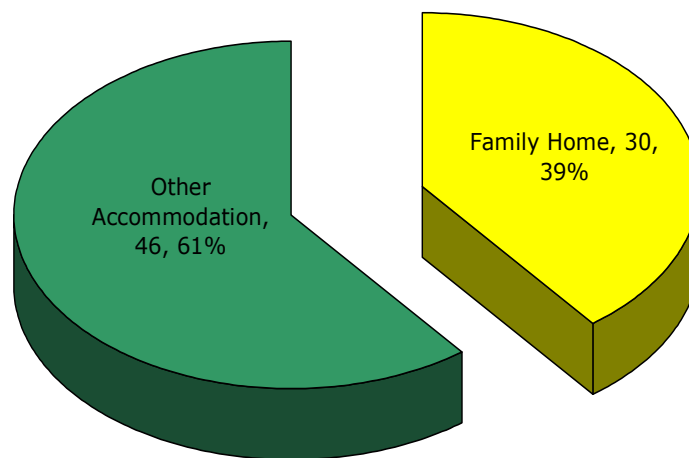
- 3.1.2 In Brighton and Hove, levels of homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds were higher than the regional average. In 2005/6 78 16 and 17 year olds were accepted as homeless by the council. By 2009/10 this figure had dropped to 16, an improvement in performance of over 80%. This improvement can be directly attributed to the actions embedded with the YHS and the partnership working that was the basis of the strategy
- 3.2 Within the action plan for the Youth Homelessness Strategy there are 76 actions in total. Of these, 69 have been achieved since its publication in November 2006. 7 actions have been partially achieved. The YHS actions have been delivered by a partnership of organisations and monitored by the members of the Youth Homelessness Working Group. The improvement in joint working between teams such as Housing Options, the Support to Young Parents team and RUOK (both part of CYPT) has meant a real difference to the young people that the strategy is designed to help. For example on 31/03/06 there were 23 pregnant teenagers or teenage mothers in temporary accommodation. On 31/03/10 this number had reduced to 4
- 3.3 The Youth Homelessness Strategy has 5 objectives which reflect the differing needs of young people who may become homeless, and the integrated methods of working that are needed to ensure the best possible outcomes for these young people.
- 3.4 The paragraphs below are a brief explanation of some of the actions within the Youth Homelessness Strategy that have been achieved since its launch in November 2006. The full action plan of 76 actions is attached for a more detailed breakdown of the work that has been finished, or is still in progress. In addition, an interim action plan for 2010/2011 is attached which will pick up those actions that have not been completed, and set out some new actions for this financial year, which will build upon and expand the good practice of the Youth Homelessness Strategy.
- 3.4.1 It is proposed that a new Youth Homelessness Strategy be developed during this time period, to be published in April 2011, and covering a three year period 2011-2014. The strategy will be developed in consultation with the Youth Homelessness Working Group, Supporting People and wider partners throughout the city, including young people and their parents and carers.
- 3.5 **Objective 1 – Intervene early to prevent homelessness –**

One of the actions under this heading was to ‘provide a programme of support information and advice to parents’ to prevent relationship breakdown between young people and their parents, which often results in them becoming homeless from the family home. In partnership with Sussex Central YMCA, the council’s Housing Options service developed the Respite Scheme, which has increased support given to parents and carers, by offering a family liaison and mediation service. Parents are able to see a trained family mediator, either with their children or separately, to explore the difficulties that the family may be experiencing. In many cases this is a clash of lifestyles, which can be increased by circumstances such as cramped housing conditions due to overcrowding, or the young person not being engaged in employment education or training.

If the family and the young person need a break from each other, the young person can stay in a Sussex Central hostel for up to 3 weeks, whilst support is given to them and their parents to look at the issues that caused the family breakdown. The table below shows that 39% of families that have engaged with the family mediation service have had their young person return to the family home.

Table 1

Percentage of young people engaged with Family Solutions that returned to the family home



3.6 Objective 2 – Provide support to vulnerable young people –

The housing needs of vulnerable teenage parents were audited in 2007, and it was identified that there was a gap in supported housing provision for this client group. A successful bid was made in November 2008 by Housing Strategy and the CYPT to the Department of Children Schools and Families for a pilot supported housing project teenage parents. The funding is for 2 years the project is providing an enhanced package of support and accommodation for 10 households. The project is working with midwives, health visitors and where necessary social workers to improve parenting, engagement with work and learning, and reduce social isolation. Each young parent – including fathers is able to access a life coach, to address aspirations, improve relationships with partners and families, and to improve engagement and moving towards independence. At present 15 young parents are being supported at the project, with a further 4 accessing life coaching. Accredited learning is delivered through groups within the project, covering subjects such as nutrition, parenting and nurture skills, finance and budgeting, and healthy relationships.

3.7 Objective 3 – Address the underlying causes of youth homelessness

Young people who become homeless often have other factors in their lives that can cause their relationships with their parents or carers to break down. Additionally, where young people are housed in supported accommodation,

factors such as mental health problems or substance misuse can impact on their ability to sustain that accommodation. Through the YHS links between the sexual health teams within CYPT and hostel support workers have improved. Staff have received training on assessing the sexual health needs of young people and helping them to access the services they need. Additionally, hostel staff have improved the numbers of young people with substance misuse issue to RUOK the substance misuse service for young people in Brighton and Hove.

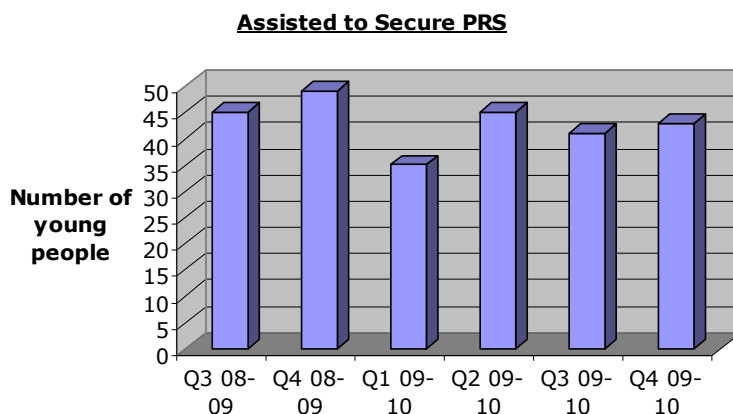
3.8 Objective 4 – Prevent a new generation of rough sleepers –

Every rough sleeper under 25 has a worker who will proactively relocate out of area rough sleepers, or refer those with a local connection to hostel accommodation. In 2008/2009 there were 52 young people relocated out of Brighton and Hove. In 2009/10 this figure was 55. Where they are aged 16 or 17 there is a co-ordinated response involving Housing Options who organise multi - agency professionals meetings to ensure fast track referrals to substance misuse agencies and mental health services, amongst others, and liaise with the relevant social care team, if there is a child protection element to the case.

3.8.1 All supported housing providers have signed up to an Eviction Protocol, to ensure that a multi agency meeting occurs before any young person is evicted (and therefore runs the risk of rough sleeping) from a supported housing project. The client group traditionally has a high eviction rate from supported accommodation; however, rates have been decreasing since the eviction protocol was put into practice.

3.9 Objective 5 – Provide a wider range of housing options for young people -

A private sector development worker employed by Sussex Central YMCA and funded by Housing Strategy has consistently produced good results, allowing young people to live independently following a period of homelessness. Young people have been able to move through the integrated support pathway, from Band 2 hostels to band 3, and then into private sector accommodation. In 2009/10 164 young gained PRS accommodation through this service, an average of 41 per quarter.



4. Continuation of the work around youth homelessness

The Youth Homeless Strategy now needs to be updated to incorporate the continuing challenge of supporting young people at risk of homelessness, and ensuring that key partners work together to provide the best possible services for vulnerable young people in the city. The Youth Homelessness Working Group has consulted with its members to devise an interim action plan covering the period 2010/2011. During that time, the group is in the process of collaborating with the Supporting People team to consult with key stakeholders regarding a longer term strategy, which would be in operation from April 2011-March 2014. In the interim strategy, the five overarching objectives have been kept, and various priorities have been added. For example, building on the family support model and Think Family approach to prevent family breakdown. This links in to the integrated working that the Children and Young People's Trust has instigated in the last few years, which uses the Common Assessment Framework to bring a team of professionals together to support a child or family, to cut down duplication, and offer early intervention and prevention strategies. Another priority is to prevent the homelessness of young people and young families aged 18-25. There will be a focus on making sure the transitions between young people's services and adults services are easily accessible, where young people have a variety of support needs. There will also be support given to young families who are living with extended families and are at risk of homelessness due to overcrowding.

5. CONSULTATION

Consultation on the updating of the Youth Homelessness Strategy action plan was done through the Youth Homelessness Working Group, which sits beneath the Homelessness and Social Exclusion Steering Group. Membership includes managers from the CYPT - including the Youth Offending Service, Integrated Youth Support Services, Social care, the Post 16 Team, Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health, and RUOK (the under 19 substance misuse service). Also represented are B&HCC Housing Options Service, Supporting People, and providers such as Hove YMCA, Impact Initiatives, The Foyer, and Friends First.

- 5.1 Hove YMCA has also carried out consultation with young people and parents, on their experiences of homelessness services for young people, which has influenced the design of services, especially the Respite scheme.

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 Financial Implication

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report. The youth homelessness strategy action plan 2010/11 forms part of the budget strategy and can be funded from within the agreed budget allocations for 2010-11

Finance officer Consulted: Neil Smith Date: 07/06/10

6.2 Legal Implications:

The strategic and legal context to the action plan are as set out in the body of the report.

As the plan notes major challenges are presented by a House of Lords decision known as the Southwark judgement. The Southwark judgment gave express clarification that local authorities should presume that where the criteria for Children Act S20 accommodation to be provided has been met, ie where a child is in need and where their parents are unable or unwilling to provide suitable accommodation or care, children's services do not have discretion to use Section 17 powers of the Children Act to provide accommodation. The effect of providing accommodation under Section 20 is that the child becomes "looked after" within the meaning of Section 22 of the Children Act 1989. There are a few limited exceptions to this and the CYPT pathway being developed will highlight these. The duties of local authority children's services to accommodate children in need can not be circumvented by referring the child to a housing authority.

The cross working with CYPT promoted by the plan will be essential to ensure that the impact of the judgment is minimised, and to ensure the range of statutory duties to homeless young people are being met. Key in meeting the challenges arising from the implications of the judgment will be the strategies to prevent young people becoming homeless so as to trigger the duty to treat homeless young people under the age of 18 as a looked after children, and so trigger all the ancillary duties associated with becoming a young person in care.

Ongoing legal advice regarding the development of specific aspects of the plan is being provided by the senior lawyer for housing, and the principle lawyer for the CYPT . All tendering processes relating to implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy go through the B&HCC Procurement and Legal Teams.

Name: Natasha Watson Managing Principal Lawyer Litigation Group

Date: 24.0610

6.3 Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Housing Options Service has been completed and is awaiting sign off by the corporate equalities team and the senior management team. The Housing Options Family and Young People's Team has been assessed as part of this process.

6.4 Sustainability Implications:

With reference to the sustainable communities agenda, this ensures family and community cohesion, by encouraging young people to remain within the family home, to engage in education, employment and training and to address support needs that may affect their communities, such as drug and alcohol misuse, or involvement in the criminal justice system.

6.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Addressing the causes of youth homelessness and therefore preventing young people from becoming homeless decreases offending and anti-social behaviour amongst this cohort.

6.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The Youth Homelessness Strategy is relevant to the following indicators that have been identified as key priorities within the Brighton and Hove Local Area Agreement:

N1 116 – Proportion of children living in poverty

NI 112 – Reduce the numbers of teenagers becoming pregnant

NI 156 – Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation

N1 117 – Number of 16-18 year olds in work, education or training

N1 141 – Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living

NI 40 – Drug users in effective treatment

L 24 - Reduce the numbers of rough sleepers to as near zero as possible

6.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The Youth Homelessness Strategy is part of the wider Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategy, and illustrates the directorate priorities of Adult Social Care and Housing which are:

Reducing Inequality

Working in partnership to improve the commissioning and provision of services

Providing homes to meet the needs of the city

It also feeds into the Corporate Priorities:

Reducing inequality by increasing opportunity

Better use of public money

Fair enforcement of the law

7. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

Not necessary.

8. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve the Youth Homelessness Strategy interim action plan

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. The Youth Homelessness Strategy action plan 2007-2010
2. The proposed interim Youth Homelessness Strategy Action plan 2010-2011

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None.

Background Documents

1. None

Objective 1. Intervene Early to prevent Homelessness

Priority	Action	Success Criteria	Progress	Target Date
1. Prevent homelessness through the provision of timely housing options and advice	Ensure inclusion of the Housing Options Service in the on-line directory of the Family Information Service	On line directory published	Achieved	April 2008
	Develop young person specialists with Housing Options Team	Specialists recruited	Achieved– 4 specialists work with under 18's and care leavers	January 2007
	Develop specialist Housing and Support Needs Assessment for 16 / 17 year olds		Achieved	April 2008
	Train specialist Housing Options Officers in working with vulnerable young people (Brighton University Course)	Training completed	Achieved	June 2007
	Improve information on preventing youth homelessness available on Brighton & Hove Council & Sussex Connexions websites	Increase in the number of hits to the Housing Options areas of the Brighton & Hove Council and Connexions website	Meeting arranged to update connexions website Carried forward to 10/11	End of March 2010
	Provide access to homeless prevention and advice at appropriate young people's advice centres across the City (e.g. YAC, Safe & Sorted, YPC)		Advice provided at Youth Advice Centre Blatchington Road, Safe and Sorted, Moulsecombe, Young People's Centre	September 2008

Objective 1. Intervene Early to prevent Homelessness

2. Develop integrated approaches to prevent family breakdown	Develop referral protocol within Common Assessment Framework for young people and families who require housing advice	Ensure protocols are in place for partnership working between Housing Options Teams and area Teams of CYPT	Achieved. Joint working protocol written, training on CAF processes in relation to homeless 16 and 17 year olds completed. CYPT Integrated Youth Support Service briefed on protocol	June 2009
	Identify families where there is a risk of family breakdown (through Common Assessment Framework)	Through partnership agencies ensure early intervention with families where there is a risk of 16 and 17 year olds being evicted from the family home	Links with Integrated Youth Support Service forums in each area of the city being established, CAF to be used after April 09	As above June 2009
	Provide a programme of support, information and advice to parents	Links made with B&HCC parenting team. Family mediation and family support service set up within Hove YMCA in partnership with Housing Options (Respite) Projected reduction in the numbers of 16 and 17 year olds in emergency accommodation is 58%	Tackling youth homelessness embedded within Parenting Strategy Respite Scheme up and running. From Oct 08 to Jan 09 there were 12 under 18s placed in B&B In the same period last year (Oct 07-Jan 08) the number was 42. This was a decrease of 71%	October 2008
	Deliver joint training programmes for professionals between Housing Options Teams and area teams of the Children & young People's Trust	Quarterly training programme embedded into corporate learning and development programme	Sessions arranged with area teams	April 2010

Objective 1. Intervene Early to prevent Homelessness

3. Reduce levels of repeat homelessness amongst young people	Monitor and report on the levels and causes of repeat homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds	Reduce repeat homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds to below 4%	Current Performance 0 This target has been achieved every quarter since qtr 4 06/07	April 2008
	Develop a co-ordinated response to eviction rules re: drug use and anti-social behaviour for supported housing providers (reviewed against the drugscope guidance document)	Ensure reducing eviction protocols are in place for all young persons supported housing providers	Joint protocol now published and signed up to by supported housing providers	December 2008
	Undertake feasibility study and seek funding to establish a Peer Mentoring Scheme delivered through Supported Housing Projects	Study presented by Youth Homeless Working Group to Homeless Steering Group	To progress via YHWG, carried over to 2010/11	End of March 2010
4. Provide advice and information in schools for you people and parents	Hove YMCA to pilot module of housing need in 6th Form colleges using peer education volunteers	Overall reduction in the number of presentations to Housing Options/Hove YMCA of young people who are threatened with or already are homeless.	7 peer educators recruited. 39 training sessions delivered to them. 3 peer education sessions delivered to Falmer, Portslade Community College and Cardinal Newman schools. Number of homeless accepts of 16 and 17 year olds has reduced from 67 in 2006/7 to 16 in 2009/10	End of March 2010
	Deliver training on preventing youth homelessness to Educational Welfare Officers and Teachers	Training programme established	Achieved – 4 sessions delivered in schools by Hove YMCA 2008/9. 3 sessions delivered 2009/10. Programme is in CYPT core training programme	April 2008

Objective 1. Intervene Early to prevent Homelessness

	Improve awareness of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools and develop guidance for schools	Guidance published on B&HCC website on dealing with this issue.	CYPT have published guidance for use in schools	September 2009
	Expand and develop peer education in relation to housing options and homelessness	Overall reduction in young people presenting in housing need to Hove YMCA/Housing Options	Hove YMCA recruited 7 volunteer peer educators. 1st session delivered 03/12/09 Number of under 25s to whom we have a full statutory homelessness duty has reduced by 39% since 2006/7 -	End of March 2010

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
5. Develop housing and care pathways for vulnerable groups	Establish an integrated housing support pathway for single homeless young people, young offenders and care leavers	Evictions from supported housing <10%. Abandonment's from supported housing <15% (Integrated pathway Bands 2 & 3)*	Pathway launched March 07 Evictions from supported 2007/8 – 11% 2008/9 – 17% 2009/10 21% Abandonment 2007/8 – 5% 2008/9 – 4% 2009/10 3%	March 2010
	Integrate YOT housing worker within Housing Options Service	Ensure all young offenders requiring specialist housing and support needs assessment receive one within 5 working days	Achieved – 100% offered an appointment within 5 working days	April 2007
	Develop joint assessment between Housing and Children's Services(CYPT) of young person's needs, whether the application is made initially to the housing department or CYPT	More joined up approach incorporating lead professional and team around the child approach	Achieved CAF is used for all homeless 16 and 17 year olds	Training done to all housing and Integrated Youth Support Staff by June 2009
	Implement and monitor the action plan developed to meet the housing related needs of pregnant teenagers and teenage parents in Brighton & Hove	More supported housing developed for vulnerable teenage parents and pregnant teenagers	Achieved successful bid made to Department of Children, Schools and families. Project to start in July 09. 19 young parents being supported with multiple and complex needs	December 2008

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Ensure that all teenage parents who are in independent tenancies can access floating support	Better tenancy sustainment achieved	Number of unplanned departures from the service < 15% 2007/2008	April 2007
	Ensure that young people presenting as homeless who have a substance misuse problem are fast tracked for assessment by RUOK	Increase in referrals to RUOK from Housing Options and housing support services	Achieved - Screening tool used by all support workers, housing advisers and housing options officers. 100% offered referral to RUOK where appropriate. New SP indicator from q2 2008/9 - % service users with a substance misuse problem referred to RUOK. 2008/9 Q2 – 69% Q3 – 100% Referrals to RUOK by Housing Options and Supporting People funded service 06/07 20 referrals 07/08 29 referrals 08/09 24 referrals 09/10 20 referrals	December 2008
	Improve the response to young homeless substance misusers by responding to 15 cost neutral recommendations via the Aim [1] Group		All providers signed up to partnership agreement produced by CYPT, monitoring engagement, referral and treatment of under 18s with substance misuse service RUOK	March 2010

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Develop Housing Strategy for people with learning disabilities		Achieved LD Housing Strategy complete – published 2007	September 2008
6. Respond to youth homelessness among minority groups	Develop private rented sector housing solutions for young asylum seekers in temporary accommodation	Reduction in the number of young asylum seekers in Bed & Breakfast accommodation	Achieved - Post 16 team have developed links with Pathways to Independence, who house young asylum seekers in the private rented sector. 100% of young asylum seekers now housed in the private rented sector or in foster care.	April 2007
	Ensure that young homeless people have fair access to housing and support services through providing information and interpretation in community languages		Achieved – All young people presenting to Ovest House (Hove YMCA) and City Direct (B&HCC) can access interpreters. Leaflet and information can be translated if necessary	April 2007
	Ensure that young BME homeless people are considered in the development of the BME Housing Strategy		BME Housing Strategy in development, planned to be published in 2011	March 2010
	Improve monitoring of ethnicity and nationality of young homeless and young rough sleepers		Hove YMCA relocation worker monitors ethnicity, nationality in 100% of cases.	April 2008

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
7. Provide support to help young people move on to their own accommodation and sustain independent living	Establish buddy scheme for young people to meet and be supported to move-on into shared accommodation in the private rented sector	55 % successfully moved on (from Band 2. 85% successfully moved-on from Band 3)	Achieved – Jan to Dec 08 77% of YP moving from band 2 providers do so in a planned way 86% of YP moving from band 3 providers do so in a planned way	December 08
	Develop a move-on toolkit for supported housing providers	All young people have move-on plan with 3 months of entering supported housing	Toolkit Launched Nov 07. Youth Homelessness Working Group instigated a Move On protocol, signed up to by all providers. Move on targets included in Supporting People workbooks New indicator from Q2 2008/9 shows 98% of young people have a move on plan within 3 months and 73% engage in a move on/life skills course	December 2007
	Work with the Credit Union to develop 'year bond' deposit scheme to assist young people to move from supported housing into the private rented sector	Launch 'year bond' scheme in 2006/07, targets to be set in 2007/08	Deposit Guarantee Scheme in operation. Supporting People funding Move-on initiative for each client group, using scheme.	March 09
	Ensure that all young people who move-on into independent housing have a re-engagement plan	100 % exit interviews including re-engagement plan for all young people leaving supported housing (planned moves)	Monthly move-on meetings established. 86% of move on from band 3 planned in 2008	April 2008

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
8. Respond appropriately to LGBT youth homelessnes s	Establish specialist LGBT Housing Options Officer	Reduction in LGBT Youth Homelessness	Achieved Post has been agreed, recruitment has taken place, HOO started in May 09	Jun 2009
	Consultation process of the LGBT Housing Strategy to include young people's services	LGBT Housing strategy completed	Achieved – strategy published	August 2009
	Introduce sensitive monitoring of sexual orientation and gender identity	Monitoring of sexual orientation and gender identity in 80% of housing options cases in 2007/08; 85% in 2008/09; 90% in 2009/10	Sexuality and gender monitoring introduced 2007/8. We are not currently able to report on this by age group. outcomes across the service for 2008/9 are: Sexuality monitoring - 70% Gender monitoring – 100% Outcomes in 2009/10 are 90% and 100%. Further training has been undertaken within Housing Options.	End of March 2010
	Review housing and support needs assessment forms to ensure that young LGBT people are appropriately assessed		Achieved – Under 18 forms redesigned with Hove YMCA. Adult support (18-24) needs assessments redesigned. Both support needs assessments identify support needs arising from sexuality and gender. Forms to be reviewed at LGBT Housing and Support Work group in 2009/10	April 2008

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Develop an 'LGBT safe space' compact to be used in all young person's housing services	Less complaints of homophobic bullying received	Compact written with input from SP providers. TA compliant, need to add bed and breakfast. Carry forward to 2010/11	September 2009
	Deliver LGBT awareness training to all housing options staff and managers		Achieved	December 2007
	Ensure support providers tackle racist, homophobic, trans-phobic harassment		SP contract management ensures these issues are tackled – part of SP quality assessment framework	December 2007
	Deliver LGBT awareness training for Supported housing and temporary accommodation providers		Achieved	April 2008

