





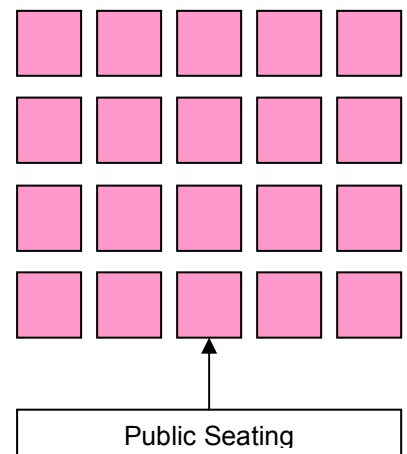
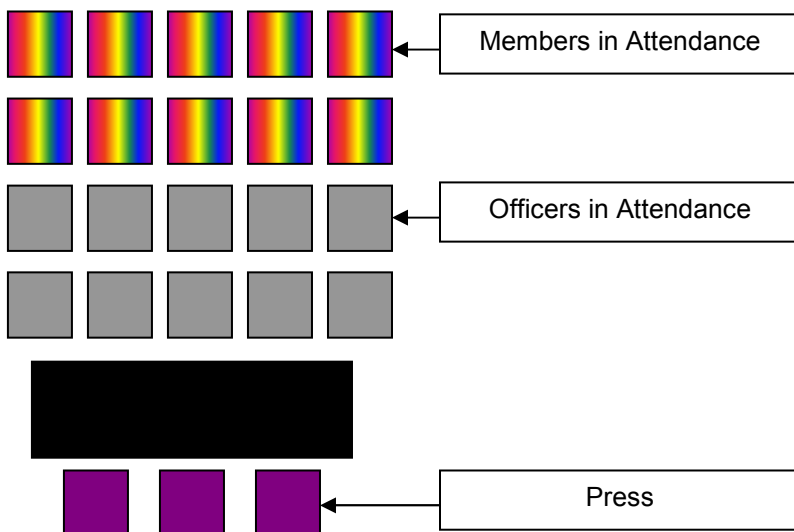
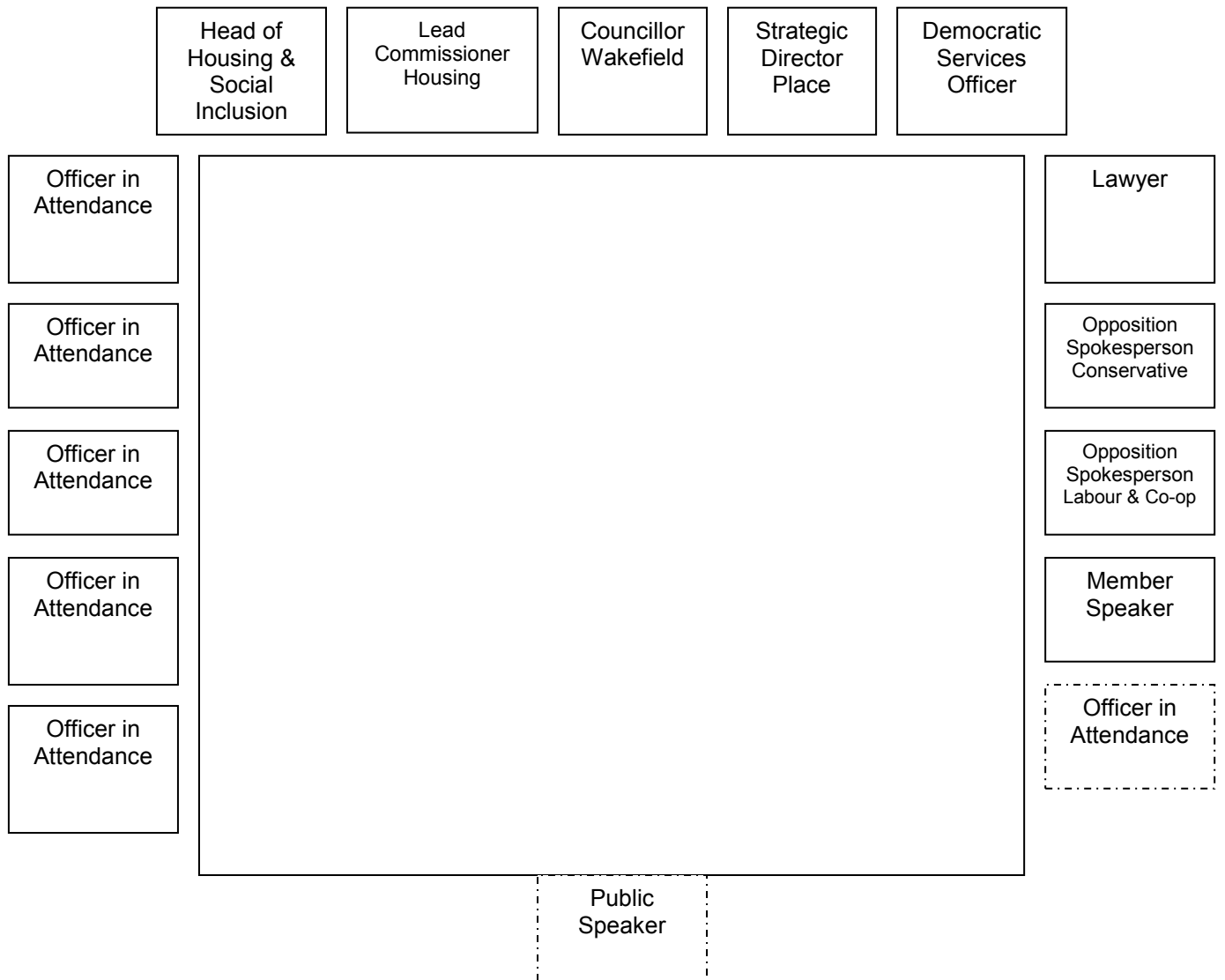
Brighton & Hove  
City Council

# Cabinet Member Meeting

Title:	<b>Housing Cabinet Member Meeting</b>
Date:	<b>1 December 2011</b>
Time:	<b>4.00pm</b>
Venue	<b>Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall</b>
Members:	<b>Councillor:</b> Wakefield (Cabinet Member)
Contact:	<b>Caroline De Marco</b> Democratic Services Officer 01273 291063 caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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# Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



**AGENDA**

**45. 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.*

**46. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**1 - 6**

Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 October 2011 (copy attached).

**47. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS**

**48. 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.*

**49. PETITIONS**

**7 - 8**

Report of the Strategic Director, Resources (copy attached).

**50. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

(The closing date for receipt of public questions is 12 noon on 24 November 2011)

## HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

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

### 51. DEPUTATIONS

(The closing date for receipt of deputations is 12 noon on 24 November 2011)

No deputations have been received by the date of publication.

### 52. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

No letters have been received.

### 53. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No written questions have been received.

### 54. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

No Notices of Motion have been received by the date of publication.

### 55. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 9 - 20

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2011 (copy attached).

### 56. COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY 21 - 32

Report of Head of Housing and Social Inclusion (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Becky Purnell *Tel:* 29-3022  
*Ward Affected:* All Wards

### 57. REVIEW OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE - COUNCIL HOUSING LAND 33 - 62

Report of Strategic Director Place (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Graham Page *Tel:* 01273 