Objective 3. Address the underlying causes of youth homelessness

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
9. Improve access to learning, training and employment for young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness	Ensure that all under 19s are referred directly to a Connexions PA if appropriate	Reduction in number of homeless under 19 year olds who are NEET*	Homeless Connexions PA in post, based at Ovest House 100% appropriate cases referred to connexions PA. Baseline data: Hove YMCA Connexions worker saw 537 homeless clients in 08/09 Worked intensively with 78 Closed 50 Moved from NEET to EET 50 In 09/10 this figure was 43	April 2010
	Deliver training to increase the capacity of PA's to give housing advice	Decrease in crisis homelessness in young people, especially 16 and 17 year olds	Hove YMCA and Housing Options deliver training every quarter	June 2009
	Ensure that all homeless young people have access to accredited life skills training	55% of young people in supported housing complete a work and learning programme (Bands 3 and 4 of the Integrated Pathway)	Part of Integrated support pathway 73% of young people in supported accommodation engage with move on/life skills course	April 2008
	Deliver housing information sessions through Connexions network to young people	5 sessions per annum delivered through Connexions network	Advice provided at Youth Advice Centre Blatchington Road, Safe and Sorted, Moulsecombe, Young People's Centre	March 2010

Objective 3. Address the underlying causes of youth homelessness

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Hold information event for frontline practitioners to promote take-up of financial support packages available to young people who continue in education or training		Achieved Dec 2006	December 2006
	Provide all housing options officers (under 18 specialists) with information on financial support available for under 18's who continue in education and training		Achieved, information provided.	April 2007
10. Develop targeted interventions to prevent youth homelessness due to anti-social behaviour	Deliver 'Respect' standard across all temporary accommodation	Reduction in number of evictions from temporary accommodation and supported housing due to anti-social behaviour*	Achieved	April 2008
	Deliver 'Respect' standard across Supported Housing providers		Eviction protocol and substance misuse agreed by all YP supported housing providers Evictions from supported 2007/8 – 11% against target of <10% 2008/9 – 10% (projected) Abandonment 2007/8 – 5% against a target of <15% 2008/9 – 5% (projected)	December 2008

Objective 3. Address the underlying causes of youth homelessness

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Deliver training for temporary accommodation staff on addressing anti-social behaviour		Achieved Specific ASB Housing Officer for TA now in post	December 2008
11. Promote the take-up of primary health services amongst homeless young people	Provide sexual health and drugs information for young people in temporary accommodation and review services who provide condoms to ensure that they are working within PCT guidance	100 % of 16 and 17 year olds with support plan within 10 days of placement in temporary accommodation	Achieved. 100% of floating support staff trained in condom promotion scheme - C-Card, and delivering sexual health advice.	December 2008
	Incorporate sexual health issues into housing support plans with young people and ensure that staff receive appropriate training to achieve this	100% of support plans to address health needs	Needs incorporated into new support needs assessment. Health care professionals now working in hostels for young people	September 2009
	Ensure that all young people in temporary accommodation are registered with a GP and access appropriate primary health services		Achieved. Part of temporary accommodation strategy	End of March 2010

Objective 4. Prevent a new generation of rough sleepers

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
12. Ensure that, wherever possible, no young person sleeps rough in Brighton & Hove	Ensure that any young person who is sleeping in rough in Brighton & Hove receives support from a specialist young people's worker	More than 45 YP relocated per year	In 07/08 there were 53 YP relocated out of Brighton and Hove by the Y-Contact worker In 07/08 there were 2 verified rough sleepers who were under 25	April 2008
	Ensure that every young rough sleeper under 25 has a named YAC adviser and named RSSST	Reduction in % of referrals to RSSST who are young people under 25 (baseline: 15% of referrals)	Reduction in the numbers of young people rough sleeping (target is <15% of total rough sleepers) 2006/7 – 42 (9% of total rough sleepers) 2007/8 – 36 (7%) 2008/9 data to follow 2009/2010 76 (13.5%)	December 2008
	Every child at risk of rough sleeping to be given a named care co-ordinator		Where a young person is sleeping rough a multi-agency approach is taken, to ensure they are safely accommodated	End of March 2010
	Care co-ordinator to arrange a multi-agency case conference if child at risk of rough sleeping		In 2009/10 there has been one case of a YP under 18 sleeping rough. The care coordinator was from RUOK and links were made with the East Sussex social care team to ensure continuation of provision	End of March 2010
	Ensure that a multi-agency professional conference takes place before a supported housing provider commences possession action to evict a young person	Evictions from supported housing <10%. Abandonment's from supported housing <15% (Integrated pathway Bands 2 & 3)*	Joint evictions protocol established amongst SP funded supported housing providers Evictions from supported 2007/8 – 11% 2008/9 – 17% 2009/10 21% Abandonment 2007/8 – 5% 2008/9 – 4% 2009/10- 3%	March 2010

Objective 4. Prevent a new generation of rough sleepers

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Commission a snap shot housing needs survey of young rough sleepers		James Crane to meet with Kevin from Sussex Central YMCA and write a report taken from Kevin's caseload of rough sleepers under 25	August 2009
13. Improve sub-regional housing advice and information to relieve the pressure of inward migration	Provide comprehensive information to other Local authorities and advice agencies in respect of housing options for young people in Brighton & Hove	Less inward migration from other areas to Brighton and Hove	Hove YMCA Young Persons Adviser working with Worthing BC. Reduction in the numbers of young people rough sleeping (target is <15% of total rough sleepers) 2006/7 – 42 (9% of total rough sleepers) 2007/8 – 36 (7%) 2008/9 Qtrs 1-3 90 (20%) 2009/10 76 (13.5%)	April 2010
	Ensure that Brighton & Hove are represented on the Youth Homeless sub-group of the South East Regional Homeless Forum	Effective sub regional and regional working with other local authorities and voluntary organisations	Representatives attend all sub-group meetings	April 2008
	Seek appropriate out of City solutions to provide housing and support for young people		Hove YMCA relocation worker successfully relocating young people out of B&H. 53 YP in 07/08 exceeding target of 45	April 2008
14. Develop cross-authority housing solutions to help young in-migrants re-connect safely	Ensure that young people without a local connection can access support whilst being reconnected with their local area	Support 45 young rough sleepers per annum to re-connect with a settled housing solution and support in their local area	Y-Contact worker Achieving this target – 53 relocated in 07/08	April 2008
	Seek to ensure young people's advice needs are considered in the SE Regional Housing Advice Strategy		Information submitted via Regional Homelessness Forum	April 2008

Objective 5. Provide a wider range of housing options for young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
15. Reduce the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for families and young people	Explore the use of Dispersed Tenancies for Care Leavers		Care Leaver protocol has been updated to ensure all care leavers are housed in appropriate accommodation when they leave care. Care placements can be extended beyond the age of 18	December 2009
	Only use bed & breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds as a last resort and for the shortest time possible (maximum 6 weeks)	Average length of time of 16 and 17 year olds in B&B (target less than < 2 weeks)	In 2006/7 45 16 and 17 year olds accommodated in B&B and TA. In 2009/10 this number had reduced to 3	End of March 2010
	Ensure that 16 and 17 year olds in temporary accommodation received a fast track referral for floating support	100 % of 16 and 17 year olds in temporary accommodation with support plan within 10 days of placement in temporary accommodation	100% of 16 / 7 yr olds who are placed in temporary accommodation referred to floating support	April 2007
16. Provide greater housing choice by increasing young people's access to decent homes	Produce a leaflet on moving on from Supported accommodation tailored for young people	All young people have move-on plan with 3 months of entering supported housing	Move on protocol agreed by providers and signed up to Targets within SP workbooks. Service user move on handbook published. New indicator from Q2 2008/9. 98% have a move on plan within 3 months and 73% engaged with a move on course	November 2008
	Establish the year Bond Scheme for use by Young Person's Supported accommodation Providers in partnership with the Credit Union	Better throughput in SP funded supported housing for young people	Private sector development worker funded by SP in post and actively engaging with YP to assist move on. In 2009/10 moved 164 young people into the Private Rented sector	March 2010

Objective 5. Provide a wider range of housing options for young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Target Date
	Provide evidence to the DWP and DCLG about the impact of the Local Housing Allowance restriction for under 25s upon restricting access to the private rented sector		Achieved, but new welfare benefits legislation has not changed these regulations	December 2008
17. Develop appropriate, supportive housing options for young people in crisis	Develop a short-term Respite scheme to provide emergency accommodation for young people	Reduce levels of homelessness amongst 16 & 17 year olds to below national level (< than 8 % of total homeless acceptances)	Achieved 2007/8 – 11% 2008/9 – 3% 2009/10 4%	October 2008
	Encourage housing associations to provide shared accommodation for 16 / 17 year olds (Moat Housing Association Model)	Reduce levels of 16 and 17 year olds in B&B	Hove YMCA in talks with housing providers to provide shared accommodation for young people as move on from hostels. In discussions with Housing Development Manager around putting in a bid for HCA money for supported accommodation. Carried over to 2010/11	March 2010
	Undertake feasibility study for establishing a Supported Lodgings Scheme	Reduce levels to zero of 16 and 17 year olds in B&B	Scheme to be affiliated to the Depaul Trust Nightstop, board established, Hove YMCA advising. 10 hosts trained by end of march. Still in development carried over to 2010/2011	September 2009

Objective 1. Intervene Early to Prevent Homelessness

Priority	Action	Success Criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
1. Build on family support model and Think Family approach to prevent family breakdown	Ensure that the use of CAF assessments for vulnerable young people is resulting in clear action plans to support them	Number of Common Assessment Framework assessments where housing options staff contribute increases by 100%		Housing Options/Sussex Central YMCA Susanna McLaren/Julia Harrison	March 31 st 2011
	Where appropriate housing options and floating support workers to join a Team Around a Child to ensure joined up approach between agencies in delivering support to that young person	Increase in number of housing staff from both housing management and housing strategy involved in CAF processes Increase by 75%		Housing Options/Housing Management/Sussex Central YMCA, Housing Support Service	March 31 st 2011
	Support vulnerable young families living in temporary accommodation through the Team Around the Family model	Temporary accommodation staff to attend Think Family training programme and to register families at risk with the Think Family team. Number of registrations monitored on Think Family database		Temporary Accommodation/Family Pathfinder Aaron Burns Rachel Howard	March 31 st 2011
2. Strengthen links with schools and colleges	Increase number of peer education sessions delivered by Sussex Central YMCA to years 10, 11 and 12 within schools and colleges	6 sessions delivered		Sussex Central YMCA Julia Harrison	
	Develop toolkit for early identification of young people at risk of homelessness developed and shared with schools and Integrated Youth Support Services staff	Decrease in presentations to Housing Options YP specialists		Housing Options/Sussex Central YMCA/YOS Susanna McLaren Julia Harrison	

Objective 1. Intervene Early to Prevent Homelessness

Priority	Action	Success Criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
3. Ensure vulnerable young people aged 16-25 can access appropriate housing advice	Develop One Stop Shop service at Ovest House for young people aged 18-25 in need of Housing Advice	Decrease in number of presentations to Housing Options at Bartholomew House of 18-25 year olds		Sussex Central YMCA Julia Harrison	March 31 st 2011
	Through Frontliners ensure advice workers across the city are aware of housing advice provision for young people	Youth Homelessness page developed on Frontliners		YHWG/Susanna McLaren	March 31 st 2011
	Update the Connexions website to improve information on housing and homelessness	Number of hits on 'homelessness' section of website increase qtr by qtr		Housing Options Rachel Howard	March 31 st 2011

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
4. Use Every Child Matters as a framework for monitoring support given to vulnerable young people	Further develop joint arrangements with Integrated Youth Support Services	Less parental evictions and sofa surfing amongst young people, as reported by IYSS		Housing Options/IYSS Susanna McLaren/Head of IYSS	End of March 2011
	Encourage the use of CAF assessment within supported housing projects, by providing CAF training to staff	Target to be set by YHWG		YHWG	End of March 2011
	Monitor internal partnerships with teenage pregnancy services and RUOK to ensure the needs of vulnerable young people are being assessed within supported housing projects and appropriate referrals made	Increase in referrals to RUOK Continuing decrease in teenage pregnancy		Supporting People/RUOK/YHWG Jo Sharpe, Anna Gianfrancesco,	End of March 2011
5. Ensure that housing services and CYPT work in a joined up way to provide accommodation and support for 16 and 17 year olds who become homeless	Through the joint Housing /CYPT working group agree pathway for vulnerable young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, ensuring that legal implications of the Southwark Judgement are taken into consideration	Pathway up and running by August 2010		Housing/CYPT Rachel Howard, Andy Whippey	August 2010

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
6. Ensure adequate provision of accommodation and support for vulnerable young people who are homeless	Capture the needs of vulnerable young people in the Supporting People Strategy Review and consultation for the new Youth Homelessness Strategy 2011/2014	All providers working with young people aged 16-25 contribute to the strategy review Service users are able to contribute also		YHWG Jo Sharpe/Rachel Howard	End of March 2011
	Explore commissioning of accommodation for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds	Bi-monthly meetings arranged to track progress		Supporting People/CYPT Jo Sharpe Andy Whippey Richard Bewick	End of March 2011
	Look at membership of the Youth Homelessness Working Group to ensure the most appropriate people from a range of organisations are attending	Members from adult mental health and substance misuse services attend and learning disabilities		YHWG Chas Walker	
	Scope needs of BME young homeless people and contribute to BME housing strategy being written in 2011	Task and finish group set up by YHWG		YHWG	End of March 2011
	Extend LGBT Safe Space compact to all providers of accommodation for young people	Compact agreed with providers of B&B and BHCC Temporary Accommodation team		Housing Needs Aaron Burns/Lou Lowery	
	Monitor and evaluate the Teenage Parent Supported Housing pilot to ensure project funding is mainstreamed	Project secures ongoing funding		CYPT Anna-Marie Jones	End of March 2011

Objective 2. Provide Support to vulnerable young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
	Monitor and evaluate the teenage parent life coaches and seek to mainstream funding	Life coaches are able to continue in post after March 2011		CYPT Anna Marie Jones	End of March 2011
	Through the sexual exploitation steering group ensure support for young homeless people who are at risk of sexual exploitation	New sexual exploitation post case managing up to 15 young people at risk		CYPT/ Rachel Brett	End of March 2011
	Expand peer education scheme to offer peer support to vulnerable young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	10 peer support sessions to have been offered in various settings – hostels, IYSS hubs, community groups		Sussex Central YMCA/Julia Harrison/Pippa Green	End of March 2011

Objective 3. Address the underlying causes of youth homelessness

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
7. Ensure vulnerable young people and families receive extended housing options.	Where there are overcrowding issues within social housing, offer support to young families to enter the private rented sector	Monitor take-up of PRS by young families, By calculating baseline data.		Housing Options James Crane	End of March 2011
	Through extended housing options link in vulnerable young people and families to work and learning programmes, eg Young People's Guarantee	Targets to be set		Housing Options James Crane	End of March 2011
	Increase links with community education providers and Places for Change provision	Targets to be set		Housing Options Justine Harris	End of March 2011
8. Increased joint working with CYPT and 3rd sector to support vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness	Youth Offending Service to identify young people from age 13 at risk of homelessness and offending, and pilot family support and mediation to prevent them becoming homeless	Pilot service to be set up by November 2010		YOS/Housing Options/Sussex Central YMCA Nigel Andain/Chas Walker	End of March 2011
	Develop toolkit for school and IYSS staff to allow early identification of YP at risk of homelessness	Increased numbers of young people at risk of homelessness being supported by IYSS and school staff		Sussex Central YMCA/IYSS Julia Harrison/Susanna McLaren	End of March 2011

Objective 4. Prevent a new generation of rough sleepers

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
9. Support young people aged 16-25 who are revolving door clients	Increase engagement of young people experiencing mental health problems with mental health services through TAPAS	Reduction in number of evictions from young people's hostels		YHWG	End of March 2011
	Ensure young people using substances are able to transition successfully to adult substance misuse services	Reduction in number of evictions from young people and adult hostels		RUOK/CRI Anna Gianfrancesco/Micky Richards	End of March 2011
	Inspire project to train support staff to work with vulnerable young women who are offenders	Reduction in number of young women who are offending being evicted from accommodation		YHWG/INSPIRE	End of March 2011
10. Ensure care leavers are able to secure stable accommodation at age 19	Review and monitor joint protocol for care leavers between housing services and the post 16 to ensure it remains effective	No care leaver is without secure accommodation on leaving care at 18		CYPT Post 16 team and Housing Options Dermott Anketell/Emily Ashmore/Susanna McLaren	End of March 2011
	Develop multi-agency protocol to continue to support care leavers who may face difficulties maintaining their accommodation	Reduction in number of care leavers being evicted		YHWG	End of March 2011

Objective 5. Provide a wider range of housing options for young people

Priority	Action	Success criteria	Progress	Lead Agency	Target Date
11. Increase numbers of 18-25 year olds going into private rented accommodation	Build on the work of the move-on protocol in young people's supported housing to ensure young people are supported to move on into the private rented sector	Increase by 25% numbers moving into PRS from hostel accommodation. Calculate baseline data.		Supporting People Jo Sharpe	End of March 2011
	Ensure adequate floating support is available for young people aged 18-25 moving into the PRS	Decrease in homelessness due to eviction from PRS – monitored by Housing Options and Sussex Central YMCA		Supporting People Jo Sharpe	End of March 2011
12. Increase numbers of homeless young people being provided accommodation through Sussex Nightstop	Continue to support the recruitment and training of volunteer hosts, and ensure the organisation fits in with the SP governance framework	20 trained by end of December 2010		Sussex Nightstop Pippa Green	End of March 2011
	Attempt to make temporary placements of young homeless people into more longer term arrangements, using Housing Benefit to cover rent	5 placements to become longer term		Sussex Nightstop Pippa Green	End of March 2011
13. Increase capital funding in the city to provide supported accommodation for young people	Put in bid to HCA for a refurbishment or new build project in conjunction with Housing Development Manager	Bid in by August 2010		Housing Strategy Division Sarah Potter/Rachel Howard	End of March 2011

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 27

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Refresh and update Empty Property Strategy
Date of Meeting: 3 July 2010
Report of: Director of Housing Culture & Enterprise
Contact Officer: Name: **Martin Reid** Tel: **29-3321**
E-mail: martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To update the Empty Property Strategy which ran from 2006 – 2009, bringing it up to date and aligning the dates with the Housing Strategy (2009 – 2014).
- 1.2 The refreshed Strategy links into the Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 and contributes to the 20:20 Community Strategy under Improving Housing and Affordability where private vacant dwellings brought back into use is a key target.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Cabinet Member agrees the Strategy refreshed in line with the Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014
- 2.2 Cabinet Member agrees for the revised Strategy to go out for consultation to key stakeholders
- 2.3 Cabinet Member approves Assistant Director has delegated powers to agree any proposed changes to the Strategy post-consultation and in agreement with the Cabinet Member.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1 The Empty Property Strategy has an excellent performance record. 165 properties (against a target of 153) properties were returned to use in 2009/10 including 31 units funded via BEST (Brighton & East Sussex Together) funding which are now leased to the council. Performance targets have been consistently met and Brighton & Hove is one of the top performing local authorities regionally and nationally. The current Strategy is attached as Appendix 1
- 3.2 The Council's Empty Property Strategy is based on the principles of Identify, Encourage and Enforce to bring empty private sector properties back into use.

- 3.3 The current Strategy ran 2006 -2009 and an update is now needed. The Strategy will remain largely unchanged, still being based on the system outlined in 3.2. However, a general 'refresh' to reflect economic, political and legislative changes, is needed – details of proposed changes attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.4 The revised Strategy will be launched in September this year at a Best Practice in Empty Homes work event to be organised by the Empty properties Team.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The draft Empty Property Strategy 2010 – 2014 will be placed on the council's website and comments invited. In addition to this individual groups / other local authorities / internal and external partners and connected services will be sent a copy of the revised document for comment.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report. The revised empty property strategy 2010/14 forms part of the budget strategy and can be funded from within the agreed budget allocations for 2010-11

Finance officer consulted – Neil J Smith 21 June 2010

5.2 Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this Report but the Council's Legal Department will continue to provide legal support as and when required in the implementation of the Empty Property Strategy. Please note, however, that there may be resource implications for legal services in supporting the implementation of the Strategy. It is not considered that any individual's Human Rights will be adversely affected by the recommendations in this Report.

Lawyer consulted – Joanne Dougnaglo 10 June 2010

5.3 Equalities Implications:

Lack of suitable housing disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members of society. Bringing empty homes into use increases the supply of housing in the city.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

Bringing empty homes back into use helps towards improving the quality of life in local neighbourhoods and to maximise housing resources. It helps to tackle and reduce incidents of antisocial behaviour, crime and disorder; it avoids existing housing going to waste providing much needed accommodation in the city.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Empty Properties are known to blight areas and cause a nuisance to local people, attract anti-social behaviour, graffiti, drug activity and vandalism, and lead to dumping of rubbish and an increase in rodent and pigeon activity.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

There is a risk associated with not having an Empty Property Strategy which is that the council has no formal framework within which to continue it's excellent work in this field.

The opportunity is to continue work to bring empty properties back into use (160 returned to use 2009/10, including 31 brought in to the leasing pot to provide temporary housing for those in housing need in the city.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

Bringing empty homes back into use meets the following Council priorities:

'Protect the environment while growing the economy' by re-using existing housing stock and making property economically active, and

'Fair enforcement of the law' through use of relevant enforcement legislation.

Bringing empty homes back into use meets the following Housing priorities:

'Homes to meet the needs of the City' by increasing housing provision,

'Improving housing quality' by bringing property up to Decent Homes / liveable standards

The performance of the Empty Property Strategy is measured through a local PI set under the 'Improving housing & Affordability' section of the Local Area Agreement 2008 – 2011

In addition to the above bringing empty homes back into use improves the 'liveability' of local neighbourhoods, reducing potential hotspots for anti-social behaviour, and may generate additional council tax revenue.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 No alternative option.

Bringing empty properties back into use remains high on the political agenda.

Brighton & Hove have a proven track record with excellent results produced within the existing Strategy. This is a specialist area of work which requires a separate Strategy.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The council has an excellent record and reputation in dealing with empty properties and the Empty Property Strategy 2010 – 2014 will build on this. The document will be used to promote the service.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1 Empty Property Strategy Empty Property Strategy 2006 – 2009 (readable format) This document is also on the council's website in the design layout of the finished document.
2. Appendix 2 – proposed changes / updates to Empty Property Strategy

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY
2006 - 2009**

Page 1

Contents:

Introduction

Local picture – the Brighton & Hove approach to empty homes

Brighton & Hove Strategy

Identify finding the property and the owners

Encourage what help is available for owners

Enforce enforcement options

Case Studies

Regional Policy

National Policy

Glossary of Terms and Useful Contacts

Links to other council strategies

Performance Monitoring and Strategic Priorities

Why we need this strategy

Brighton & Hove is a bright, vibrant city and a popular place to live. There are many developments creating new businesses and new housing. And yet, even with new development, housing need continues to outstrip supply and many local people cannot afford to buy or rent a suitable home. There remains a need for more housing of all kinds.

At the same time a significant number of homes in the city remain empty for over 6 months and other, non-residential properties remain unused even though they offer the potential to be turned into homes. These are often rundown as well as empty, making neighbourhoods feel shabby and uncared for.

The majority of empty property in the city is privately owned. So why do people leave their property empty? Surely bringing it back into use would benefit both themselves and the local community. Often owners do not know how to get their property back into use, and sometimes they simply don't seem to care

This strategy sets out how we will work with owners of property and with local communities to make empty, wasted property a thing of the past.

Key objectives of this strategy:

1: To bring empty homes in the private sector back into use to increase housing supply in Brighton & Hove

2: To improve neighbourhoods by bringing empty property back into use

3: To identify non-residential empty property and vacant land that provides potential residential use

4: To minimise the number of properties becoming long term empty (over six months) by identifying them and working with the owners at an early stage

5: To offer advice and assistance to the owners of private empty property; those who are looking to purchase and/or develop

empty property, and those who are experiencing the problem of living near an empty property

6: To be a contact point within the Council in respect of privately owned empty dwellings and other empty buildings

7: To campaign and lobby on issues related to or likely to affect the Empty Property Strategy – at a local, regional and national level.

Page 2

Quote

To ensure that all the people of Brighton & Hove have access to decent affordable housing that enables a good quality of life'

Brighton & Hove Housing Strategy

Introduction

Brighton and Hove were among the first Local Authorities in the UK to develop strategies to deal with privately owned empty property. That was in the early 1990s when the two towns, as they then were, had yet to join forces and become the vibrant and popular City that it is today. We have had an active and successful Empty Property Strategy ever since.

Awareness of the problems associated with empty properties is higher on the political agenda than at any other time and the City Council's commitment to bringing empty properties back into use is as strong as ever. We believe that an empty property is a nuisance, a wasted asset and, most of all, a wasted home.

People sometimes question why the Council gets involved in dealing with privately owned properties and some even say it is none of our business. We do not agree. An empty property is not a 'stand alone' issue: all property is part of a community and the condition or use of a building can greatly affect the local area.

An empty property can be very distressing for neighbours, as it can become a magnet for anti-social behaviour, and is also at risk of being squatted. Owners of empty property often live elsewhere and are unaware of the impact their empty property is having on the local community.

Empty property is also a wasted resource in an area of high housing need. Brighton & Hove is a popular place with a wide range of housing needs. There is limited housing supply and further limits on

the land available for building new homes, bordered as we are by the South Downs and the sea.

The private housing market remains buoyant – both for purchasing and renting – as people aim to move house when their circumstances change, or get a first foot on the property ownership ladder. For many local people, owning or renting a property is beyond their means.

An empty property brought back into use is another home for someone in the City, whether that is a private buyer or tenant; a step onto the ladder for a Key Worker; housing with extra care for someone with support needs, or a homeless family.

Brighton & Hove City Council has a responsibility to all residents of our City including those who own property, those who live near an empty property, and those in housing need of any kind. This is why we aim to rid the City of the blight of empty property and we will continue to do our best to bring such properties back into meaningful use.

Page 3 to 4

The Brighton & Hove approach to empty properties

Brighton & Hove has a dedicated **Empty Property Officer** post within the Housing Strategy division which works closely with colleagues from other departments, particularly:

- ◆ Private Sector Housing (Environmental Health Officers) – for fitness and enforcement issues, and administration of the assistance funding;
- ◆ Housing Development – linking to Housing Association partners and the associated funding that they can attract;
- ◆ Temporary Accommodation Team – properties receiving Empty Property Assistance are generally let through this team;
- ◆ Housing Needs – working to identify and target property types that address specific housing need;
- ◆ Council Tax – identifying properties and owners details;
- ◆ Community Safety – working on problem properties which are attracting anti-social behaviour or are at risk of being squatted;
- ◆ Planning and Conservation – information sharing and enforcement issues;
- ◆ Legal Team – taking enforcement action;
- ◆ Economic Renewal and Regeneration – linking in to regeneration of particular areas of the City.

Dealing with empty property is a complex process and can involve many people and a substantial amount of officer time.

We are already recognised as innovative in dealing with empty homes, and have consistently exceeded the Performance Indicator figures set. In 2004 we won a national award from the Empty Homes Agency for Most Innovative Partnership Scheme. This scheme involved two long term empty properties being used for accommodation for those coming out of hospital and involved partnership working between the local Primary Care Trust, a Housing Association and the City Council.

This illustrates the approach we take in dealing with empty homes, and we are always looking for new ways to work to achieve our aims – providing more housing and improving our neighbourhoods.

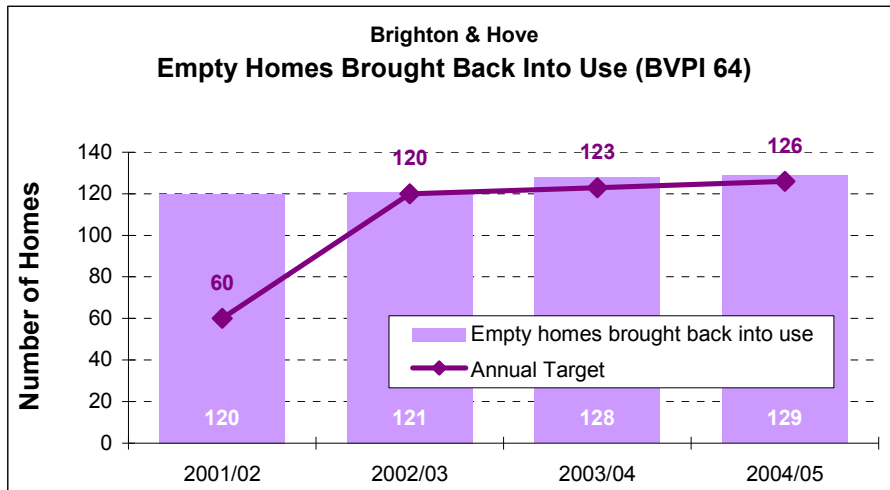
What often surprises people is that there are so many empty homes in the City. ‘Snapshot’ surveys through Council Tax records often show around 2000 properties empty at any one time, and this figure is mentioned as the ‘number of empties in the City’. However, this includes those between lettings and being sold, neither of which we would get involved with. We generally follow up on properties that have been empty for more than six months, record details of them on our Empty Property Database and contact the owners.

The most recent national figures - taken from the Housing Investment Programme returns collected by the ODPM - show 417 properties empty for over six months in Brighton & Hove on 1 April 2005. The vast majority of these properties are owned by private individuals. On top of this, there are the potential homes like flats over shops and unused offices, which could be converted to provide useful residential accommodation.

At the same time as homes are standing empty, there is real housing need in Brighton & Hove. There are in the region of 8000 people on the Housing Register including families accepted as homeless by the Council - of which there were 361 in 2004. There are also people looking to move ‘up’ the property ladder, either through renting or buying. The 2005 Housing Needs survey identified an annual shortfall of over 1000 units of affordable accommodation in the City and potentially 11,000 people whose current accommodation does not meet their needs, mainly in the private sector.

Bringing empty homes back into use and re-using empty flats over shops or abandoned office space increases housing supply and improves neighbourhoods. Research consistently shows that empty and run down property attracts anti-social behaviour and a shabby empty property next door can reduce the value of neighbouring property.

Chart: Empty Homes brought back into use (BVPI64)

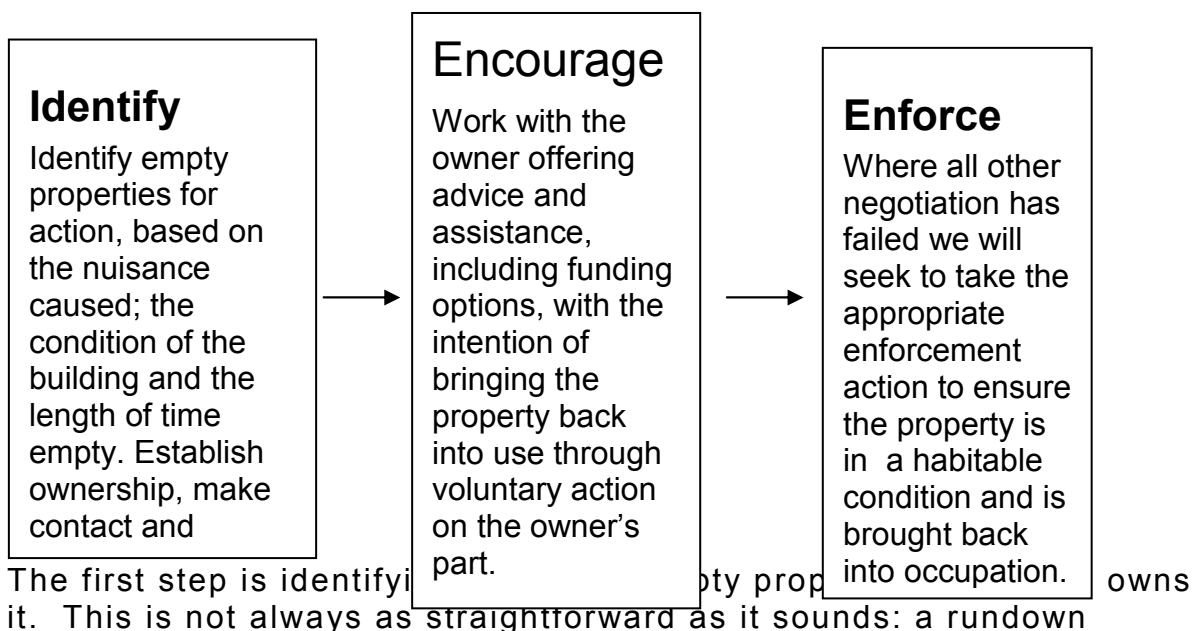


Page 5

The Brighton & Hove Strategy

The starting point of our Empty Property Strategy has always been to work with the property owner where possible. Each empty property is different and there are many reasons why they become empty. These reasons can be sensitive and it is important to be understanding of all different situations. However, it is also important to be committed to the principles of our strategy and recognise that an empty property is a blight on a neighbourhood and a wasted resource. Owners should know that while we would prefer to work with them, non-action is not an option. By owning a property they have a responsibility for it and must act accordingly

Our strategy follows three simple steps:



property may appear empty, but is actually someone's home, whereas a tidy house with curtains up may have been empty for years.

The most useful way we have of gathering information about empty property is through Council Tax records. Permission to use this information was introduced in the Local Government Act 2003 which allowed Local Authorities, for the first time, to use Council Tax information for: 'identifying vacant dwellings and taking steps to bring vacant dwellings back into use.'

We are also contacted by members of the public who report individual properties which they are aware of. This provides valuable information and helps to build up a detailed picture of the situation in Brighton & Hove.

Other than Council Tax records, we also liaise with Environmental Health, Planning and Building Control among others, talk to neighbours, carry out Land Registry searches and check with the Probate Office. We have been successful in tracing people as far away as Saudi Arabia and Australia. Once the owner is identified we will contact them and try to work with them in bringing the property back into use.

The reasons why people leave property empty can vary enormously. Sometimes there are sensitive issues, for example a property where the owner has gone into residential care and has expectations of returning, or where a property is the subject of probate or a legal dispute.

With other properties the reasons are less sensitive and less understandable, such as a property just left empty as the owner, who lives elsewhere, sees it as a long-term investment and does not want the 'hassle' of renting it out.

Encourage

Whatever the situation, the Empty Property Officer will contact the owner, talking to them directly where possible, and outline the options for their empty property, providing information that may assist them in deciding what to.

The options for owners are to rent the property out, to sell the property, or to live in it themselves. How quickly they are able to do any of this will generally depend on the condition of the property. We will advise and forward relevant information.

- ◆ Does the property require any building work to make it habitable? If so, does the owner intend to fund it direct, or are they seeking finance privately? Are they interested in the Council's Empty Property Assistance scheme?

- ◆ Are there any grants available for works if they decide to move into the property themselves?

Two photographs of property before and after intervention from EPS

Page 7

Photograph of owner handing keys to BHCC manager for EPA funded property.

- ◆ If the owner wants to rent the property out, do they intend to do so privately or through a Leasing Scheme? What schemes are available? -Is the Council renting private sector properties at the moment? Are there any schemes through local Housing Association partners?
- ◆ The local universities operate schemes for letting to students.
- ◆ Local Housing Co-operatives who are looking for property to lease and who may be prepared to renovate the property in exchange for reduced rental levels.
- ◆ Are they aware of the current VAT rates for developing empty property? We will send a VAT information sheet outlining reduced VAT rates for works to empty property, and provide a statement that the property has been empty to Customs & Excise if needed.
- ◆ Are there any Regeneration or Conservation plans for the area that the property is in? We will advise on how these plans may effect the property and on whether this has attracted other funding.
- ◆ Is the property a flat over a shop? We will send details of the Flat Conversion Allowance – a tax allowance introduced by the Inland Revenue in 2001 and designed to encourage people develop empty space above shops to rent out.
- ◆ Do they want to sell the property? We can forward a list of potential purchasers who have registered an interest with us, and offer guidance on looking for estate and letting agents locally.
- ◆ Has the property been the subject of any complaints? It may be necessary to take action against an owner if there are issues such as build up of rubbish, vermin, 'nuisance' to adjoining properties or if the condition of the property is affecting local amenity.
- ◆ Is the owner an established Landlord? Are they interested in joining our Landlord Accreditation Scheme?



Empty Property Assistance

This innovative funding is provided through the Council's Private Sector Renewal Programme

It offers

- Grant funding for works to make a building fit for occupation;
- Grants up to:
 - £15,000 for a one bedroom property
 - £20,000 for a two bedroom property
 - £26,000 for three bedrooms or more
- VAT on eligible works and a contribution to some fees also paid;
- in exchange for a five year nomination agreement to the property;
- property must have been empty for one year;
- management by the Council or a local Housing Association partner
- no hands-on management for the owner;
- guaranteed rental income for the lease length;
- property returned to owner at end of 5 years for owner to rent or sell;
- no repayment of grant (provided 5 year agreement honoured);
- can be used to develop flats above shops (including creating access)

Winners of Most Innovative Partnership Scheme – Empty Homes Agency Good Practice Awards 2004

Letting or Leasing

- directly with the Council and/or through Housing Association partners (depending on which schemes are in operation at the time);
 - owner signs a long term Lease (generally between three and ten years);
 - security of a guaranteed rental income for the lease length;
 - no managing agent fees
 - no 'void' rental loss (when the property is between lettings)
- Student letting schemes operated by the universities
- Guidance on letting in the private sector

VAT rates

- **Building empty ten years plus and being developed to sell or developed by RSL/Contractor or by DIY builders – 0% VAT**
- Building empty for three years to ten years – 5% VAT
- Building being converted to more or less units – 5% VAT
- Listed Buildings – 0% VAT
- ◆ Relates to qualifying items in all cases

TAX - Capital Allowances

Flats above shops

- 100% Capital Allowance
- Owners claim allowance up front
- Conversion works to space above shops
- Creating separate access is an eligible cost

Enforce

Enforcement action will be considered where a property has been empty for at least one year and where it is considered that the property is unlikely to be brought back into use unless such action is taken. This will be taken forward by the Enforcement Working Group, made up of the Empty Property Officer and officers from Private Sector Housing and Planning, with input from other sections as needed.

Enforcement action through the Empty Property Strategy is designed to ensure the re-occupation and/or refurbishment of an empty property. This could be on top of other action taken for issues like rubbish, vermin or other nuisance, or action taken through Planning or other departments. Enforcement action will be considered against individual property, group properties (i.e. those with more than one unit of accommodation in them) and vacant land sites.

The Enforcement Working Group will carry out an Enforcement Feasibility, designed to show which enforcement option is most suitable for that particular case. Weighting will be given to each case based on whether there is a history of nuisance or anti-social activity and the potential housing that could be provided from the empty property. Once the property and the type of action is agreed this will be pursued, with each case going through the applicable Council Committee approval process.

Page 9

When enforcement action is successfully taken against a property, the Empty Property Officer will aim to ensure that the property is brought back into use as quickly as possible, through whatever

means the form of enforcement dictates. Preference may be given to the Council's own leasing scheme or working with RSL partners to provide social housing but private sales and renting will also be used. The intention is to return the property to meaningful use by whatever means.

Enforcement options are:

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Compulsory Purchase Order carried out under Section 17 of the 1985 Housing Act (as amended). This allows Local Authorities to acquire property for either 'quantitative or qualitative gain'.

A CPO is the final solution to a problem empty property as it removes ownership from the current owner. Once approved we would arrange the sale of the property, preferably to a Housing Association partner to develop as affordable housing. If this is not financially viable, the property will be sold on the open market subject to covenants ensuring the refurbishment and reoccupation of the property.

Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)

This is a new piece of legislation introduced as part of the Housing Act 2004. It is also the first ever piece of legislation to specifically target empty property. Having effect from April 2006, it involves the Local Authority taking over management of a property; carrying out works if applicable and then renting the property out. Management costs and any refurbishment costs can be reclaimed from the rental income – with any balance going to the owner.

Enforced Sale Procedure

Carried out under the S 103 of Law of Property Act 1925, this allows the Local Authority to force the sale of a property with a local land charge on it. It is a step on from Works In Default action by the Local Authority (where the Local Authority has paid for works to be done in lieu of the owner who is unwilling to actor untraceable).

However, if known, the owner has to be given the opportunity to repay the debt prior to sale. The Council does not acquire the property, it is sold to a third party. Any outstanding charges against the property, including any mortgage, are paid following the sale and the money remaining (if any) is put into an account for the owner to claim.

Page 10

Case studies

The recycled family home

Mrs S had inherited the house she grew up in from her mother. It was an old-styled house with a shop in the front room in a now under used terrace of such

properties. Mrs S wanted to keep the house in the family but wanted it to be used again as a family house and asked about Empty Property Assistance.

Planning policy dictated that she had to prove the property was no longer viable as a business. After marketing the property as a shop it was accepted that no tenant could be found and planning permission was granted. A three bedroom family house with a garden was created using just under £17,000.

As part of the Assistance scheme, Mrs S entered into a five year Nomination Agreement with the Council and the property was let through a local RSL partner to a local family in housing need.

Selling on

The owner of an empty studio apartment was happy to be contacted by the Empty Property Officer when the property showed up as a long term empty. The flat had been his mother's but she had passed away, he lived elsewhere in the UK and had been quite ill and unable to visit the property himself for some months. He was worried about what to do with the property and looking for **advice and guidance**.

The owner arranged for the keys to be provided and the property was visited by the Empty Property Officer. Some repair and updating was necessary and the visit alerted the owner to this. He was then able to arrange maintenance works to ensure the condition of the property did not deteriorate further.

The flat was in a quiet complex, largely used as retirement homes. The location and size of the unit meant it was not suitable for a leasing scheme. Ultimately the Empty Property Officer recommended that selling the property on the open market was the most suitable option. Details of similar properties and prices were forwarded to the owner along with details of Estate Agents working in the area.

The owner was pleased to have had some guidance at last and arranged the sale of the property.

Bringing flats above shops back into use

A developer contacted the team to discuss his plans to develop two flats above a shop in one of the city's busy shopping areas. He had identified a tenant for the commercial premises on the ground floor, and was planning to change the front of the shop to provide direct access to the flats above. Was there any help we could give?

Information on Empty Property Assistance and the Capital Allowances available for developing space above shops was forwarded and the scheme went ahead – producing two flats.

By losing a few square metres in the retail area, the living accommodation above has been made into not only somebody's home but into a realisable asset for the owners of the property.

This particular developer is currently working on his third scheme, and providing a total of eight homes.

Page 11

Regional Policy

The Sustainable Communities Plan published in 2003 sets out a long-term programme for delivering sustainable communities in urban and rural areas. The Plan emphasises the importance of brownfield land and referred to making better use of existing housing stock especially empty properties.

It also introduced a new regional approach to housing policy.

Regional Housing Boards were set up, including the South East Regional Housing Board which has responsibility for the preparation of the Regional Housing Strategy. This Strategy is the basis for informing Ministers on strategic housing investment policies within the region, with the aim of making housing policy more localised and therefore more relevant and specific to an area's needs.

The Board includes representatives from the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the South East England Regional Assembly, English Partnerships (the national regeneration agency) and the Housing Corporation (who administer funding for Housing Associations), as well as cross party representation from a group of elected councillors from across the region.

The South East Regional Housing Strategy was launched in July 2005, with an overall objective for everyone in the South East to live in a decent home. Identified priorities are: supply and affordability; sustainable communities, and decent homes and private sector renewal.

The strategy recognises that land is scarce in the region and that this means more emphasis on using 'brownfield' land (land that has already been used for another purpose i.e. industrial sites) and existing buildings, including unused offices and flats over shops. A National Land Use Database and the Brownfield Land Assembly Trust have been set up. These aim to identify sites in the region, some of which will be suitable for housing. A Register of Surplus Public Sector Land is also maintained by English Partnerships on behalf of the ODPM. This identifies land owned by public bodies that could be used to meet the Government's wider objectives including housing need.

There is a proposal to develop this work further working with partners like the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and SEEDA. Housing cannot be developed as a stand alone facility, people need to work,

Page 12

spend their leisure time and send children to school as well. The Strategy works with partners to ensure a holistic and sustainable approach to housing developments.

The Strategy concludes with a set of principles entitled 'The Way Forward'. One of the principles is '**Innovative schemes should also be developed to utilise empty properties, flats over shops and empty office blocks which are potential homes.**'

We also regularly attend the **Sussex Empty Homes Forum (SEHF)** a group which meets regularly to discuss and work together on regional issues.

Photos

Page 13

National Policy

Empty property has become an important issue nationally over the last few years, with more pressure on Local Authorities to develop effective strategies for tackling this problem. The government has produced a range of guidance and legislation, designed to help Councils set and achieve challenging targets on this issue.

The **Urban Task Force**, set up in 1998, looked at the causes of urban decline and recommended measures to encourage people back into urban areas. *Towards an Urban Renaissance* was published in 1999 and included 105 recommendations, including:

- Making empty property strategies a statutory duty for Local Authorities: *Local Authorities are currently expected to have an Empty Property Strategy.*
- The reduction of VAT on conversion and refurbishment of empty property : *in the Budget 2001 VAT was reduced to 5% for improvement/conversion works to properties empty for over 3 years and to 0% for those empty over ten years to be sold after improvement*
- Changes in Council Tax rules to allow Local Authorities to charge full Council tax on empty property (people were previously charged only 50%), and allowing information to be used to help deal with empty properties: *Section 75*

of the Local Government Act 2003 allowed local authorities to reduce the council tax discount on empty property from 50% to 0%, (owners now have to pay full Council tax on their empty property) In addition to this: Section 85 of the same Act allowed information gained for Council tax purposes to be used for the purpose of identifying vacant dwellings and for taking steps to bring vacant dwellings back into use.

- Making Compulsory Purchase Orders less complicated by streamlining the procedures : *The DTLR produced a 5 part guide to Compulsory Purchase and Compensation in 2001*
- Looking at Flats over Shops as an under used resource: *in the Budget 2001 a capital allowance for creating flats over shops for rent was introduced.*

A Best Value Performance Indicator (the way the government measures and compares Local Authority performance across the country) for bringing privately owned empty property back into use, was introduced in 2000/01: Brighton & Hove City Council has exceeded the target set on a year by year

Page 14

basis since the introduction of the indicator

In February 2003 the Deputy Prime Minister launched the Communities Plan – Sustainable Communities : Building for the Future. This plan sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. The Plan includes housing and planning reforms and offers a new approach to how we build and what we build. It specifically refers to bringing empty homes back into use.

The Housing Act 2004 introduced Empty Dwelling Management Orders, the first piece of legislation specifically targeting privately owned empty property. These involve local authorities taking over most of the rights and responsibilities of the owner of an empty dwelling, to refurbish and rent out the property, without becoming the legal owner.

In January 2005 the government issued the next stage of the government's Sustainable Communities agenda - Sustainable Communities: Homes For All, one of two five year plans following from the Communities Plan. This refers specifically to the new powers introduced in the Housing Act and talks of the New Empty Homes (now Dwellings) Management Orders enabling local authorities to bring about a quarter of usable empty homes (around 25,000 nationally) back into use by 2010.

December 2005 saw the publication of the Government response to the Barker Review of Housing Supply. The Review was set up by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Deputy Prime Minister in April 2003, to look at issues underlying the 'lack of supply and

responsiveness of housing in the UK'. Kate Barker's final report – Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Needs - was published a year later. This made clear that more housing of all kinds is needed and that only 'concerted action by all players' will meet the challenge of creating a more flexible housing market. The Barker Review did not specifically refer to empty homes BUT the Government response corrected this and does refer directly to the importance of using existing stock both in practical and environmental terms.

Page 15

Glossary of terms and contacts

Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

A series of targets set by the government, administered by the Audit Commission to measure local authority performance in all areas.

Brownfield Land Assembly Trust (BLAT)

www.seeda.co.uk

Set up by SEEDA, working closely with other partners, to specifically identify and acquire small, derelict sites in urban regeneration areas for recycling into the housing land market. These sites are likely to have specific development cost constraints, which means that they are not deliverable by Housing Associations or developers by conventional methods in the residential market.

Communities Plan

www.communities.gov.uk

Working name for the Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future publication (Feb 2003) 'The Plan sets out a long-term programme for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply issues in the South East, low demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of our public spaces.' [ODPM website January 2006].

DCLG – Department of Communities and Local Government

www.communities.gov.uk

Created in May 2006 with a powerful remit to promote community cohesion and equality as well as responsibility for housing, urban regeneration, planning and local government. Supercedes ODPM in these areas.

Empty Homes Agency

www.emptyhomes.com

The Empty Homes Agency is an independent campaigning charity, which exists to highlight the waste of empty property in England and works with others to devise and promote solutions to bring empty property back into use.

English Partnerships

www.englishpartnerships.co.uk

English Partnerships is the national regeneration agency, supporting high quality sustainable growth across the country. They are a key delivery agency for the urban renaissance and the government's new Sustainable Communities agenda.

Government Office for the South East (GOSE)

www.GOSE.gov.uk

Regional operations for ten central Government departments. Structured through multi-disciplinary teams that include housing and regeneration.

Housing Association

A non-profit making organisation providing affordable housing. If registered with the Housing Corporation also known as registered social landlords (RSLs). Brighton & Hove works with a number of Housing Associations.

Housing Corporation

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Funds and regulates housing associations in England, investing for the creation and maintenance of safe and sustainable communities. Through regulation it promotes a viable, properly governed and properly managed housing association sector. A housing association is

Page 16

National Association of Empty Property Practitioners

www.naep.org.uk

The National Association of Empty property Practitioners was established in May 2001 to support people involved in delivering empty property strategies. It was launched by empty property practitioners with the support of government ministers, the Housing Corporation and the Empty Homes Agency. It's aims include: promoting unity and understanding amongst Empty Property Practitioners, promoting the role of Empty Property Practitioners and promoting policies and practices which offer effective responses to the challenges presented by Empty Property. NAEPP worked with the Audit Commission to set the definition of BVPI 64 [see also BVPI).

National Land Use Database

www.nlud.org.uk

'The objective of the full National Land Use Database is to develop a complete, consistent and detailed geographic record of land use in England, extendable to the other countries of the United Kingdom.' [ODPM website January 2006]

ODPM – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

www.odpm.gov.uk

Government department now superseded by DCLG

Regional Housing Board / Regional Housing Strategy

www.GOSE.gov.uk

Set up by Ministers to develop regional housing strategies and advise on funding.

South East England Development Agency

(SEEDA)

www.seeda.co.uk

The South East development agency with strategic lead in promoting sustainable economic development in the region. Housing role includes brownfield land development programme and promotion of best practice in built environment skills and sustainable construction.

South East England Regional Assembly

(SEERA)

Grouping of local authorities with economic and social partners (CBI, TUC, voluntary sector etc) set up and funded by Government to promote South East England. Also the regional planning body.

Sussex Empty Homes Forum

Forum with representatives from all local authorities in Sussex specifically to discuss and share good practice on empty homes work.

Sustainable Communities

'Sustainable communities are about things that matter to people: decent homes at prices people can afford, good public transport, schools, hospitals, and shops; people able to have a say on the way their neighbourhood is run; and a clean, safe environment'.

(Definition from ODPM website January 2006)

[Page 17](#)

Links to other Council strategies:

- ◆ **Corporate Plan:**
- ◆ Corporate objective of 'Liveability' (Improving the quality of life in the City)
- ◆ **Housing Strategy:**
- ◆ 'To do all within our power to ensure all the people of Brighton & Hove have access to decent affordable housing that enables a good quality of life'.

- ◆ **Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008:**
- ◆ Specific reference to the Empty Property Strategy as a means of bringing more housing into use.

- ◆ **Sustainability Strategy - Local Agenda 21:**
- ◆ 'to make the most effective and efficient use of previously developed land ('Brownfield sites') and promote best sustainable practice in new development'.

- ◆ **Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy:**
- ◆ ten key priorities including improving the physical environment in neighbourhoods and reducing anti-social behaviour.

- ◆ **Brighton & Hove Economic Strategy 2005 – 2008 :**
- ◆ Strategic Priority 2 'Renewing the Urban and Physical Environment.' Objective 2a Make the best use of derelict Brownfield and Greenfield sites for commercial and housing use'

- ◆ **2020 Community Strategy**
- ◆ : links to the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. Eight key targets including : A safer city, an Affordable City and an Attractive City

- ◆ **Brighton & Hove Regeneration Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy:**
- ◆ recognising that Brighton & Hove is a city of neighbourhoods. With specific targets on housing, crime prevention and the environment.

- ◆ **Brighton & Hove and Adur Area Investment Framework (AIF):**
- ◆ a framework developed at the request of the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) to channel future regeneration funding into priority regeneration areas in the South East region.

- ◆ **Local Plan :**
- ◆ planning guidance for the city. Includes specific policies on use of empty property. .

The Empty Property Strategy operates within the Council's Equalities Policy

All of the above documents can be accessed via www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

Page 18 (inside back cover)

Performance Monitoring

The council reports performance to the Audit Commission under BVPI64.

Best Value Performance Indicator 64: 'The number of private sector dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished...as a direct result of action by the Local Authority.'

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
BVPI Target	149	149	130

2006/07 and 2007/08 enhanced target funded by LPSA (Local Public Service Agreement funding)

For previous years performance please see table on page 4

Brighton & Hove City Council Projected routes into use:	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Advice	84	86	70
Empty Property Assistance	15	15	15
Leasing schemes	20	20	20
Compulsory Purchase Action	2	3	3
Other Enforcement	12	13	12
RSL funded schemes	16	12	10
Total units:	149	149	130

The BVPI figure is assessed as a whole and does not require a breakdown of how the figure is achieved. To monitor and improve our service we have set projected routes into use as an internal target system

Strategic priorities

These are key areas which we are looking to either expand or newly develop to improve the service:

- Compulsory Purchase Orders
- Empty Dwelling Management Orders
- Regional working
- Involvement in master planning working with Economic Development & Regeneration on major projects

Brighton & Hove City Council Joint working:

Projected timings

Priority regeneration areas/schemes (working with Economic Development & Regeneration):

Circus Street	2006/09
LR2 (London Road/Lewes Road)	2009/12
London Road Open market	From 2007

Townscape Heritage Initiative
(Working with City Planning)

Central Brighton	subject to bid
------------------	----------------

Contact:

Empty Property Officer

Housing Strategy, 4th Floor, Bartholomew House

Bartholomew Square, Brighton BN1 1JP

(01273) 293297 or 293035

Back cover

‘Empty homes represent waste, financial expense and missed opportunity. They can blight communities, attract vandals and squatters and tie up the resources of local authorities and the emergency services. Bringing empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to meet future housing demand and helps to alleviate pressure to develop greenfield sites’.

ODPM

Appendix 2 : Summary of proposed changes to Empty Property Strategy

Empty Property Strategy refresh 2010 : Briefing for OMT 3 June 2010

The existing Empty Property Strategy runs from 2006 – 2009. There has been excellent performance throughout life of this strategy and key elements will remain the same. Proposal is to make the new Strategy run from 2010 to 2014 to link in with the Housing Strategy.

Some elements of updating will be necessary, to include:

General:

- Changes that reflect the new economic position – i.e. housing market more subdued
- Changes that reflect political changes - empty homes get their own mention in the Coalition document

Specific:

- Confirmation / update of key objectives
- Increased emphasis on regional / cross-boundary working
- Update funding options available under the strategy (moving from grants only to grants and loan options)
- Update enforcement options/ related performance
- Update case studies
- Update general regional and national policy
- Update glossary of terms and contacts (government departments and responsibilities have changed)
- Update links to other council strategies
- Increased emphasis on joint working within council and success thereof (NEW)
- Link specifically into new Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 (NEW)
- Update performance monitoring
- Update photos / charts - form and content
- Refresh appearance of Strategy to make it lighter colour (easier to read) and to reflect new corporate identity as outlined in communications leaflet 'The new face of our council'.

Timetable:

Revised content to go to CMM July 7.

Consultation and revisions : July to August

Design updates: August to September

Launch late September (at event – see below)

Alongside the refreshed Strategy we will be developing a leaflet in the same corporate style to provide information to both owners of empty homes and general public interest.

Organising a 'Best practice in empty homes work' event (target date late September) – to promote BHCC and regional working. The Strategy and leaflet will be launched at this event.

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 28

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Private Sector Renewal & Housing Adaptations Update

Date of Meeting: 7th July 2010

Report of: Director of Housing, Culture and Enterprise

Contact Officer: Name: **Martin Reid** Tel: **293060**
E-mail: Martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

Private Housing Renewal

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is the lead authority for the delivery of the 2008-2011 Private Housing Renewal Programme for Brighton and Hove and East Sussex (The BEST consortium).
- 1.2 The consortium receives funding from the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board (RRHB) and has received the largest allocation of funding across the South East for 2010/11, and the sixth highest allocation in the country, £8,579,190
- 1.3 The partnership has received 28% more funding than previously expected for this financial year, due to our ability to deliver, and evidence, a comprehensive programme of capital works across a successful partnership of local authorities.
- 1.4 The BEST consortium was also successful in an in-year bid for £1m of additional funding, which was received in January. £0.467 of this funding is carried forward to 2010/11 (£1m funding less £0.474m paid to our partners less £0.059m used in 2009/10)

Disabled Facilities Grant

- 1.5 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is individual government grants towards capital spending on providing disabled adaptations to housing.
- 1.6 The DFG grant covers 60% of the DFG expenditure. Brighton & Hove City Council uses the RRHB grant to match fund this grant.
- 1.7 We have received £660K DFG grant settlement in 2010-11, and this will be match funded by £440K BEST funding.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That it is noted that that the council has been awarded £8,579,190 Private Housing Renewal Grant from the Regional Housing & Regeneration Board for 2010/11. This has been allocated across the BEST consortium according to the agreed split below.

B&HCC	£4,514,369
Hastings BC	£1,871,979
Eastbourne BC	£1,319,479
Rother DC	£277,107
Wealden DC	£290,834
Lewes DC	£305,419
	£8,579,190

- 2.2 That it is noted that the council's share of the 2009/10 £1m mini-bid, £566,200, has been carried forward to 2010/11.
- 2.3 That is noted that the council has been awarded £660,000 by the government for expenditure in 2010-11 on Disabled Facilities Grant
- 2.4 That the progress made by the BEST partnership in year 2 of the RHB private sector renewal programme 2009/10 be noted

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Background

- 3.1 In 2007, Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne, Hastings, Wealden, Lewes and Rother formed the BEST consortium specifically to bid for Regional Housing and Regeneration Board (RHB) 2008/11 private sector renewal funding. The Government Office for the South East (GOSE) reported that the bid was successful. Money is released each financial year in March based on previous performance in spend and delivery. This is now the last year of the programme.
- 3.2 The renewal programme for BEST covers energy efficiency/fuel poverty, decent homes, empty homes and other interventions such as landlord accreditation.
- 3.3 The BEST partnership was also successful in bidding for additional £1m of funding in a mid year bid opportunity. This funding was received in January from Central Government and it has been agreed to carry this forward to 2010/11.

- 3.4 In June 2010, GOSE reported to the RRHB on progress in the first six months made by all the bids throughout the South East and noted of our performance:

“The Brighton & Hove and East Sussex partnership again demonstrated highly efficient delivery, coordinating the largest allocation through a programme that has over fifty individual elements. The partnership hosted a regional seminar in the spring that showcased effective practice and brought together over a hundred energy efficiency and private sector practitioners. This has been followed up by a series of workshops to share effective practice and broaden the skills of practitioners from across the region.”

- 3.5 Brighton & Hove are the lead authority in the BEST consortium and host the programme management team. BHCC as the largest local authority with the greatest need receive over 50% of the funding.
- 3.6 The 2010-11 Settlement, based on the BEST partnerships ability to spend and achieve outcomes, means that we are now the 6th largest partnership (out of 236) in the country, after Liverpool, Manchester, Barnet, Bradford and Birmingham.

Progress in Brighton & Hove

3.7 Private Sector Renewal

Progress in Brighton & Hove 2010/11 was excellent, and the Private Sector Housing Team delivered the following key outcomes

- 1680 Homes made decent or moved towards decency by financial assistance
- 85 properties improved by formal enforcement action
- 101 HMO licences issued
- 800 energy efficiency measures installed for those in fuel poverty
- 650 tonnes of CO2 saved
- Private Sector Renewal Assistance for 31 empty properties back into use for homeless families
- 99.2% of the capital budget spent

3.8 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

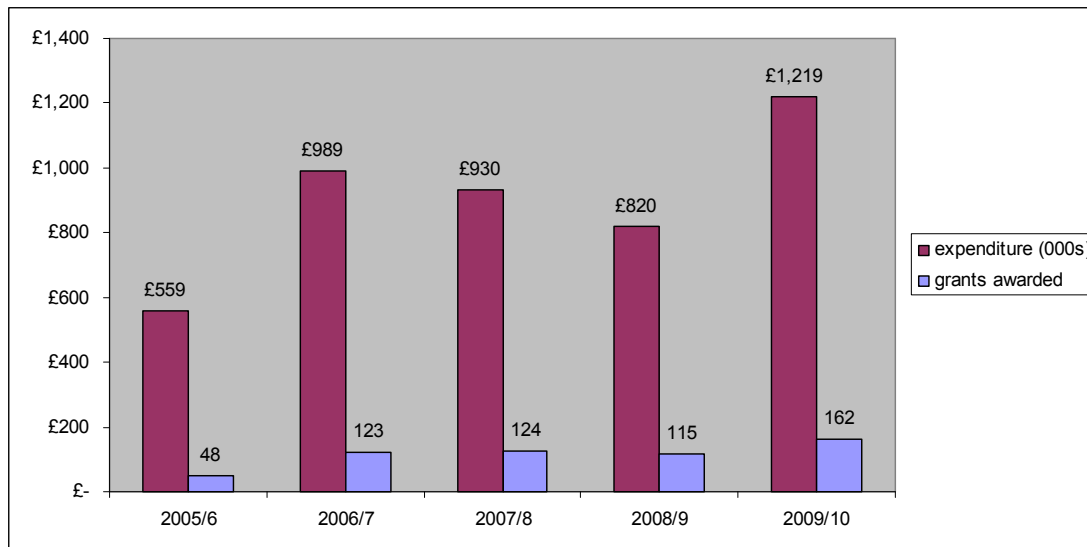
DFG is a mandatory entitlement administered by local housing authorities to help fund the provision of adaptations to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes.

- 3.9 Eligible work is wide-ranging, providing for access to the home and basic facilities within it, for example: providing ramps, door widening,

stair lifts and level access showers. The grant is subject to an assessment of need and a financial means test.

3.10 Brighton & Hove received £660K DFG grant settlement in 2010-11, this is matched funded with £440K BEST funding. In the last financial year, Brighton & Hove achieved the highest ever spend and numbers of adaptations for disabled residents.

DFG Spend and measures 2005-10



Future Plans

3.11 Funding for Private Sector Renewal Work for 2011/12 is uncertain, so the Programme Steering group will be considering a number of issue to sustain the programme in future years, including an increased use of loans to ensure funding is recycled back to the council, sharing of services to cut costs, possible carry-forward of some funding and a focus on key priority areas.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy was established following a comprehensive consultation exercise conducted both within the Council and with external stakeholders.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1.1 The Private Sector Housing Renewal grant allocation for 2010/11 is £8.579m, of which £4.065m is paid to our partners, leaving Brighton & Hove City Council with £4.514m. In addition there was a carry forward of £0.467m from 2009/10 for the additional funding received in January 2010. Staff resources have been committed by the council to ensure that the BEST consortium can closely monitor expenditure under this programme and to fully meet the obligations for reporting to the Government Office for the South East
- 5.1.2 The Disabled Facilities grant allocation for 2010/11 is £0.660m
- 5.1.3 Currently it is unclear what the impact will be on the 2010/11 funding from the recent government announcement on reducing grants to local authorities

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith

Date: 22/06/2010

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As the report is for noting only, there are significant legal or Human Rights Act implications to be considered.

Solicitor Consulted: Liz Woodley Date: 22/06/2010

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The availability of grant as part of the Council's Housing Renewal Policy provides help and assistance to disadvantaged householders.
- 5.4 Disabled Facilities Grants provide resources to help disabled people with restricted mobility to live independently.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 Housing is one of the key objectives in the Council's sustainability strategy which aims 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.
- 5.6 The Council's housing renewal activities identified in this report help to prevent ill-health, provide for basic needs by ensuring that dwellings are fit for habitation, are suitable for the needs of disabled occupiers, are energy efficient and help to reduce the level of fuel poverty in the City.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.7 Continuing to tackle empty properties, which can attract vandalism as well as making grants available for home security, will complement works to reduce crime and disorder in Brighton & Hove.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8 Policy development in this area is undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 The Private Sector Housing RRHB Grant funding will enable proactive approach to dealing with standards in the private sector housing of the City and ensure all homes meet the Decent Homes standards and provide a better use of energy into the future. The funding will also enable the Council to meet statutory duties.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: none

Documents In Members' Rooms: none

Background Documents

1. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
2. Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2008-11

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 29

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Tenant Handbook Review		
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Diane Hughes	Tel: 29-3841
	E-mail:	Diane.Hughes@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE/

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To present the results of the tenant led Chairman's Working Group review of the tenant handbook for tenants living in council housing.
- 1.2 To present a proposed draft of the new tenant handbook.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes the conclusions of the working group outlined in this report.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees to the implementation of the new tenant handbook attached at appendix 1.
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees that minor changes may be required and made to the tenant handbook between the Housing Cabinet meeting and printing to ensure it reflects the latest local context, with significant changes requiring approval from the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Chairman's Working Group undertook a review of the tenancy agreement which was agreed at Housing Cabinet on 14 January 2010 and which was implemented in May 2010 for all council introductory and secure tenants.
- 3.2 The tenant handbook was last updated in April 2006 and the group wished to ensure that the handbook complimented the revised agreement, that tenants were aware of their rights and responsibilities and that tenants have updated and relevant information.
- 3.3 The group considered the current version of the tenant handbook and noted the following points:
- the handbook was in one document which made it easy to access and ensured all the information was held in one place
 - the handbook had a logical, clear layout and covered the main areas of tenancy management
 - the handbook had a useful contents and index section
 - the handbook could benefit from more pictures and colour
 - the handbook provided a good basis on which to expand upon.
- 3.4 The group also considered examples of handbooks from local housing providers and high performing authorities (including Southampton, Poole Housing Partnership, Derby Homes and City West Homes). The presentation of the handbooks varied. Some key areas included:
- separate booklets as opposed to a single document
 - use of pictures and leaflets to break up the content
 - good use of colour
 - the level of detail varied considerably from basic information to very lengthy documents
 - some examples used a 'question and answer' approach.
- 3.5 The group therefore decided to revise the handbook using the current handbook as a structure, whilst taking into account key features of colour, pictures and questions and answers from other examples. The group agreed to organise the handbook around the five sections of the tenancy agreement, whilst adding additional sections where appropriate to cover extra information, for example resident involvement.

The group reviewed the contents of the handbook and also included further information on issues that were important to tenants including resident involvement, succession, how to end the tenancy in the event of the death of the tenant, rechargeable repairs, sustainability issues and being a good neighbour. The group also agreed to begin each section with a photograph and use colour tabs to allow for easy navigation.

- 3.6 A draft of the tenant handbook is attached at appendix 1, which if agreed will then be delivered to all tenants during summer 2010.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 During the tenancy agreement consultation in August and September 2009, tenants raised a number of issues and questions where they wanted further information or advice. For example on permission for pets and succession. The group have ensured that these issues have been reflected in the draft handbook.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs related to the production of the Tenant Handbook including design, printing and distribution will be met from the HRA revenue budget and included within the Targeted Budget Management (TBM) projections for 2010/11.

Finance Officer Consulted: Gary Driver

Date: 12/05/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Although not legally required to issue a Tenant's Handbook, a combination of powers in the Housing Act 1985 and Local Government Act 1972 provide sufficient authority for the same. The council must take the Human Rights Act into account in respect of its actions but it is not considered that any individual's human rights act rights would be adversely affected by the recommendations in this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 19.05.10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The development of the revised tenant handbook has been taken with due regards to equalities and diversity issues and will be available in a range of formats to meet to meet tenants needs. Feedback from the consultation on the tenancy agreement has been used to finalise the Equality Impact Assessment on the revised tenant handbook.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 An effective tenant handbook providing clear information on rights and responsibilities will contribute to the development of sustainable communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The revised tenant handbook will positively contribute to preventing crime and the fear of crime by stating the types of anti social behaviour and harassment that is prohibited and the enforcement action that the council can take should such behaviour occur.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The introduction of a revised tenant handbook will have citywide implications for council tenants.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Continue with the existing tenant handbook. However this is not recommended, as it does not allow the council to take advantage of developments in best practice and does not reflect the wishes of tenants. We need to ensure we have a comprehensive handbook, which compliments the revised tenancy agreement, covers information across the range of housing management services we provide and reflects the information that is important to tenants.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide the Cabinet Member for Housing with the results of the Chairman's Working Group's review of the tenant handbook. To seek the Cabinet Member for Housing's agreement to the implementation of the revised tenant handbook, attached at appendix 1. To seek agreement that minor changes may be required and made to the tenant handbook between the Housing Cabinet meeting and printing to ensure it reflects the latest local context with significant changes requiring approval from the Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft Tenant Handbook

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

Tenant Handbook

Your guide to being a tenant
of Brighton & Hove City Council



Welcome

This is your tenant handbook. It has been put together by elected tenant representatives and officers to give you information and guidance on your tenancy with Brighton & Hove City Council.

The handbook explains your rights and your responsibilities, as well as the council's responsibilities as your landlord. It also gives details of the housing services the council provides for you.

This handbook is only a guide to our services and aims to answer the general queries you may have about your home and tenancy.

Over time, our services and policies may change and not be reflected here, but we will keep you up to date through our website (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing) and the Homing In newsletter.

Please let us know if you or a member of your household would like any part of the book explained, or put on CD or tape, or produced in large print. If you need to have any of our documents translated, please contact your housing office.

We would like to express our thanks to the tenant representatives involved for all the hard work they put into compiling this handbook. They spent many hours making sure it was easy to read and understand and as useful as possible to you.

Contents

Customer care

Contacting us	4
Customer Service Standards	4
Service Standards	4
Complaints	4
Equalities	5
Data Protection	5
Freedom of information	5

Your rights

Types of tenancies	8
Rights	9

Resident involvement

Resident involvement in Brighton & Hove	12
How you can get involved	12
Estate Development Budget	13

Your rent & other charges

How to pay your rent	16
What to do if you have rent arrears	17
The support we can provide	18

Repairs & improvements

Tenant and landlord responsibilities	20
Reporting a repair	20
Tenant alterations and improvements	21
Rechargeable repairs	22
Looking after your home	23
Keeping safe in your home	24
Fire safety	25

Living in your home

Moving in	28
Going away from your home	28
Running a business from your home	29
Keeping your estates clean and tidy	29
Sustainability and energy efficiency	30
Pest control	30

Being a good neighbour

Being a good neighbour	32
Neighbourhood Agreements	32
Anti-social behaviour	32
Harassment	34
Violence	35
Pets and animals	36
Communal areas	37
Parking	37
Gardens	38

Ending your tenancy

Ending your tenancy	40
Ending a tenancy following the death of a tenant	40
Moving options	41

Supporting independence

Sheltered housing service	44
Tenancy support	44
Adaptations	45
Help with gardening & decorating	45

Useful contacts & index

Useful contacts	48
Index	50

1

Customer care



Contacting us

You can contact us in a number of ways including through our offices, by telephone, by letter, email or through the council's website.

Details of our housing offices, Repairs Helpdesk and other useful telephone numbers are in the useful contacts section at the back of this handbook. Useful email and website addresses have also been included throughout the handbook.

Our housing offices have a number of facilities, including a free telephone to put you in touch with other council services and internet access to browse the council's website. All housing offices have private interview rooms, are wheelchair accessible and have hearing loops available.

Brighton & Hove City Council's website address is www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. You will find basic information and contact details for all the council services on there, including a section on housing. If you are a regular internet user you will find the website contains a lot of the information you need and provides a way of contacting services, councillors and officers about issues that affect you and your neighbourhood. Free internet access is also available in the city's libraries.

Our priorities

We are committed to improving our service. Our plan for managing and maintaining council housing has been developed with residents, and has the overall objective of achieving excellent housing management services for council tenants and leaseholders in Brighton & Hove. Our priorities are to:

- improve services to an excellent standard, with residents at the heart of everything we do
- improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods
- deliver value for money services and maintain a sustainable 30 year business plan
- make best use of our housing stock to address housing need
- ensure that social housing provides a platform for reducing inequality and creating opportunity

Customer Service Standards

We aim to deliver excellent customer service by putting our customers at the centre of everything we do and recognising the diverse needs of the communities they belong to.

We have developed a customer charter which explains what you can expect from Brighton & Hove City Council.

For a copy of our standards, please contact your housing office or go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing

Service Standards

Our service standards ensure that everyone receives the same standard of service and allow us to measure our performance, so that we can keep improving the services we deliver to you. Each team has worked with residents to develop service standards for their area of work to make sure that you receive a consistently high quality service from us. Our performance against these standards can be seen in the performance reports available on our website.

For copies of our service charters, please contact your housing office or go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing

Complaints

Who do I contact if I wish to raise an issue?

We always try to get things right first time but appreciate that this doesn't always happen. As a first step, it is often best to contact the person who dealt with your enquiry. They will know most about the matter and it may be possible to sort out the problem straight away. If you are not satisfied with our first response, we have a complaints procedure you can follow.

Complaints procedure

Our complaints procedure helps us make sure your complaint is handled efficiently and in a fair way. Our 'Complaints, Comments & Compliments' booklet explains the procedure and includes a complaints form you can complete. You can hand it in or post it free of

charge, or you can complete an on-line form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints.

You can also make your complaint by telephone or authorise someone to act on your behalf.

Copies of the 'Complaints, Comments & Compliments' booklet are available from your housing office, the council's Complaints Team, or from the council website.

What action can I expect?

If, following an investigation, we find that we are in the wrong, we will apologise in writing and will do everything we can to put things right. We will also take action to make sure the same problem does not happen again to you or any other tenant. If your complaint was about one of our policies, we may decide to review the policy to see whether changes are needed.

Who else can I approach?

You can contact your local councillor or Member of Parliament, who can raise issues causing you concern on your behalf.

If you have a complaint against Brighton & Hove City Council and have been through our formal complaints process but are not satisfied, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman. The ombudsman is an independent organisation which may investigate the matter further. See the useful contacts section for details.

When we get it right

We also like to know if you are pleased with us. Our staff take pride in their work, so it means a lot to us when someone tells us that we got it right. This helps us to find out which parts of our service work well.

Equalities

We aim to make sure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers, and that all sections of the community have equal access to those services. We test our services and policies to make sure we are meeting residents' needs.

Brighton & Hove City Council has an equalities and inclusion policy to ensure all tenants are treated fairly and have access to our housing services regardless of race, colour, gender, nationality, religion, age, mental illness, disability, sexuality or for any other reason. Go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/equalities for further information.

We can provide information in a range of formats including audio tape, CD, large print and Braille. We can also translate into different languages or arrange interpreters. Please contact your housing office to discuss your individual needs.

Data Protection

The information we hold about you will be used for housing management purposes. We may use it for other council purposes where the law permits us. We may also share this information with other bodies who administer public funds to prevent or detect crime and to protect public funds in other ways as permitted by law. The council is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 for these purposes. We will not disclose information about you to anyone, unless the law permits us to.

We adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 to ensure that the information we hold about you is secure. The information you provide will be treated confidentially at all times. Security safeguards apply to both manual and computerised held data and only relevant staff can access your information.

For further information please contact the council's Data Protection Officer, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 4AH or call 01273 291207.

Freedom of information

The law gives you a right to know or have access to certain information held by public authorities such as councils. This right is set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You can ask for information by emailing freedomofinformation@brighton-hove.gov.uk or write to: Freedom of Information Team, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 4AH.

For further information on the act, please call the team on 01273 291207.

Draft

2

Your rights



This section gives a brief description of your main rights as set out in housing laws. For more detailed information please speak to a member of staff at your housing office.

Types of tenancies

Introductory tenancies

The introductory tenancy is for a trial period of one year. During that time, tenants must show that they are responsible enough to keep their home and can keep to the conditions set out in the tenancy agreement. If you break any of these conditions, we can extend the introductory period or take steps to end your tenancy. Introductory tenancies can be ended more easily than secure tenancies. We will write to you to confirm the situation.

As an introductory tenant you have fewer legal rights than a secure tenant. The differences are:

- you cannot assign your tenancy by mutual exchange
- you do not have the right to buy your home
- you cannot take in lodgers or sublet any part of your home
- you cannot use your home for business purposes
- you cannot make any alterations to your property (other than decorating, laying carpet and minor improvements such as putting up shelves)

Secure tenancies

If you become a secure tenant, you get the full legal rights of a council tenant. This means you keep your home as long as you choose - as long as you keep to the conditions set out in your tenancy agreement. We can only take your home away from you if you give us good reason to do so, for example if you do not pay your rent, harass other people or, if there is a legal ground for possession under the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996 or any other law.

Demoted tenancies

If you do not keep to the conditions of your secure tenancy or you or your visitors behave anti-socially, we may apply to the court to remove some of your rights as a secure tenant. You will then have a demoted tenancy. If you continue to

break the conditions of your demoted tenancy, we can apply to the courts to evict you.

A demoted tenant loses a number of tenancy rights, including the right to buy, the right to exchange your home, the right to take in lodgers and the right to sublet part of your home. A demoted tenancy lasts for one year. If we are satisfied with your behaviour during that time, you will go back to a secure tenancy.

Joint tenancies

As long as there are no previous rent arrears or breaches of the tenancy, we will normally grant joint tenancies to:

- married couples and civil partners
- partners who have lived together for 12 months or more and where both partners are over 18 years of age
- partners with a child or children

If you have a joint tenancy, you are both responsible for the whole tenancy. If there are rent arrears on a joint tenancy, either of the tenants can be held responsible for the full amount. A joint tenancy can be ended if either person serves a valid termination notice on the council.

Overcrowding

Every home has a maximum number of occupants according to the floor area of the living space (bedrooms and living rooms). The permitted numbers are shown on your tenancy agreement or you can ask at your housing office. If the number of people living in your home is more than the permitted number, the home is legally overcrowded. Young children are calculated differently from adults and older children for overcrowding purposes.

The rules are as follows:

- people aged 10 years or over count as one
- children aged between one and 10 count as half
- babies under one are not counted

It is the tenant's responsibility to make sure the home is not overcrowded. You should contact your housing office if your home is likely to become overcrowded.

Rights

The right to live in your home

You have the right, as a tenant, to live in the property unless there is a legal reason for us to take action against you to recover possession of the property. For example, this might happen if:

- you break any conditions of the tenancy agreement. We will always try to sort out matters before taking legal action but, if you continue to break your tenancy agreement, we may have no option but to take possession of your home
- you abandon your home or live permanently at another address
- you have given false or fraudulent information to get the tenancy
- we need to carry out redevelopment or major repairs to the property, which we can not do unless you move out
- there is a legal ground for possession under the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996 or any other law

The right of succession

Tenants may have the right for their spouse, partner or family member to take over their tenancy when they die - this is called succession. Please see 'ending your tenancy' section for further information. A succession can only take place once.

The right of assignment

In certain circumstances you can transfer your tenancy to another family member, but this can only be to someone qualified to succeed to your tenancy under the right of succession. If you want to pass your tenancy on, please contact your housing office for further advice.

The right to exchange (secure tenants only)

You have the right to mutually exchange your property with another council or housing association tenant (subject to certain conditions). See the 'ending your tenancy' section for further details.

The right to sublet part of your home (secure tenants only)

You have the right to take in a sub tenant, but there are rules you must follow. You must not:

- sublet without our written permission
- sublet the whole of your property and move elsewhere
- create a situation of overcrowding

Please note that:

- it may affect any benefit entitlement
- you are responsible for the behaviour of people living with you
- if you decide you want them to leave, you will need to arrange it yourself

If you sublet the whole of the property, you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and we will take action to end your tenancy by serving you with a 'Notice to Quit'. If you suspect a property has been sublet, please report it to your housing office so we can investigate further. You can also call 01273 291700 or e-mail anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gov.uk

The right to take in lodgers (secure tenants only)

You have the right to take in a lodger but you must not create a situation of overcrowding.

Please note that:

- it may affect any benefit entitlement
- you are responsible for the behaviour of people living with you
- if you decide you want them to leave, you will need to arrange it yourself

The right to buy (secure tenants only)

If you have been a secure tenant with us, or another public sector landlord for at least five years (or two years if your tenancy started before 18 January 2005), you can apply to buy your home unless it's in a sheltered scheme suitable for older people or has been specifically adapted for someone with a disability. If you are interested in buying your home, please contact the Right to Buy & Leasehold Team for further information on qualifying criteria on 01273 293074 or rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk

The right to be consulted and changes to your tenancy agreement

We believe that it is important that you are involved in housing management decisions that affect you. We will consult with you about any changes to our policy or practice that may substantially change the housing service we provide to you, your home and your neighbourhood.

Except for changes to rent and any other charges, the terms of your tenancy agreement can only be changed if we give you written notice that we intend to alter it. We will write to tell you about any changes we are proposing and give you the opportunity to comment. We will take your views into consideration before agreeing any changes and give you at least four weeks notice before the change takes place. The tenancy may also be changed where we both agree.

The right to manage

You have the right to take over the management of your own home. This right can be taken by a group of tenants forming a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) in a particular block or estate. The TMO would take on the responsibility for providing the housing services the council normally supplies, such as collecting the rents and organising repairs and maintenance.

All tenants in the block or estate must be consulted and those proposing to take over the management must go through competency tests. Support from outside agencies is available to help with this process.

The right to repair

The right to repair is a scheme to make sure that small, urgent repairs (up to a value of £250) that might affect your health, safety or security, are done quickly and easily. For example:

- loss of electricity
- a tap which cannot be turned
- a blocked sink, bath or basin

The types of repair we need to complete under the right to repair, and the response times you

can expect from us are set by law. See the 'Guide to Repairs' for more information.

The right to improve your home (secure tenants only)

You must get permission in writing from us before you start any work. Please note that you will be recharged for any damage caused to the property or if we have to put right any sub-standard work.

The right to compensation for improvements

This scheme gives tenants moving out of their homes the right to claim compensation for certain authorised improvements they have made to properties. For further details on qualifying improvements, please contact your housing office.

The right to information

We keep details about you and your family that are relevant for the management of your tenancy. You have the right to see the information we hold about you and your family. If you wish to see this information, please contact the council's Data Protection Officer on 01273 291207.

We can arrange an appointment for you to come to our offices to view the information. You cannot take the information away with you, but we can arrange to take copies of it for you at a reasonable charge.

We cannot show you information that includes details of other people.

If you think the information we have is not correct, you can ask us to change or remove it. If we do not accept that the information is wrong, we will attach a note to your file recording your view and our decision not to alter it.

3

Resident involvement

Resident
Involvement



The council has a long standing commitment to working closely with tenants. This commitment has been formalised in the Tenant Participation Compact - a written agreement developed by tenants and the council that sets out how residents will be involved in strategic and local housing decisions.

How can I get involved?

Your opinions about your home and neighbourhood are very important to us, and we want to know your views about the service you receive. Your involvement helps us make sure our service to you is as good as it can be.

There are many different ways you can have your say. You can get involved by giving as much or as little time as you are able to. We have developed a variety of options to make sure there's something to suit everyone. By working together we can improve the service for everyone.

What can I get involved with?

Individual residents

Telling us what you think

You can raise issues, problems and ideas directly with our services. Contact details for our services are in our useful contacts section at the back of this handbook.

Estate inspections

We inspect all our estates quarterly to make sure they are clean and tidy, and identify work or improvements that need to be done. We encourage residents to take part in these inspections alongside housing staff and local councillors so you can tell us about the issues affecting your neighbourhood.

Taking part in surveys and consultations

These surveys may be done face-to-face, over the phone or by post or e-mail. We will promote these consultations and surveys in Homing In, on our website and at our housing offices.

Mystery shopping

Resident mystery shoppers make unannounced visits or telephone calls and report back on the service they receive. Training is provided to help you carry out this role. You will be helping us to check how well we deal with our customers so we can improve our services to all residents.

Neighbourhood agreements

Neighbourhood agreements are voluntary schemes where landlords, residents and other partners aim to agree standards and plans for delivering services in a particular area. If we are setting up a neighbourhood agreement in your area, we will let you know and give you the opportunity to get involved. If you think your area needs a neighbourhood agreement, let us know so we can start talking to residents about local issues.

Local offers

You can help us to develop and monitor local standards for our services to ensure we are delivering quality, relevant services that reflect the priorities of local communities.

At a local level

Tenant and resident associations

You can join your local association or set one up if there is not one in your area. Each association aims to represent the views of the residents within a defined area, or block of flats, and is open to everyone living there. Your association can also raise issues affecting you and your neighbourhood on your behalf. If there isn't a tenant or resident association in your area, we can help you start one by providing financial support and guidance.

Joining a Local Action Team

Local Action Teams consist of people who come together alongside the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and other public agencies to tackle crime and disorder in their area. These groups have a strong commitment to resolving problems at a local level.

At area level

Area Panels

These are panels of tenant and resident association representatives in each of the council's four housing management areas who meet regularly to discuss service, performance and neighbourhood issues.

At a citywide level

Citywide interest and monitoring groups

We have groups that meet several times a year to discuss particular subjects or services. Our current groups are:

- Tenant Compact Monitoring Group
- Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group
- Car Parks & Garages Monitoring Group
- Housing Income Management Monitoring Group
- Estates Service Monitoring Group
- Sheltered Housing Action Group
- High Rise Action Group
- Leaseholder Action Group
- Tenant Disability Network
- Asset Management Panel
- Homing In Editorial Board

Working groups and focus groups

These are special working groups set up to deal with a particular aspect of the housing service, such as reviewing our Estates Service. They are task based groups set up for a short time until the aims have been achieved. The working groups can make recommendations for changes to the service or policies through our committees and are set up as and when required.

The City Assembly

Representatives from all associations across the city come together to debate matters concerning tenants and leaseholders citywide. These meetings are held twice a year and all tenants and leaseholders are welcome to take part in the debates. Dates of the meetings are promoted in Homing In and on our website.

Housing Management Consultative Committee

This is the main consultative body for housing management prior to the council's Cabinet and decision making process. Area Panels send elected resident representatives but there is a public gallery if you wish to observe. Meetings are held several times a year. Details are on the council's website or you can contact your housing office.

A chart showing our resident involvement structure is shown on the following page.

Breaking down barriers

We don't want any barriers to stop you being involved. That's why we offer to cover travel costs and can reimburse you for childcare or care for any other dependants. For further details, contact your Community Participation Officers at your housing office.

We aim to make sure that all venues we use have disabled access and facilities. We can provide British Sign Language signers and foreign language interpreters on request.

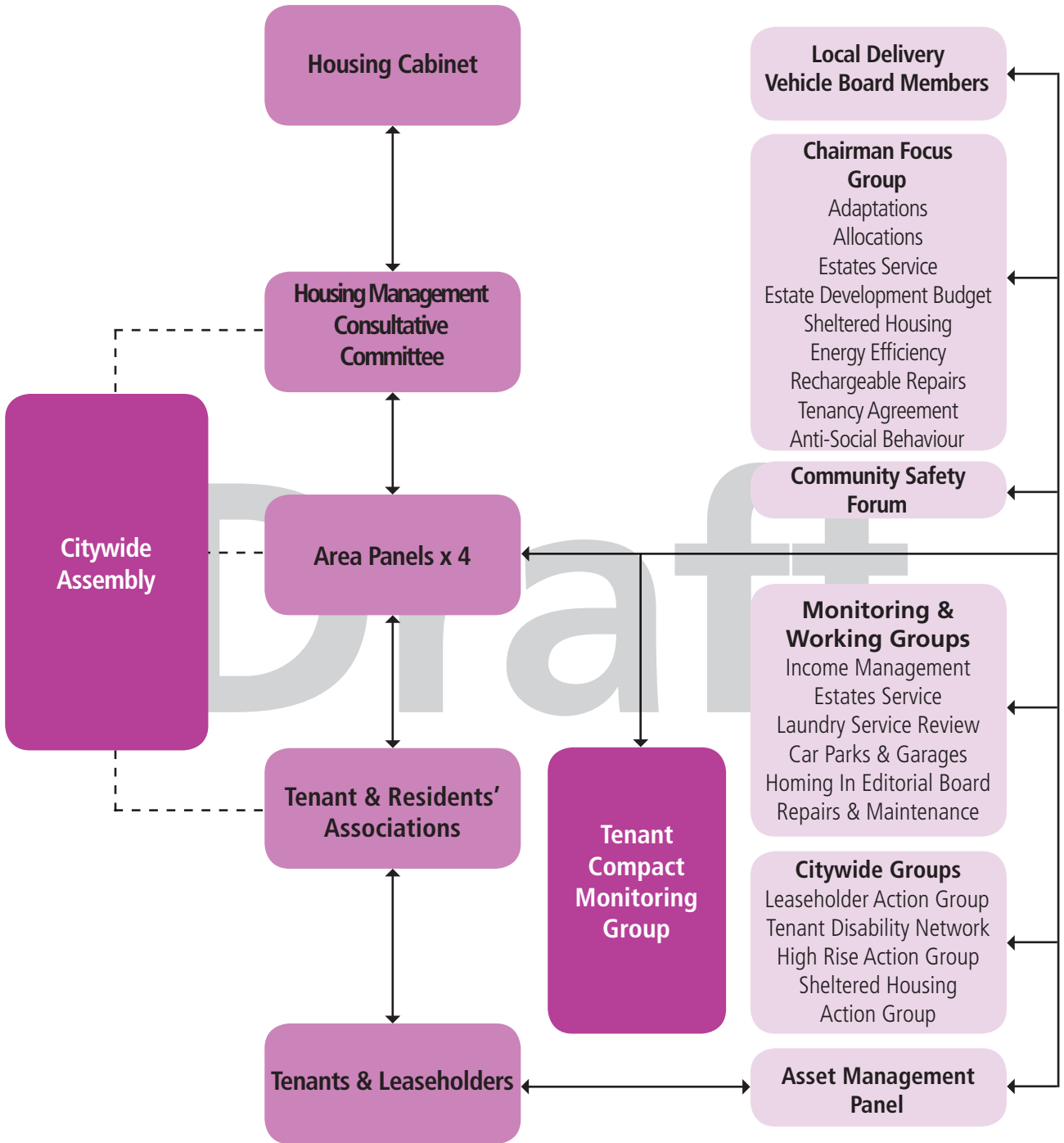
Who should I contact?

Contact your housing office to discuss how you would like to get involved. Each neighbourhood also has its own Community Participation Officer who can provide support and advice to resident groups. They can tell you about activities and the dates of any meetings.

Estate Development Budget

The Estate Development Budget is set up to allow tenant and resident associations to put forward bids for improvements on their estate and in their neighbourhood - this can range from installing a bench to putting in extra lighting. Bids are reviewed and voted on annually at area panel meetings. If you would like to know about any work due in your area, please contact the Repairs Helpdesk.

Brighton & Hove’s formal resident involvement structure



4

Your rent & other charges

Your rent & other charges



What is included in my rent?

Your rent is a weekly charge for the property you live in, and reflects the size and type of property you have. You may also pay additional charges for any extra services you receive. These might include:

- communal heating
- cleaning communal areas, such as in blocks of flats
- ground maintenance, such as grass cutting areas surrounding blocks of flats
- laundry charge for sheltered housing

If you live in a block with services such as these, charges are divided proportionately among all residents and the proportion is added to your rent account.

Tenants in sheltered housing also pay a support charge. This charge pays for the housing-related support provided by the sheltered service, including providing the Scheme Manager and the community alarm service.

Garages and parking spaces are managed by our Car Parks & Garages Team. Please contact the team on 01273 296646 for further information.

When is my rent due?

Your rent is due on a Monday every week and must be paid on or before the date it is due. Most tenants pay their rent weekly, but it may be more convenient for you to pay fortnightly or monthly. If you do wish to pay at longer intervals, rent must be paid in advance. Please contact the Housing Income Management Team on 01273 293224 if you want to discuss this.

We will send you a statement of your rent account every three months. When you receive your statement, please contact us if you are not clear about any of the items or charges shown.

It is vital for us to collect the rent due every week in order to maintain and improve services to tenants. If your rent account falls into arrears, you are in breach of your tenancy agreement and could lose your home.

Can my rent change?

The amount of rent you pay is reviewed at the beginning of each year. Your rent is based on a formula that takes into account the value of your home and other factors set out by the government. Any change in your rent will normally start in April and we will advise you at least four weeks before your rent changes.

How do I pay my rent?

At any post office or PayPoint outlet

You can pay at any post office or PayPoint outlet free of charge using your payment card. Please contact the Rent Accounting Section to order a payment card on 01273 293065. For a list of all of the payment outlets in Brighton & Hove, please contact your housing office. If you use a payment card to pay your rent, please make sure that you always get a payment receipt for your records.

Pay on-line

You can pay your rent online through our secure server if you have a debit card. Go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk and follow the 'pay on-line' link. Select 'housing rents' from the drop down menu and follow the instructions to make your payment. If you do not have internet access at home we have computers available for you at the housing offices. All libraries in Brighton & Hove also provide free internet access.

Direct Debit

This is the easiest way to pay. Once a direct debit is set up you don't have to think about paying your rent again, as we notify you of any changes and arrange to change the payment with your bank. It costs the council less to collect rent this way and any money we save means there is more available to help improve the services you receive. It costs nothing to set up and can be cancelled at any time by contacting your bank or building society. When you make regular payments by direct debit you will be entered into our £100 monthly tenant reward scheme.

For further information, pick up a leaflet from your housing office or contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065.

Standing Order

Paying by standing order is another simple way to pay your rent if you have a bank or building society account. You need to fill in a form at the bank or building society, and they then make your payments automatically. With a standing order you have to tell your bank or building society to change the amount that is paid if your rent changes. For further information, contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065.

By telephone

You can use a debit card to pay your rent by telephone 24 hours a day with our automated payment service on 01273 291908. You will need a debit card and your rent account reference number. The Housing Income Management Team can also take telephone payments from 8.30am – 6.30pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am – 5pm on Friday.

By post

Cheques or postal orders can be sent to your housing office, but please make sure you write your rent reference number on the back of the cheque. Please allow time for your cheques to clear. Never send cash through the post.

At a housing office

You can pay your rent in person at any housing office, by cash, cheque or debit card. Our cashiers can also take telephone payments during normal working hours.

Council employees

If you work for Brighton & Hove City Council, you can also pay directly from your wages. Please contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065 for further information.

What if I am finding it difficult to pay my rent?

Your tenancy agreement states that 'you must pay your rent and other charges on or before the date it is due'. The rent and other charges are due on Monday every week.

If you have difficulty paying your rent, contact the Housing Income Management Team as soon as possible on 01273 293224. We are here to help and the earlier you contact us the easier it will be to help you.

If you do get into arrears, the Housing Income Management Team will carry out a financial assessment and agree an affordable repayment plan with you. They can also refer you to specialist advice to make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to, or if you need help to cope with high levels of debt.

What should I do if I have rent arrears?

If you have arrears on your rent account you can take one of the following steps:

- Where possible make a one-off payment to clear your arrears in full.
- Agree a repayment plan to clear your arrears within a reasonable time. If you have agreed a repayment plan and have difficulty making a payment, contact the Housing Income Management Team immediately.
- Seek independent advice about your debts – the Citizens Advice Bureau on 0845 120 3710 can help.
- Contact the Housing Income Management Team or your housing office if you think you may be entitled to help with paying your rent - they can advise you and help you to make a housing benefit claim.

Remember the Housing Income Management Team is there to help you so please get in contact if you are experiencing difficulties. Contact them on 01273 293224.

What will happen if I do not clear my rent arrears?

If you don't pay your rent and fail to get in touch with us, we will make every attempt to contact you and help with any difficulties that might be stopping you making a payment. However, if you do not work with us and reduce your arrears, we will serve you with a 'Notice

of Seeking Possession'. This is the first stage of legal proceedings, which may result in you losing your home.

We will continue to try to help, but if you do not pay your rent, or if you continually fail to keep to a repayment plan to clear any arrears, you may end up being evicted from your home. If it does become necessary to refer your case to court, you will be responsible for paying all the court costs. These are currently several hundred pounds.

If you have rent arrears, you will not normally be allowed to carry out a transfer. You may also be excluded from our discretionary decoration and gardening schemes and will not be able to rent a parking space or garage.

Garages and parking spaces are on seven day licence agreements. If you are in arrears we will inform you. If the arrears are not cleared, we will end your licence.

What happens about the rent if I am a joint tenant and one of us leaves?

If you have a joint tenancy, you are both responsible for the tenancy and for the paying the rent. If one of you leaves, the rent must still be paid. If one tenant is planning to leave the property, please contact your housing office to discuss the options available to you.

Am I eligible for housing or council tax benefit?

If you receive other welfare benefits or are on a low income and have savings below the amount advised by the benefit service, you may be entitled to housing benefit (rent rebate). If you are entitled, the amount you receive will depend on your income and household, and may cover all or part of your weekly rent. Housing benefit does not cover water rates, heating charges or garage and car parking charges.

You can claim housing benefit if you are responsible for paying the rent. It is important to claim as soon as you think you may be entitled,

as it is only payable from the date you make your claim. When you claim, you must respond to any requests for documents within the time stated.

If you do get housing or council tax benefit and your circumstances change (someone moves in with you or your income changes for example), you must tell the Benefits Service straightaway. Please refer to the useful contacts section.

Am I eligible for any help with my support charge?

If you receive any amount of housing benefit, you will be entitled to maximum help with your support charge (payable by sheltered housing tenants). You may also get help with this charge if you do not receive housing benefit, but you must complete a Fairer Charge Assessment form to find out if you qualify. Contact the Sheltered Housing Service on 01273 293255 for an application form and further advice.

What other financial help can you provide?

We are committed to making sure that you have access to appropriate financial products and services so that you can make informed decisions about your circumstances. This ranges from where you can go to get the best money advice to information about maximising your income and minimising your financial outgoings.

The Housing Income Management Team can give you information about:

- setting up a bank account to pay rent by direct debit
- making claims for housing and council tax benefit
- other welfare benefits and how to claim
- independent financial and legal advice
- low cost home contents insurance
- low cost energy companies and energy efficiency
- joining the credit union

5

Repairs & improvements

Repairs & improvements



We have included some key information on the repairs service - for full information, including a list of council and tenant responsibilities, please see the Guide to Repairs.

What repairs are the council responsible for?

By law, the council has an obligation to look after the structure of your home. Repairs must be carried out to make sure that fixtures and fittings for water, sanitation, gas and electricity are safe and in working order. The council must also maintain any equipment it has installed to provide hot water and heating, and maintain communal facilities such as lifts and door entry phones.

Servicing of gas appliances

By law, it is essential that we service all gas appliances installed by us once a year - this could save your life. If they are in a poor condition, they can produce carbon monoxide gas which doesn't smell and can't be seen, but can kill.

The contractor will contact you directly to make an appointment to service your gas appliances and if they cannot contact you by telephone, they will send a letter.

You must allow our contractors access to your home to carry out this work. It is a condition of your tenancy agreement and, if you refuse, we will take legal action against you to gain access. If we do this, we will seek to recover any legal costs from you.

Gas leaks

If you think there is a gas leak in your home, the suggested steps to follow are:

- ring the National Grid on 0800 111 999
- open the windows to get rid of the gas
- turn off the gas mains
- do not turn electric switches on or off
- do not smoke
- do not use matches or other naked flames
- report the problem to the Repairs Helpdesk

What repairs am I responsible for?

As a tenant you are responsible for all fixtures and fittings (apart from those mentioned above or provided by the council), such as curtain rails, light bulbs and sink plugs. You are also responsible for internal decoration and for any improvements, alterations or work you do yourself. You will have to pay for repairing anything damaged by you, your family or your visitors.

You are expected to make sure that your home, garden and balcony (if you have one) are not neglected and kept clean, tidy and free from rubbish.

Examples of the repairs tenants are responsible for include:

- internal doors, locks and handles, cupboard doors and catches
- wall, floor and fireplace tiles
- fences, gates, washing lines, posts and rotary driers
- toilet seats and tap washers

Exceptions are made in some cases for people over 70, people who have a disability, and sheltered housing tenants.

How do I report a repair?

Tenants can report repairs in a number of ways:

- by phoning the Repairs Helpdesk on freephone 0800 052 6140 or local number 01273 294409 24 hours a day (you may wish to use the local number if you have a mobile phone or free local calls)
- via the freephone at your housing office
- by emailing BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk
- by completing our online repairs reporting form
- by text message (for non-urgent repairs) to 07786 204352 – make sure each message begins 'Repairs' and we will text you back to confirm we've received your request
- by completing a form at our housing offices
- by letter

To report all urgent or emergency repairs, please phone the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409.

What do I do if I have an emergency repair?

An emergency repair is one which needs to be carried out to avoid danger to you and/or your neighbours or serious damage to the building, **such as burst pipes, water leaks, gas leaks or complete power failure.**

Emergency repairs will be dealt with immediately and should be reported to the Repairs Helpdesk at any time. Please note that only emergencies will be dealt with outside of normal working hours.

Who is responsible for reporting repairs to communal areas?

Our Community Wardens will check for any repairs needed in the communal areas. However, they are not there all the time so if you see anything that needs repairing, please call the Repairs Helpdesk as you usually would for home repairs. In sheltered housing schemes, the Scheme Manager will report these repairs.

Appointments are not needed for repairs to common areas in blocks of flats as we can get to these areas without you being at home.

When will the repair be done?

This will depend on the work needed but should be within 28 days, unless the work is being done under a planned maintenance programme.

When you report the repair, we will give you the target date for completion and this will be confirmed on your 'Repair Notification Card'.

How will the work be arranged?

When you report a general repair, in most cases we will offer you the choice of a morning or afternoon appointment. Some evening and Saturday morning appointments are also available.

We will try to arrange to do the work at a time to suit you, but it is important that you are at home at the agreed time.

Please note that you will not be given an appointment for emergency repairs. Our contractors will get to these repairs as quickly as possible and you need to wait at home to let them in. Before you let anyone into your home

to carry out repairs or gas servicing, check their identity card to make sure they are genuine. If you are in any doubt, ring the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409.

What if I am not happy with the repair or the contractors?

All work carried out by contractors should be done to the highest possible standard and finished properly. If a job cannot be completed due to lack of materials or parts, the contractor must tell you and make arrangements to return to finish the work. However, we aim to complete most repairs in a single visit.

Once your repair has been reported you will receive a customer satisfaction questionnaire. If you complete and return this form after the work has been done, it gives us a clear idea of the quality of work being done.

All contractors who work for the council have to abide by a Code of Conduct, covering how they should behave in your home, treat you and your property, and clean up. Our contractors will also carry identification badges which they will show to you. If you are unhappy with the way you were treated or the way work was carried out, please let us know by calling the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409.

Tenant alterations and improvements

Can I carry out my own improvements?

The council allows you to carry out improvements to your home, but you must get written permission from your housing office before starting. Only secure tenants can carry out improvements. If you are an introductory tenant you will need to wait until your tenancy is secure.

We will not normally refuse permission for work unless it is likely to affect the safety of the building, cause a future maintenance problem, or cause a nuisance to your neighbours. We may attach conditions to the permission, such as insisting that the work is carried out by a competent contractor and to a satisfactory standard.

You will need our permission to put down any hard floor finish such as laminate flooring, hardwood overlay and ceramic tiles, or want to have bare floorboards in any room. This is because these types of flooring can cause a noise nuisance to neighbours. We will not refuse permission unreasonably, but are only likely to agree if you live in a house or a ground floor flat where there is less risk of neighbours being disturbed. It is important that you make sure any floor covering is installed correctly with appropriate underlay to keep noise to a minimum. Any flooring of this type will be the tenant's responsibility to maintain and lift if we need to inspect anything below the floor.

You do not need permission to decorate the inside of your home, lay carpet or carry out minor improvements such as putting up shelves. However, you must not fit polystyrene (or similar) ceiling tiles or coving as they are a fire risk. If you do, you will need to pay for the cost of their removal.

If you move, you will be expected to return your home to its original condition or leave any alterations that we have given permission for in place. If we have to do any work to correct it, you may be charged – see 'Rechargeable repairs' for more information. Check with your housing office before you move out.

You may be able to claim compensation for certain types of improvements that we have given permission for - see the 'Right to compensation for improvements' information in the 'Ending your tenancy' section.

Do I need permission to put up an aerial, shed or other structure?

You must get our written permission before erecting sheds, garages, greenhouses or extra fencing. We do not allow very large structures or sheds which cut out the light or views of your neighbours, and you should not put sheds or garages against boundary fences.

You must also get our written permission before putting up external aerials and you may also need planning permission. The aerial needs to be properly fixed and should not interfere with

anyone else's TV and radio reception. There are also restrictions on where you can put aerials and satellite dishes.

How do I get permission to carry out an alteration or improvement?

To get permission to do alterations to your home, write to your housing office giving details of the work and, if appropriate, a detailed sketch plan of what you intend to do.

A member of staff may visit you and we will write to tell you whether you have permission and if there are any conditions attached. Please note that some alterations and improvements may require planning permission or building regulations permission as well - this must be obtained in advance as it could cost you a lot to put things right afterwards.

Usually, a surveyor will inspect the work you do to check that it has been done to a satisfactory standard.

If permission is refused and you feel the decision is unreasonable, you can contact the Housing Manager at your housing office or your local councillor. You can also appeal in the County Court.

Rechargeable repairs – what we recharge for

A recharge is for a repair or clearance done by the council to your property which you are responsible for. If we need to do this, you will be charged for the cost of the work.

We are committed to being clear about what work we are responsible for and what residents are responsible for. Being consistent about the way decisions are made about recharging helps us manage the repairs and maintenance budget. This money can then be spent on looking after and improving all residents' homes.

Repairs & improvements

Recharges include:

- **Unauthorised alterations or DIY.** You must have written permission from your housing office before starting any alterations or improvements to your home (apart from decorating, laying carpet and minor improvements such as putting up shelves). It is important to check with the housing office before you move out to find out if you are expected to leave any alterations or improvements in place, or return the property to its original condition. If the council has to do any work as a result of alterations you have done, the cost will be recharged to you.
- **Moving out.** When you end your tenancy, we will explain your responsibilities and what you must do to avoid being recharged. This includes handing back all keys to the property on the agreed date and time, leaving the property clear of all goods, belongings and rubbish (including carpets and laminate flooring unless we have given you permission to leave them in the property). You should make sure the property is in a good state of repair.
- **Emergency repairs.** If emergency repairs are needed due to deliberate damage, vandalism, neglect or botched DIY, by any members of your household (including pets) or visitors to your home, the council will carry out the repair and recharge you.
- **Damage caused by condensation.**

We will tell you if we need to recharge you and how much you need to pay. If you fail to repay any sums due, legal action may be taken to recover the recharge debts.

Tips on how you can avoid being recharged:

- report repairs and keep the property in a good state of repair
- know your responsibilities as explained in the guide to repairs
- seek written permission before you make any alterations or improvements and keep a copy of any letters giving you permission
- clean and clear your property before leaving

Looking after your home

Condensation

Condensation is dampness caused by water vapour and it can cause a lot of damage to your home. Condensation occurs when there is too much water vapour in the air or when warm moist air meets cold surfaces.

Condensation is worse in cold damp weather and when heating is poor, but it can be controlled by proper heating and ventilation.

How can I minimise condensation?

You can minimise condensation by:

- closing kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking and bathing to stop water vapour spreading through the home - it also helps to have a window open
- avoiding drying clothes indoors - if you have to, always dry clothes near an open window with the door to the room closed
- avoiding using paraffin and bottled gas heaters as these give out a lot of water vapour
- keeping a constant level of heat throughout your home
- using air vents and opening windows slightly - never block air vents
- wiping your windows and sills regularly to prevent mould growth and other damage from standing water, which is quite common in winter
- washing off black mould growth with a weak solution of bleach - this is a common symptom of condensation but it will not usually become a serious problem if you remove it
- leave a gap between your furniture and the wall to let air circulate

If you do this and still have problems, report it to the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409. If condensation causes damage to the property this will be a rechargeable repair.

How can I prevent frost and flood damage?

A lot of damage is done by burst pipes in cold weather. To reduce the risk of damage, make sure you know where the stop taps are and check they work. If you cannot find them or they don't work, contact your housing office. It is a good idea to check and oil the taps regularly.

You should also make sure all pipes and tanks are properly insulated and keep your home heated during cold weather, even if at a low heat. If you go away during the winter, drain down the water system by turning off the main stop tap and running all the taps.

If one of your pipes does burst, turn off the stop taps, central heating and immersion heater, and run the taps to empty the system to minimise damage. Report the problem immediately to the Repairs Helpdesk, and mop up any water.

How can I make my home more secure?

If you have concerns about the security of your block of flats or local estate, speak to staff at your housing office - they will be able to tell you whether there are any plans to improve security, such as installing door entry systems or additional lighting.

You can do a number of things to improve the security of your home:

- never leave doors and windows unlocked when you go out
- don't leave keys under doormats, or flowerpots - burglars know all the hiding places
- don't make it obvious if you go away - get a friend to come in to open and close curtains and switch lights on and off or buy a time switch so that your home looks occupied
- never let people into your home unless you know who they are - if in doubt don't let them in and always ask workers to show their identity cards

How can I keep safe in my home?

We want to help you make your home a safer place. Taking simple precautions can help you avoid potentially dangerous situations.

Safety in the home – gas heaters and flammable substances

You will need written permission to store potentially flammable or explosive substances in your home, such as gas canisters including oxygen cylinders.

Although accidents involving oxygen cylinders are very rare, when they happen, they can cause serious injury or death through fire and explosion. When you seek permission, we will write to you with some guidance on how to prevent accidents and keep safe. Always follow instructions given to you about your oxygen equipment carefully.

Due to the risk to other residents from explosion in flats of a particular construction, tenants must not use bottled gas in the flats listed below. If you live in these properties and require further advice, please contact your housing office.

• Dudeny Lodge	• Heron Court
• Falcon Court	• Kingfisher Court
• Kestrel Court	• Nettleton Court
• Swallow Court	• St James' House

Asbestos

Although asbestos is a hazardous material, it only poses a risk to health if the fibres get released into the air. Material containing asbestos poses little risk unless it is disturbed (for example broken, drilled, cut or sanded) and no precautions are taken.

Asbestos was often used in the construction of houses and flats, and was only completely banned in 1999. Most council properties were built before then and, therefore, may contain materials that have some asbestos in them.

A few examples of the most common items using materials that may contain asbestos are:

- corrugated or flat cement sheets used for roofing and wall panels
- eiling tiles
- bath panels
- textured coating such as Artex
- boilers and flue pipes
- floor tiles
- downpipes and gutters to carry rainwater

This list doesn't contain all possible materials containing asbestos and the only way to know for sure is to test it.

If your home has any of these items, it doesn't mean they will contain asbestos. However, if you suspect that there is asbestos in your property, please **report it to the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409**.

A surveyor will visit to investigate and organise whatever action is needed, if any. Asbestos is not always dangerous and may not need removing, but it does need to be managed and the property address needs to be added to our asbestos register.

If you are thinking of carrying out any work on your home:

- identify if asbestos is present by contacting the Repairs Helpdesk
- do not break, cut or drill the material
- do not remove or dispose of any asbestos material

Legionella

Legionella bacteria are common in natural sources of water but certain circumstances need to be in place for infection to occur, and this doesn't happen very often. You can take the precautions below to reduce the risk.

If you have a shower, regularly descale and clean the shower head to protect against the risk of legionella.

If you are going on holiday or away for longer than a week, take the shower head off and place it in a bowl of diluted disinfectant or a shower head cleaning agent. When you return, run the shower without the shower head for a few minutes and then refit it

Fire safety

What you should do in the event of a fire

Preparing and practising a plan of action will help you act quickly if there's a fire in your home, and could even save your life. When discussing fire safety, involve everyone who lives in your home, including children, older or disabled people and any lodgers or regular visitors. Please note that the following safety advice is offered as guidance only. If in doubt, get out, stay out and call 999.

Fires in your home

If there is a fire in your home you should:

- alert everyone
- get everyone out of your home and close the door after you
- call the fire service on 999
- close windows if it's safe to do so
- not delay to collect your valuables
- not investigate the fire
- check doors with the back of your hand before you open them - if they're warm don't open them as the fire is on the other side
- always use the stairs - don't use the lift

Fires in communal/shared areas

If you are in any communal or shared area, such as a stairwell or resident lounges in sheltered housing, and discover a fire, please leave the building by the nearest fire exit and call the fire service on 999.

If a fire breaks out elsewhere in your building

If you are in your home and there is a fire elsewhere in the building, you are usually safest in your own flat unless heat or smoke is affecting you. The council and the fire service support a 'stay put' policy unless you are told otherwise, meaning the majority of fires elsewhere in a building can be extinguished with residents staying in their homes.

Keep safe

To help reduce the risk of fire you can:

- make sure all shared areas are kept free of rubbish and belongings
- fit smoke alarms and make sure you test them weekly and change the battery once a year – the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service will supply smoke alarms free of charge. In sheltered housing, fire alarms are fitted in all individual properties and in the common ways
- have an evacuation plan – know your exit route, where your keys are, etc
- keep passage ways clear to help you get out quickly
- don't smoke in bed
- beware of chip pans – don't leave them frying on their own

- make sure cooking appliances are turned off when you have finished cooking
- unplug appliances at night or when your home is empty
- be careful with candles
- use fire guards on open fires
- don't put clothing close to open fires, storage heaters or electric fires to dry off
- don't overload power points and avoid using multi adaptors
- never leave children alone in a room with cookers and heaters on and always keep matches out of their reach
- tell anyone living with you or your visitors what to do in the event of a fire

If you have a mobility problem, you should discuss a personal emergency evacuation plan with your Housing Officer.

If you would like your Housing Officer to visit to discuss what to do in a fire, please contact your housing office.

For further information on fire safety please contact the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service at www.esfrs.org or 0845 130 8855.

Draft

Repairs & improvements

6

Living in your home



Living in
your home

Moving in – checklist for new tenants

If you are just moving in, there are a number of things you need to do or know about.

Getting connected

Contact the electricity, gas and water companies to make sure supplies are connected. Make a note of all meter readings as soon as you move in. A council officer will tell you where the meters, fuse boxes and stop taps are. Make a note of where they are in case of an emergency.

Letting people know

Below are some examples of who you might need to give your new address to:

• your doctor, dentist or healthcare visitors	• your home help and support workers
• your bank	• the benefits agency
• TV licence	• council tax
• your employer	• children’s school
• library service	• household insurance company

For council services we have the ‘tell us once’ scheme in place so we notify other council departments.

What can I expect?

Once you have moved into your property, you will be contacted by your Housing Officer to arrange a visit within the first two weeks of your tenancy. This is to check that you are settling into your new home and give you an opportunity to ask any questions.

If you are an introductory tenant, you will receive three visits during the introductory period to see that your tenancy is running smoothly. At the end of the year, your tenancy will automatically become secure unless we have taken action to end or extend your tenancy.

Our staff also visit all households every so often. These are to find out how we can help you,

make sure the property is being looked after and check the property is occupied by the tenant. You don’t need to wait for our visit - if you think we can help, please contact your housing office.

If you live in sheltered housing, your Scheme Manager will also give you information about our sheltered housing service.

Insuring your home’s contents

We strongly advise all tenants to take out household contents insurance, as we do not insure your belongings or decorations. This is important in case your belongings are damaged by fire, water leak or flooding, theft or burglaries for example.

You can insure your contents through your own private arrangements or through the council scheme. We have negotiated competitive rates with an insurance company and premiums can be paid weekly with your rent. For a little extra money, your insurance cover can also include accidental damage.

For further information and an application form on our insurance scheme, please contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293303.

What happens if I move out of the property?

Your tenancy agreement states that your property must be your main home. You must tell us if you are going to be away from your home for 28 days or more. This is so that we can contact you or a nominated representative if there are any issues while you are away.

If you don’t tell us that you are temporarily away, we may decide that you are no longer living at the property as your main home and treat it as abandoned. We will then serve a notice to quit on the property to end your tenancy and take legal action to take it back.

If you decide to move out, you need to tell us and provide four weeks written notice to end your tenancy. Information on how to do this is included in the ‘Ending your tenancy’ section.

Can I run a business from my home?

You need to apply to your housing office for permission to use your home for business purposes. Permission will depend on the nature of the business and the likely impact on your neighbours – for example, we might not give permission for businesses involving car repairs or using controlled substances. If we do grant permission but receive complaints at a later date, we will investigate and may withdraw the permission. Obviously you cannot use your home for any illegal purposes.

How is my estate kept clean and tidy?

We aim to make all estates safer, greener and cleaner places to live to improve the quality of life for all residents. We work closely with our colleagues in the council's refuse, recycling and park services to help us do this.

Estates Service

The duties you can expect the Estates Service Team to do are:

- sweep and wash the entrance halls, banisters, railings and skirting boards
- clear litter in and around blocks of flats
- keep bin areas clean
- check for safety hazards
- report repairs to shared areas
- arrange the removal of dumped rubbish (we will take action against those responsible where possible)
- remove graffiti
- check and change lights as necessary
- adjust timers for the automated lights in shared areas

You can help by letting us know if anything in particular needs to be done. To do this or give feedback on the service, please call the Estates Service Team on 01273 294769 or e-mail EstatesServiceManagers@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Residents can help to keep their estates and buildings clean by:

- taking litter home or putting it in bins
- wrapping and bagging rubbish and putting it in the bins provided
- keeping entrances and common ways clear – do not fly tip or leave bulky items or bags of rubbish in corridors, landings or beside bins and chutes
- clearing up any spills or leaks when taking rubbish to the bin rooms
- removing any marks on the floor or walls made by bikes, prams, or by dragging items in or out of the building

Ground maintenance

Some of our estates and sheltered schemes have shared grassed areas, which we are responsible for. We maintain landscaped areas and cut the grass and prune shrubs and hedges regularly, although we do not collect grass cuttings.

We encourage residents to take an active interest in their local areas and will not normally refuse permission to anyone wishing to cultivate or maintain shared areas and gardens. However, you must get written permission from your housing office first.

Refuse and recycling

You are expected to dispose of your rubbish responsibly by bagging it up properly and putting it out for collection on the day it is due. If you live in a flat please place your rubbish in the provided bin areas.

If you have large or bulky items that you need to dispose of, the council's refuse and recycling service can collect it for a charge – call them on 01273 292929 for further details. Discounts are available for older residents and people receiving benefits.

The council encourages tenants to recycle and reduce waste as much as possible. If you want to find out more about recycling facilities in your area, go to the council website or call the refuse and recycling service on 01273 292929.

Estate inspections

We inspect all our estates quarterly to make sure they are clean and tidy, and identify work or improvements that need to be done. We

encourage residents to take part in these inspections so you can tell us about the issues affecting your neighbourhood. If you are interested, please contact your housing office. If you would like to see feedback on recent inspections, results are displayed on community notice boards or at your housing office.

Community Wardens

Our team of Community Wardens provide a presence on our estates and act as the 'eyes and ears of the council'. The wardens are there to deal with any environmental issues in the neighbourhood and can answer questions and provide advice. They provide support to local groups including resident associations, lunch clubs and youth activities. They also carry out welcome visits to new tenants and home visits to vulnerable tenants.

The Community Wardens spend much of their time out on our estates and can be easily identified by their distinctive uniform displaying the Brighton & Hove City Council logo so, if you see them, please approach them with any queries. Alternatively, you can contact them at your housing office.

Sustainability & energy efficiency

The council is committed to taking action for a more sustainable future. Housing Management aims to improve the sustainability of our service to make sure we have a minimal impact on the environment and improve the energy efficiency of our properties. We hope to achieve this by:

- setting challenging targets to improve the energy efficiency of your home
- using contractors with a commitment to recycling and reducing their carbon footprint
- installing energy efficient lighting in communal areas
- working towards tackling fuel poverty for all our residents by being at the forefront of technology and innovation
- providing energy efficiency advice in Homing In and through home visits

There are also a number of things you can do:

- if you are worried about paying your fuel bills, SMART displays can help you make savings by showing exactly how much energy you are using in your home - some energy companies supply these so get in touch with your provider to see if you can benefit
- if you are having difficulties paying your fuel bills, contact the Homeheat helpline on 0800 336699 for further advice
- get involved in community based gardening and food schemes
- recycle as much as possible
- take steps in your home to reduce the amount of energy you use - eg by turning lights off when not in use and switching off appliances rather than leaving them in 'stand by' mode

For more information on energy saving, visit the Energy Saving Trust website at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Energy saving lightbulbs

Energy saving lightbulbs contain a tiny trace of mercury and should not be put in the normal household waste. Unbroken bulbs can be recycled at the city's two household waste recycling centres. Please ask a member of staff to point out the correct container.

If you break one, make sure the room is well ventilated for 15 minutes as a precaution. Sweep up the remains with a damp cloth, place them in a sealed bag and dispose of them at one of the household waste recycling centres.

Pest control

As a general rule, it is your responsibility to deal with pests in your home, and some you can deal with yourself. However, some pests need specialised treatment and it is essential to get professional advice on how to deal with them safely without damaging the environment.

The council's Pest Control Team offers advice on all types of pests. They treat rats, mice, cockroaches, wasps and fleas. They do not treat bedbugs but can give advice on how to deal with them. Contact them on 01273 292170.

7

Being a good neighbour



Being a good neighbour

Being a good neighbour

How can I be a good neighbour?

- welcoming new neighbours and saying hello to them
- make sure your house/flat contributes positively to the appearance of an area
- alert someone if you notice a change in your neighbour, eg if you haven't seen them for a while
- help neighbours who are unable to use communal bins by taking their rubbish out for them
- getting involved in local groups
- don't carry out noisy DIY work at night or early in the morning
- be co-operative if asked by a neighbour to reduce noise
- be quiet when you return home late at night – don't slam doors or shout to your friends
- respect the fact that different people have different lifestyles, but do not impose your lifestyle on your neighbours
- if you have permission to keep a pet, look after it properly and don't let it foul public areas or cause a nuisance in any other way
- dispose of rubbish properly

Abuse against staff

The council will not tolerate violence, threats of violence or abusive language towards our staff and contractors. We will support the prosecution of tenants or members of the public if any council employees are assaulted. Tenants who threaten staff could be taken to court and face eviction proceedings.

Neighbourhood Agreements

These are voluntary agreements between landlords, residents and other partners setting standards and agreeing plans for delivering services.

They give residents the opportunity to get involved and shape the services they want to receive. They can cover a range of issues and services at a local level, such as anti-social behaviour, street cleaning and dog control.

They are tailored to meet your needs and take account of local priorities in your area. They can cover any area from a block to a few streets or a whole estate. To find out more about setting up a neighbourhood agreement, contact your housing office.

Anti-social behaviour

What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is any behaviour that unreasonably disrupts the peace and comfort of other residents or adversely affects their health and safety. ASB can be anything that prevents another person from enjoying their home, garden, estate or neighbourhood.

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to making sure all residents can enjoy their home peacefully. We expect you to behave in a way that does not disturb your neighbours and respects differences in lifestyles.

You are responsible for the behaviour of anyone living with or visiting you. Your tenancy agreement makes it clear that we will not accept nuisance or harassment. It states that: 'you, anyone living with you and your visitors must not do or threaten to do anything which causes, or is likely to cause, a nuisance or annoy someone else'.

Examples of ASB include:

- loud music or car stereos
- graffiti
- vandalism (ie causing damage to property)
- dumping rubbish
- aggressive and threatening language and behaviour
- problems caused by pets such as noise and fouling

What should I do if I experience anti-social behaviour?

If you are having problems with a neighbour, talk to them about it if you can. It's possible that they do not realise that their behaviour is disturbing you.

If the problem continues, or you do not feel able to contact the person causing the problem,

please contact your housing office. If you live in sheltered housing, please speak to your Scheme Manager.

If you are experiencing noise nuisance, you should contact the council's Environmental Health & Licensing Team on 01273 292929.

If I need to complain how will you deal with my complaint?

We take all reports of nuisance and harassment very seriously, and will act quickly and decisively. We will:

- contact you to discuss your complaint
- agree an action plan with you
- investigate the complaint, including talking to other residents as necessary
- contact the person you are complaining about if you give us permission
- work with other agencies such as the police and environmental health to resolve the problem
- ask you to keep diary sheets as they are useful in allowing us to build a picture of what is happening
- keep you informed
- contact you once your case is closed and find out how you felt it was handled

What will you do to tackle anti-social behaviour?

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to effectively tackling and resolving nuisance and anti-social behaviour throughout the city. We aim to do this using a balance of support and enforcement.

There are lots of things that we can do to help stop anti-social behaviour. We recognise that there are no easy answers and no single solution that will work for everyone.

The range of action that can be taken is listed below. Your Housing Officer will explain more about which is most suited in your situation.

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts – these are written agreements between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and their landlord, the police or another agency. They help the person to acknowledge their behaviour and its effect on others, with the aim of stopping that behaviour.

Mediation – we recommend mediation in cases of neighbour disputes which could be resolved through discussion and shared understanding. We use an independent external mediation agency and this has proved a very effective way of helping parties understand each other's views, particularly as they will usually remain living as neighbours. Mediation does not look to blame, but tries to find a middle ground that the parties can agree on and work from there. You can also refer yourself to the service by calling them on 01273 700812.

If these measures break down, we may consider enforcement action, which can include:

Injunctions – these are court orders which tell a person to stop behaving in an anti-social way. Injunctions can also be used against anyone living with our tenants, visitors, or even people with no connection to a council tenancy. If a person with an injunction disobeys the order, they may go to prison.

Noise Abatement Notices – these can be used to stop noise that is causing a statutory nuisance. If the noise continues, the council may put a stop to the nuisance, and recover the costs. This includes the power to seize and remove equipment.

Demoted Tenancies – these allow landlords to apply to the court to reduce the security of tenure. A demoted tenancy gives the tenant fewer rights and the tenancy can be ended quicker if nuisance continues.

Possession action – we may look to take possession action when a tenant has seriously or persistently broken the tenancy agreement.

Enforcement action is normally only considered when all other options have been exhausted. We will always consider issues of vulnerability such as mental health, drug or alcohol dependence. Where such issues exist, we will seek the intervention and support of our partner agencies to help to address problem behaviour.

Your Housing Officer will manage the majority of cases but, in cases of serious nuisance and harassment, it may be referred to one of our Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Officers. Your Housing Officer will tell you if this is necessary.

Why is it taking a long time to get the problem resolved?

Tenants are protected by the terms of their tenancy agreement and this means that we may need to go through many steps if we want to take legal action. We always act as quickly as we can to resolve problems but need to make sure we have enough evidence. We will keep you informed of the progress of investigations but please let us know if you have any concerns.

What can I do to help?

Witnesses are crucial to tackling anti-social behaviour. We recognise that being a witness in an anti-social behaviour case can be a daunting experience, but it is often essential to the success of a case, particularly if the case goes to court. Being a witness could involve providing us with a diary of events through to attending court to give evidence.

We make a commitment to support and protect witnesses throughout the process, including after a court case if necessary. We will also look at practical measures including additional security and referrals to partner agencies that can provide appropriate support.

How can I get involved?

If you are interested in getting involved to improve community safety and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in your local area, you can:

- join or start a neighbourhood watch scheme
- become involved in your neighbourhood's Local Action Team (LAT)

Contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team for further information. Call Sussex Police on 0845 607 0999.

Harassment

What is harassment?

We expect all tenants to treat their neighbours with respect and any form of harassment, abuse or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. Harassment differs from nuisance in that it is deliberate action to cause annoyance or distress to a particular individual, family or group.

Your tenancy agreement states:

'You or they must not harass or threaten any other person because of race, colour, gender, nationality, religion, age, mental illness, disability, sexuality or for any other reason.'

Harassment can consist of one incident or many. It may include attacks on property as well as the person, and can be:

- verbal abuse - eg racist or homophobic name calling
- physical abuse - eg spitting, punching, kicking, slapping
- threats
- attacks on property - eg throwing eggs or stones at properties, slashing tyres, breaking windows, racist graffiti, etc

What is racial harassment?

Racial harassment is abuse suffered by individuals, families or groups of people because of their colour, race, nationality, or ethnic origin.

What is a hate crime?

A hate crime is a criminal offence motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or because they are transgender.

We support people who experience harassment, victimisation or abuse because of their race, faith, religion, disability or because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

If you know someone is being harassed, please encourage them to contact us.

What should I do?

If you are being harassed, you should:

- report any violence, threats, damage to your property or any other criminal acts to the police immediately
- tell us as soon as possible
- keep a record of all incidents
- keep a note of the name and address of the person harassing you, if you know it
- let us know the names and addresses of anyone who saw any of the harassment

What will we do?

We will not accept any harassment. Once reported, we will:

- meet you as soon as possible (within one working day)
- arrange for an interpreter if you need one
- remove any offensive graffiti and complete emergency repairs within one working day
- agree with you what action we will take, and confirm this in writing
- keep you informed about what is happening
- work with the police and other agencies including the Partnership Community Safety Team
- put you in contact with any support agencies, such as victim support

We may be able to:

- help the police to take action
- improve your home's security, such as providing stronger locks and better lighting
- take out an injunction to stop the person from committing further acts of harassment
- start proceeding to demote or end their tenancy.

We will support you to stay in your home, which may include increasing your security. However, if you no longer feel safe, we will discuss the different housing options available to you. You may need to live in temporary accommodation before finding a new permanent home.

What other support can I get?

The Partnership Community Safety Team work with a range of organisations and groups to improve community safety, reduce crime and disorder and make people feel safer across the city. The Hate Crime & Community Engagement Team has specialist officers who can support victims of hate crimes.

The Racial Harassment Team work to reduce racist and religiously motivated crimes and incidents. They aim to increase the reporting of incidents, make sure that victims and witnesses are fully supported, and build their confidence in the criminal justice system. The team can be contacted on 01273 292735 or by e-mailing racial.harassment@brighton-hove.gov.uk. We can also contact them on your behalf.

Victims of racist, faith and disability hate crime can call 01273 294367, and victims of homophobic or transgender hate crime can call 01273 294636 for additional support.

Violence

Domestic violence

Your tenancy agreement states that:

'You must not use or threaten to use violence by using physical, mental, emotional or sexual abuse against any other person living with you, anyone you have invited into your home, or anyone living in, or in the locality of our properties. If you do and that person or their children have to leave the property because of violence, or threats of violence or abuse against them, we may take steps to evict you from your home'

Anyone who is experiencing domestic violence can also expect help and support from the council. If you are experiencing domestic violence, please contact your housing office for further advice.

We will do everything we can to help you stay in your home - offering advice, security, support and a sensitive, confidential service. We can also put you in touch with other people who can help and support you, such as RISE and the police. Should you decide to take legal action against a violent partner, we can help you to access legal help. We will also take action where possible to evict any tenant who is violent.

If you are experiencing domestic violence you can get help and support from:

- the police on 0845 60 70 999 or call 999 in an emergency
- RISE (formerly the Women's Refuge Project) on 01273 622822 www.riseuk.org.uk
- the 24 hour National Domestic Violence helpline on a freephone number – 0808 2000 247
- the men's advice line on 0808 010 327
- Broken Rainbow for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are experiencing violence or abuse in their relationships on 0300 999 5428

If you need to leave your home, we can help you access emergency housing through a refuge, or where this is not appropriate, through temporary accommodation. We will discuss your longer term housing options with you.

Safeguarding vulnerable adults

Older people, people with a physical disability, mental illness or learning disability can be vulnerable to abuse. The abuser is usually well known to the person being abused. They may be:

- a partner, child or relative
- a friend or neighbour
- a paid or volunteer care worker
- a professional

Abuse can occur anywhere and people can be abused in different ways, including:

- physical abuse
- neglect
- financial exploitation
- psychological abuse
- sexual abuse

The housing management service follows the Sussex multi-agency policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults. If you experience, witness, or suspect abuse is happening to a vulnerable adult, it is important to tell someone about your concerns. For help and advice please call the council's Access Point on 01273 295555 or Sussex Police 0845 60 70 999. In an emergency call 999.

Pets and animals

How many pets can I have?

If you want to keep pets you must get our written permission through your housing office. The number of pets we will allow will depend upon the type of pet, and the size and type of home you live in. If you live in sheltered housing, please check with your Scheme Manager to see whether your scheme allows pets. We will not unreasonably withhold permission but will not give permission for residents to keep the following animals:

- any dangerous wild animal as detailed in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

- the specific breed of dog restricted by law and detailed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, such as pit bull terriers and Japanese tosas
- a species prohibited by trade, import or export as detailed in the Endangered Species (Import & Export) Act 1976
- all venomous (poisonous) insects and spiders
- all large, poisonous or constrictor snakes or lizards

The Animal Welfare Team gives advice and practical help for keeping pets and animals in the city. They investigate complaints about stray animals, dangerous dogs, dog fouling and cases of animal cruelty. You can get further information and advice on 01273 292929 or 292446.

Is there anything I need to know about keeping pets?

If you have a pet or would like to get one, we expect you to look after your pets in a responsible way.

You must make sure that:

- they do not cause a nuisance to your neighbours by creating lots of noise or excessive smells
- you clean up after your pets
- you look after your pet responsibly

If you keep an animal that we believe is being mistreated, we will report it to the council's Animal Welfare Team.

If your pets are causing a nuisance or disturbance to your neighbours, we may ask you to re-home them.

If these conditions are not kept, permission can be withdrawn and action may be taken against your tenancy.

Can I feed wild birds and animals?

You must not encourage pests, vermin or animals that may cause a nuisance or damage at your home or in the neighbourhood. Examples of this include feeding wild pigeons and seagulls and not disposing of rubbish properly.

This is because they can pass on diseases to people or, in numbers, can be a nuisance to or

pollute the areas you live in. You must not feed them from your home or in your neighbourhood. If you do, action may be taken against your tenancy and you will have to pay the costs if we have to clean mess from the building.

Communal areas

What are communal areas?

Communal areas are shared areas of a block of flats, or an estate, which tenants, residents and visitors can use. This includes stairs and lifts, landings, bin stores, shared gardens and car parks.

Are there any special considerations if I live in a flat?

Living in flats and maisonettes brings extra responsibilities. Everyone living in a block is responsible for keeping the communal areas clean and tidy, and must:

- not leave rubbish or property on the stairs or in the hallways - rubbish should be disposed of carefully
- not smoke in enclosed shared areas
- not interfere with fire safety equipment
- keep emergency exits clear
- not interfere with security equipment such as door entry systems and CCTV
- not throw rubbish or other items from balconies - if you, your family or visitors do this, you will be considered to have broken your tenancy agreement and legal action may be taken

The fire service and the council have agreed that personal goods should not be stored in communal areas as they could be a hazard if people need to leave the building in an emergency. If we need to clear any items belonging to you from shared areas, you will need to pay our costs.

You must not store mobility scooters in shared areas without our permission. You need to speak to your Housing Officer before buying a mobility scooter so we can make sure you have somewhere to store it safely.

Door entry systems

To improve the security of people living in flats and maisonettes, we provide door entry systems so that only residents and genuine visitors can get in. Please help to keep the flats safe and do not:

- let someone you do not know into the building
- wedge the door open or leave it open for any reason

When you leave the building, please close the door securely to protect you and your neighbour's homes against theft, vandalism and unwanted visitors. If you notice that your door is being left open or is faulty, please let your housing office or the Repairs Helpdesk know.

Parking

Where can I park my car?

Both the council and your neighbours expect you to park in a reasonable way and not block other residents or obstruct emergency access routes.

You must only park in marked areas or on the side of the road. Where there are parking control schemes, you and your visitors must follow the rules.

You can only park on your property or your front garden if you have a driveway with a lowered kerb and a hard standing for your vehicle. If you wish to apply for this, you will need permission from us and the council's Highways Team. You may also need planning permission.

How can I rent a garage or parking space?

We have a number of garages to rent and parking areas with marked bays. If you would like to rent a garage or parking space, please contact the Car Parks & Garages Team on 01273 296646.

If you rent a garage or car parking space you will have a separate account for it, but can pay in the same ways you pay your rent. If you are in arrears with your rent, you cannot rent a garage or parking space.

Can I store anything in my garage or parking space?

A garage is only for storing a car, van or motorbike. You must not use it to store any dangerous items, such as petrol, bottled gas or any other flammable materials. Your garage must not be used for general storage and it must not be used in connection with a business.

What do I do if my car is clamped or taken away?

Your vehicle will only be clamped or removed if you have not followed the rules of the local parking control scheme or have left it untaxed or abandoned. If your car is clamped, you can get it released quite quickly by making the payment - details are given on a ticket that is left on your car. If your car is taken away, there will be a notice nearby telling you what to do to get it back.

Can I repair my car outside my home?

You are allowed to carry out minor routine maintenance to your own vehicle in your garage, parking space or outside your home, provided that you do not cause a hazard or nuisance to your neighbours and do not make a mess. If the council has to clear up after you, you will be charged.

You are not allowed to do welding, spraying or major car maintenance on housing land. If you do, we may take legal action which could result in you losing your home.

Caravans, boats, trailers and other vehicles

You must get permission from your housing office before parking a caravan, boat, trailer or other such vehicle in your garden, in a parking space or on other housing land.

Abandoned and unroadworthy cars and motorbikes

You are not allowed to leave unroadworthy vehicles in your front garden or in parking areas. If you do, we may arrange for the vehicle to be towed away and you will be recharged the costs and may face action against your tenancy.

Gardens and balconies

Tenants are required to maintain their own gardens and balconies to make sure they look acceptable and do not cause a nuisance to their neighbours. If you are having difficulty maintaining your garden, please contact your housing office as further help may be available through our discretionary gardening scheme.

You are responsible for:

- keeping the garden tidy and free of rubbish, household items and vehicle parts
- trimming shrubs, hedges or trees to make sure they do not become a nuisance to neighbours
- maintaining any fencing that is your responsibility - please check with your housing office if you are unsure which fences are your responsibility

You will need our written permission to:

- put up a garage, shed or greenhouse
- put up or change a wall or fence
- cut down, remove or destroy any bushes, hedges or trees unless you planted them

Harvest Brighton & Hove operate a 'Grow your neighbours own' which links people who would like their gardens to be used for growing fruit and vegetables but don't have the time or physical capability with those who don't have the space. If you'd like further information, contact Harvest on 01273 431700.

8

Ending your tenancy



Ending your
tenancy

Ending your tenancy

What if I want to end my tenancy?

If you want to end your tenancy, you need to give us a minimum of four weeks notice in writing, with your tenancy ending on a Monday. If you are transferring to another Brighton & Hove City Council tenancy, you can give two weeks notice. This is a requirement of your tenancy agreement.

If you do not give us the required notice before you leave, you will still be responsible for the rent until the end of the notice period.

You need to complete a 'Termination of tenancy' form, available from your housing office or our website. Once you have returned this to us, we will arrange for a council officer to visit you at home before you move out.

At this visit we will tell you about any work you need to do before you leave. This could include repairs which are your responsibility or returning any work done without our permission to its original state. However, we may only identify this after you move out, in which case you will be recharged for the work.

Your home must be left in a clean and tidy condition. All fixtures and fittings supplied by the council should be left in the property. All your items and possessions must be removed, including anything kept in lofts, sheds and gardens. In some cases, fittings such as carpets and curtain rails can be left for the incoming tenant but please discuss this during our visit.

If we need to remove anything after you leave or if you do not complete any work identified, you will be recharged.

Moving checklist

- it is your responsibility to tell all parties that you are moving, including your gas, electricity, water and telephone suppliers
- you must return all keys and/or pendant alarms to us on or before the termination date
- you will need to pay any outstanding rent and any other charges owed to us
- if you receive housing or council tax benefit, you must tell them when you intend to leave

If you want your mail to be redirected to your new address, please contact the Post Office.

If you have any questions or need help or advice about ending your tenancy, please contact your housing office.

Compensation for improvements

If you move, you can apply for compensation for certain improvements you have made with our permission. Please contact your housing office for a list of qualifying improvements.

Please tell us if you would like to claim when you give notice to end your tenancy. We will need to see bills for the work – if you do not have these, tell us the cost and when the work was done. The maximum payment for each improvement is £3,000, but this depends on when you made the improvement, how much you have benefited from it, the cost, and its quality and condition.

Ending a tenancy – following the death of a tenant

We understand that this is a difficult time for families and friends and want to make the process of returning the property as simple as possible. We give a broad outline of what to do here, but for more advice or to arrange an appointment to speak to a Housing Officer, please contact the housing office where staff will be happy to help.

If there is no one to succeed to the tenancy, the tenancy will need to be legally ended. This can happen in a couple of ways:

1. If there is an executor, they will need to provide four weeks notice. Rent will be charged for the four week period but we appreciate this places a burden on the deceased tenant's estate. If the executor is able to clear the property within the first two weeks of the notice period and return the keys to us we will not charge rent for the final two weeks of the notice period.
2. If there is no executor, we will serve a notice to end the tenancy and register it with the

Public Trustee. If there is a next of kin, we will provide them with a copy of this notice.

Who can take on my tenancy if I die?

If a tenant dies, their tenancy can be passed on to a joint tenant, spouse, civil partner or another family member (including partners) - this is called succession. Under the Housing Act 1985, only one succession is allowed for each tenancy. The successor will have the same tenancy conditions as the previous tenant.

There are some rules we have to follow when someone wants to succeed to the tenancy:

- if you are a joint tenant, your surviving joint tenant will succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same property
- if you are a sole tenant, your married partner or civil partner can succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same property
- a family member (including partners) can succeed to the tenancy if they can prove they have resided with you for 12 months before your death and used it as their only or main home – however, they may have to move if the home is larger than they reasonably need
- if there are two or more family members who can succeed, they must decide who will take over the tenancy – if they cannot agree, we will decide
- if a family member is required to move to smaller accommodation and refuses to, we can take legal action to take back the property and enforce the move to suitable alternative accommodation

What will happen if a succession has already taken place?

There can only be one succession in law but we will work with the family member to find a solution. In certain circumstances, our allocations policy allows us to make further offers but each case needs to be looked at on an individual basis.

We appreciate this is a difficult time and our staff will work closely with the family member. If we cannot offer a further tenancy, we will provide advice and help on other housing options, and allow a reasonable time for the family member to find another home.

Moving options

What happens if I want to move home?

We have several schemes that may help you if you wish to move to a different property.

Transfer Scheme - Homemove

If your current home no longer suits your needs, you can apply to transfer to alternative accommodation using the housing application form, available from our website or your housing office. Once we have assessed your application, you will receive a banding depending on your level of housing need - for example, whether your home is overcrowded or if you need to move for medical reasons.

Properties that become available to let are advertised and you 'bid' for the properties you wish to be considered for.

We will not normally agree transfers for tenants in rent arrears.

We try to help as many people as possible, but there are more people wanting to move than homes available. For this reason, we actively promote the alternative housing options below.

Transfer Incentive Scheme

The Transfer Incentive Scheme offers a financial reward of up to £3500 to tenants who want to downsize from a family home or wheelchair adapted property that they no longer need. Incentives are also available for tenants moving into the private sector. Please contact your housing office for further information and an application form.

Moving to sheltered housing

We have sheltered housing schemes for older people with identified support needs. All schemes have scheme managers and a 24 hour call system in case of emergencies. This allows older people to continue to live independently while having the reassurance of having support close by when needed. The schemes also provide opportunities for social activities.

If you would like more information, contact the Sheltered Housing Team on 01273 293255.

Apply directly to another council

You can apply directly to a council in another area. However, you may be given less priority than someone with a connection to that area

Mutual Exchanges

Mutual Exchanges are where council or housing association tenants apply to swap homes with each other. Each tenant signs over (assigns) their tenancy to the other. **Please note that introductory tenants can not exchange their property.**

If you are interested in a mutual exchange and would like to find someone to swap with, you can:

- Enter your details on our Sussex Homemove Mutual Exchange Register, a web-based service on www.homemove.org.uk. You can use computers in housing offices and in the city's libraries to check potential swaps. Once your details appear on the mutual exchange register, other tenants may contact you.
- Contact another tenant who already has their details listed on our mutual exchange register.
- Advertise your home in a local newspaper or place an advert in a local shop. Please note that you must pay for any advertising costs yourself.
- Check the Homeswapper website, a national database with information on people wanting to move locally and nationally. Find out more by logging on to www.homeswapper.co.uk. Please note that there is a fee for joining this service.

Once you have found a potential swap, please contact your housing office for an application form. Before a mutual exchange can take place each tenant will need the written permission of their landlord – you must not move home unless you have this. We will usually give permission unless there is a ground set out in Schedule 3 of the 85 Act, such as the property being substantially larger than the proposed tenant needs or the swap causing overcrowding.

Buying your home

There are a range of opportunities for tenants to become home owners:

- Right to Buy – if you have been a secure tenant for at least five years (two years if your tenancy began before 18 January 2005), you

may have the right to buy your home (this doesn't apply to sheltered housing or homes adapted for someone with a disability). You get a discount on the price depending on how long you have been a tenant and your family members may be able to share in the purchase. For further information, please contact our Right to Buy & Leasehold Team on 01273 293074. **Introductory tenants can not exercise the right to buy.**

- Low Cost Home Ownership - there are various low cost home ownership options available to Brighton & Hove residents but all are subject to eligibility and funding. Moat is the appointed homebuy agent in Sussex and they co-ordinate the affordable home ownership in the south east. Details of all the schemes currently available can be found on www.homebuy.co.uk or you can call the Moat home ownership enquiry line on 0845 359 6161 (8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday).

Private sector

We strongly recommend that you consider renting in the private sector where properties are in far greater supply. This gives you choice over where you live and the type of property you want to live in. If you are on a low income or benefits, you may be entitled to help with the rent through the local housing allowance. Please contact your housing office for further advice.

What if you ask me to move?

There are some circumstances when we might ask you to move. These include if:

- we need to carry out major works to repair or modernise your home – if this happens, we will provide financial and practical help
- you succeeded to your tenancy, but the property is too big for you, or designed for someone in a wheelchair or who has mobility problems and you do not need this type of property

If we ask you to move, we will explain why and give you as much notice as we can. We will discuss your rehousing options with you and make sure we keep you informed. Please contact your housing office for further advice.

9

Supporting independence



Supported
independence

We provide a number of services to help you live independently.

Sheltered housing service

The council manages a number of sheltered schemes across the city, providing over 800 homes. The service aims to provide older people with a high quality of accommodation and support services to meet a wide range of needs, enabling older people to live independently and in comfort.

Our sheltered schemes can offer the following benefits:

- a wide variety of locations and properties, including flats and bungalows
- a secure tenancy with the privacy of your own front door and living space
- an on-site Scheme Manager
- a 24-hour alarm that allows residents to call for help in an emergency
- a friendly, welcoming community of vibrant and diverse people
- communal lounges with a selection of social activities
- guest rooms where family and friends may stay
- private gardens or patios where residents may sit and relax
- laundry facilities
- existing sheltered tenants who need to move to a more suitable property get priority to move within their scheme

Our Sheltered Housing Service can offer:

- a personalised support plan
- regular call service
- emergency support service
- a range of social, learning and healthy living activities

For more information and an application form, please contact the Sheltered Housing Team on 01273 293255.

If you currently live in sheltered housing and have any queries, please speak to your Scheme Manager.

Can I still get emergency alarm support if I don't live in sheltered housing?

The 24-hour community alarm is provided by the council's CareLink Plus service and is available to anyone living in Brighton & Hove, in any type of housing. The service provides a communication link for people who may need to call for help quickly in an emergency, due to age, illness or disability.

The system can be installed in your home and linked through your telephone to the CareLink Control Centre. In an emergency, you use the alarm button, pendant or pull-cord to alert the CareLink staff to get help to you as soon as possible. For more information call the Carelink Control Centre on 01273 673105.

Tenancy support

What if I need extra support managing my tenancy?

If you are having problems managing your tenancy, your housing office can advise you and may be able to offer you support. Depending on your needs, this may involve referring you to another service.

The support we offer may include:

- regular visits by your Community Warden
- advice in running your home well
- making the most of your neighbourhood
- putting you in touch with extra help

If you are having difficulties, please get in touch with your housing office for advice.

What if my tenancy is at risk?

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team offers flexible support to vulnerable tenants experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancy, and who may be at risk of homelessness without appropriate advice and intervention.

The aim of the service is to prevent residents losing their homes, and to make sure they are supported with extra services where needed.

The Tenancy Sustainment Team can provide support that includes:

- help and support to access other services to meet health, financial or social needs - this may include employment, education, training, statutory health and social care services, local community and voluntary sector organisations
- support to access services that help with budgeting and managing debt
- advice and assistance to maximise your income and claim benefits
- advice and assistance on housing options
- help to manage neighbour problems
- help to access services in the local community

You must be willing to work with us to agree and work through a support plan to address tenancy problems so that you do not lose your home.

If you would like to find out more about the Tenancy Sustainment Team or if you think you could benefit from the support they offer, please contact them on 01273 293171 for information and advice.

Adaptations

What if I, or a member of my family, need adaptations because of a disability?

If you or someone living with you has a disability that restricts your quality of life or ability to live independently, there are a number of ways we can help you to remain in your home.

This includes advising you about equipment you can buy, providing equipment to make daily tasks easier, or adapting your home to improve access or help you use bathing facilities, etc. Alternatively, if your current home is unsuitable, we can help you move to a property that will be more suitable for your needs.

If you are living in a property that is too big for your needs, we can also support you to move to a smaller, more suitable property. You may also be entitled to transfer incentive scheme money if you agree to move to a smaller home. See our 'Moving options' section in 'Ending your tenancy' for more information.

If you think you would benefit from an assessment, please contact the council's Access Point on 01273 295555. They will take your details and your needs will be assessed by a disability professional, who will discuss their recommendations with you. If these include an adaptation, the Adaptation Team will contact you to organise a visit.

If you are eligible to have your home adapted, the Adaptations Team will tell you when this work will be done. Priority is given to those in greatest need and there is likely to be some delay as the demand for the work exceeds the budget we have available each year.

Help with gardening and decorating

What if I can no longer maintain my home?

Help with gardening may be available if you are over 65 or have a disability, and do not have a relative, friend or anyone else to do the gardening for you. The gardening scheme covers grass cutting and other essential work such as hedge trimming and pruning.

You may also be able to get help with the decoration of your home for a maximum of one room per year. You can either apply for vouchers to buy decorating materials in certain DIY stores if you have someone to do the work for you, or apply for us to do the work.

The yearly budgets for these schemes are limited, but if you are having difficulties, contact your housing office for more details and an application form. The application form can also be downloaded from our website.

Alternatively, if your current home is unsuitable, we can help you to move to a property that will be more suitable for your needs. Please contact your housing office for further advice.

Draft

10

Useful contacts & index



Useful contacts

Housing Management

Lavender Street Housing Office

01273 293260

email: LavenderStreetOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Manor Place Housing Office

01273 293200

email: ManorPlaceOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Oxford Street Housing Office

01273 293230

email: OxfordStreetOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Selsfield Drive Housing Office

01273 293171

email: SelsfieldDriveOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Victoria Road Housing Office

01273 293377

email: VictoriaRoadOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Repairs Helpdesk - 24 hour reporting

0800 052 6140 Or 01273 294409

Text (for non urgent repairs)

Begin your text with 'Repairs'

07786 204352

email: BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk

Housing Income Management Team

01273 293224

email: Housing.IncomeManagement@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Rent Accounting Section

01273 293065 - for direct debit and payment method enquiries

01273 293303 - for home contents insurance

email: rentaccounting@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Car Parks & Garages

01273 296646

email: Parking.Domestic@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Right to Buy

01273 293074

email: rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Sheltered Housing

01273 293255

email: sheltered@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Estates Service

01273 294769

email: EstatesServiceManagers@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Lettings

01273 293205

email: LettingsTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Other useful council numbers

Abandoned Vehicles

01273 292929

email: abandoned.vehicles@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Access Point (Adult Social Care)

01273 295555

email: accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Allotments

01273 292929

email: allotments@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Animal Welfare Team

01273 292929/292446

email: ehl.community@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Building Control

01273 292030

email: building.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Carelink

01273 673105

email: CareLinkPlus@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Council switchboard

01273 290000

Council Tax

01273 291291

email: council.tax@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Woodvale Crematorium

01273 604020

email: woodvale@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Disabled Access Toilets (Radar keys)

01273 292929

email: cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Disabled Parking (blue badges)

01273 296270

email: parking@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Gritting (roads)

01273 292929

Highways - dropped kerbs and crossovers

01273 292929

Homemove Team

01273 294400

email: homemove@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Advice

01273 294400

email: housing.advice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Benefit

01273 292000

email: housing.benefits@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Noise Nuisance

01273 292929

The Noise patrol can be contacted for noise complaints over the weekend from Friday 10pm – 3am Saturday morning and from 10pm Saturday night – 3am Sunday morning

01273 293541

Parking

01273 296622

email: parking@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Pest Control

01273 292170

email: pest.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Planning applications & permissions

01273 292222

email: planning.applications@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Public Toilets

01273 292929

Refuse, recycling, and street cleansing

01273 292929

email: cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Roads and Pavements

01273 292929

email: HighwayBasicMaintenance@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Stray dogs

01273 292929

Street Lighting

01273 292929

Trees

01273 292929

email: arboriculture@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

Action on Elder Abuse

0808 808 8141

ageuk

0800 16965 65

website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service

01273 700812

email: mediationservice@onetel.com

Brighton & Hove Resource Centre

01273 606160

Brighton Housing Trust

(legal and housing advice services)

01273 234737

email: advice@bht.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

0845 120 3710

Energy Saving Trust

0800 512 012

website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Harvest (Brighton & Hove)

01273 431700

email: info@bhfood.org.uk

Job Centre Plus:

Brighton - 01273 647400

Hove - 01273 368100

Local Government Ombudsman

0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

email: advice@lgo.org.uk

website: www.lgo.org.uk

Probate & Inheritance Tax helpline

0845 302900

RISE (formerly women's refuge project)

01273 622822

website: www.riseuk.org.uk

Sussex Police

0845 607 0999

Treasury Solicitor

020 7210 3116 or 020 7210 3117

website: www.tsol.gov.uk

Index

A...

abandoned cars 38
 adaptations 45
 alterations 21
 anti social behaviour 32
 asbestos 24

B...

benefits 18
 business use 29
 buying your home 42

C...

car parking 37
 caravans 38
 community wardens 30
 complaints 4
 condensation 23
 consultation 10
 contents insurance 28
 customer service standards 4

D...

data protection 5
 death of a tenant 40
 demoted tenancies 8
 domestic violence 35

E...

ending your tenancy 40
 energy efficiency 30
 equalities 5
 estate development budget 13
 estate inspections 30
 estates service 29
 exchanges 42

F...

fire safety 25
 flood damage 23
 freedom of information 5
 frost 23

G...

gardens 38
 gas leaks 20
 gas servicing 20
 good neighbour 32
 grounds maintenance 29

H...

harassment 34
 hate crimes 34
 help with gardening and decorating 45
 home security 24
 homemove 41
 housing benefit 18

I...

insurance 28
 improvements 21
 introductory tenancies 8

J...

joint tenancies 8

L...

legionella 25
 lodgers 9

M...

moving 40
 moving in 28
 mutual exchanges 42

N...

neighbourhood agreements 32
 noise 32

O...

overcrowding 8

P...

paying rent 16
 pest control 30
 pets 36

R...

racial harassment 34
 rechargeable repairs 22
 recycling 29
 rent 16
 rent arrears 17
 repairs 20
 resident involvement 12
 right to buy 9
 right to repair 10
 right to manage 10
 right to information 10
 right to compensation for improvements 10
 rubbish 29

Draft

S...

secure tenancies 8
service standards 4
sheltered housing 44
subletting 9
succession 40
sustainability 30

T...

tenancy support 44
tenant & resident associations 12
transfers 41

V...

violence 35

W...

wildbirds and animals 36

Y...

your rights 9

Draft

Notes

This is your tenant handbook. If you need a translation, tick the box and take to any housing office.

هذا هو كتيب المستأجر الخاص بك. إذا كنت بحاجة إلى نسخة مترجمة، ضع علامة في الخانة و من ثم أخذ هذا إلى أي مكتب من مكاتب الإسكان.

Arabic

এটা হচ্ছে আপনার 'টেন্যান্ট হ্যান্ডবুক'। আপনি যদি এর বাংলায় অহুবাদের কপি পেতে চান, তাহলে বঙ্গটিতে টিক্ চিহ্ন দিন এবং যেকোন হাউজিং অফিসে নিয়ে যান।

Bengali

這是你的租戶手冊。如果你需要一份翻譯本，請在方格內加刷，並交往任何房屋辦事處。

Cantonese

Ceci est votre manuel du locataire. Si vous avez besoin d'une traduction, cochez cette case et présentez-vous à n'importe quel bureau des affaires de logement.

French

این کتابچه مستأجر شما است. اگر احتیاج به ترجمه آن دارید، در مربع این علامت (✓) را بگذارید و به يك اداره مسکن ببرید.

Farsi

这是您的承租人手册。如果您需要一份翻译件，请勾此方框并拿到任何一个住房办公室。

Mandarin

Jest to Informator dla Najemcy (Tenant Handbook). Jeżeli chcesz otrzymać jego tłumaczenie, proszę o zaznaczenie okienka i dostarczenie tego do któregokolwiek biura ds. mieszkaniowych (housing office).

Polish

Este documento é o seu "Manual de Inquilinos" (Tenant Handbook). Se precisa de uma tradução, por favor assinala a caixinha e entregue em qualquer Gabinete de Habitação (Housing Office).

Portuguese

Bu sizin kiracı el kitabınız. Çevirisine ihtiyacınız varsa, kutuyu işaretleyiniz ve herhangi bir konut bürosuna götürünüz.

Turkish

This handbook can also be made available in large print, Braille or on CD or audio tape.

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 30

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	CESP- Community Energy Saving Programme		
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2010		
Report of:	Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise		
Contact Officer:	Name	Martin Reid	Tel 29-3321
	Email	Martin.Reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 One of the key strategic priorities outlined in the recently adopted City-wide Housing Strategy 2009-14 is to improve housing quality, to make sure that residents are able to live in decent homes suitable to their needs. Our strategic goals under this priority include, reducing fuel poverty, minimising CO2 emissions and improving tenants' homes ensuring they are of high quality and well maintained.
- 1.2 This paper seeks to update the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting on our response to date to the potential opportunities offered by the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) as part of our wider strategic housing vision of making best use of the City's assets by improving and increasing investment in our homes for the benefit of tenants and residents of the City as a whole.
- 1.3 The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) has been established to target home energy efficiency and renewable energy measures at geographical areas across Great Britain that have been identified as having significant levels of low income households. It is intended that a 'whole-house' approach will be applied, securing a range of different measures to homes within the target areas.
- 1.4 The paper outlines the background to the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), the discussions and project work currently underway with an energy company to assess the potential benefits of this programme to residents of the City and the likely timescale for seeking a decision on whether to progress any offer of additional funding arising from the current negotiations.
- 1.5 The paper also notes the importance of continuing to work with potential partners such as energy companies to explore means of maximising investment to meet our strategic housing goals of improving the quality of housing in the City, reducing fuel poverty and minimising CO2 emissions. The CESP programme has the potential to help us engage with energy companies, not only to deliver key energy efficiency work on the City's housing stock, but also to open up potential funding routes for future investment.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing note the current project work and negotiation being undertaken with an energy provider to assess and maximise the potential investment opportunity arising from Community Energy Savings Programme as a means of meeting strategic housing goals of improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Housing note any final decision on any funding offer from the energy provider is likely to be subject to further Cabinet Member approval given the potential nature and scope of the programme.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS;

- 3.1 The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) has been devised to target home energy efficiency measures at areas across Great Britain that have been identified as having significant levels of low income households. It is intended that a 'whole-house' approach will be applied, securing a range of different measures to all homes within the target areas, irrespective of housing tenure. The obligation to deliver CESP will rest with energy supply and generation companies, who will be required to invest an estimated total of £350 million (nationwide).
- 3.2 The target areas that have been identified are those Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the lowest income decile of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Fifteen LSOAs in Brighton & Hove are in this category, which means that all or any of these LSOAs could potentially qualify for funding under CESP.
- 3.3 Subject to the details of any offer from the energy supply and generation companies, CESP may provide an opportunity to secure additional external investment that could secure real improvements in living conditions and reductions in fuel costs for council and private sector tenants and owner occupiers living in deprived parts of the City. It may enable improvements to be made to the fabric of council housing stock within the areas included in the scheme in addition to any current capital programmes
- 3.4 CESP provides the opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships with contractors and council tenant groups and for developing partnership working with energy companies. Funding obtained through CESP would be additional to funding currently available through the Council Housing Capital Programme and the BEST Private Sector Renewal Programme.
- 3.5 Whilst it is not possible at this time to provide a clear estimate of the value of a Brighton & Hove CESP, an energy company has approached BHCC with a view to making an offer of capital funding for energy efficiency measures under the CESP programme.

- 3.6 Following preparatory work undertaken by council officers, our Home Energy Efficiency Managing Partner, Climate Energy, and Mears, the energy company have been provided with information about housing within the qualifying LSOAs.
- 3.7 Following this we are now involved in further discussion around an initial offer by the energy company for capital funding for energy efficiency measures to be carried out in Brighton & Hove under CESP.
- 3.8 It is important to note that any CESP scheme would require an investment of capital by the council as a proportion of the full capital costs as no energy company is considered likely to offer the full level of funding required for the necessary measures. This means that the council will need to carefully consider: the proportion of capital funding being offered by the energy company; whether this is acceptable; and, if so, the funding options available within the existing Council capital programme to enable any additional funding to be secured from CESP. It is also hoped that CESP management costs, incurred by Climate Energy and Mears, will be fully funded by the participating energy company.
- 3.9 It should also be noted that at this time it is likely that the energy company offer is to be restricted to council-owned properties. This is a result of a lack of specific data about the privately owned properties in the LSOAs. Whilst CESP provides scope for schemes to be developed on a cross-tenure basis, the inclusion of privately owned properties at this time would be problematic in that it is very difficult to calculate the potential need for additional funding by the council in order to persuade or enable private householders/owners to take up the measures. In addition, a clear indication has been received that Ofgem will approve CESP schemes that are based on measures carried out on a single tender basis. Consequently, it is proposed that a Brighton & Hove CESP initiative should initially be specifically targeted at council tenants. Private sector renewal assistance under the Council's existing BEST housing renewal programme remains available to private householders, covering energy efficiency and fuel poverty measures for those meeting eligibility criteria.
- 3.10 Following an initial City wide review of eligible LSOA's identified some are considered by council officers and the energy company to be a higher priority for opening discussion than others, primarily based on the type of properties, the numbers of particular measures that have been identified and the relative proportions of council housing.
- 3.11 The following LSOAs have been identified as the initial highest priorities for any CESP scheme: Whitehawk; Hollingdean / Bates Estate; North Moulsecoomb.
- 3.12 Property surveys have been carried out in the above areas. The surveys have been conducted at no cost to BHCC. Once the survey analysis is complete, the council officers, Mears and Climate Energy will work together on the cost of energy efficiency works. The energy company will then propose their contribution rate for the works for the area based on survey results and analysis. This will form the basis for a formal offer.

- 3.13 We expect receipt of a formal offer from the energy company in July. Once an energy company contribution offer is received the Council will then assess the social and financial benefits of the scheme.
- 3.14 If proven to be acceptable, and subject to further member approval as required, we would envisage proceeding with the scheme in the first area, and review and roll out to other areas if successful.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Council's Housing Strategy was established following a comprehensive consultation exercise conducted both within the Council and with external stakeholders.
- 4.2 Any proposed work on council tenants' homes will be subject to full consultation.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 This report details the current negotiation being undertaken with an energy provider to deliver energy efficiency improvements to council housing. Any funding offer from an energy provider will require the council to fund a proportion of the agreed works. It is not possible at this stage of the negotiation to assess the financial implications.
- 5.2 Therefore, once the final offer is known and evaluated, subject to this being beneficial to the council, a further report will be submitted to Cabinet detailing the full financial implications of the proposal.

Finance Officer Consulted: Sue Chapman Date: 24 June 2010

Legal Implications:

- 5.3 Based on the level of detail currently available, it is not possible to identify all the legal issues that may arise. However, procurement related issues are likely to be an issue. The Council's current contract with Climate Energy expires in July 2011, so it is not clear how the programme will be managed after that date. Further, if a management cost is payable to Climate Energy, there is a risk that the Council might exceed the advertised financial limit for the contract (£75,000 per annum.)

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Date: 24 June 2010

Equalities Implications:

- 5.4 An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the Citywide Housing Strategy during its development with the strategy containing a summary of the assessment. Additional Equality Impact Assessments will be required as the strategy action plans are implemented over the next few years. The CESP

programme, should it be developed as part of Council's Housing Strategy, would provide help and assistance to disadvantaged households.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 Housing is one of the key objectives in the Council's sustainability strategy which aims 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.
- 5.6 The Council's housing renewal activities help to prevent ill-health, provide for basic needs by ensuring that dwellings are fit for habitation and are energy efficient and help to reduce the level of fuel poverty in the City.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.7 Ensuring appropriate housing and support is essential in helping to reduce antisocial behaviour and other crime and also to support the victims of crime

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8 Policy development in this area is undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

Corporate/Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 Our housing aims support the priorities and aims of the 2020 Community Strategy. Housing is a fundamental aspect of people's wellbeing affecting the daily lives of residents in Brighton & Hove. Poor or inappropriate housing has a direct impact on the ability of residents to maintain their health and independence, this has implications for social care, education and the health services.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The Housing Strategy is supported by a detailed needs analysis that considers the wide range of housing issues faced by local people. Our strategic priorities and actions have been developed in response to those needs and refined over time through consultation.
- 6.2 This report outlines our response to date to the potential opportunities offered by the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) as part of our wider strategic housing vision of making best use of the City's assets by improving and increasing investment in our homes for the benefit of tenants and residents of the City as a whole.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The paper outlines the background to the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), the discussions and project work currently underway with an energy company to assess the potential benefits of this programme to residents of the City and the likely timescale for seeking a decision on whether to progress any offer of additional funding arising from the current negotiations.

- 7.2 The report is for noting on the basis that any final decision on any funding offer from the energy provider is likely to be subject to further Cabinet Member approval given the potential nature and scope of the programme.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. City-wide Housing Strategy 2009 -14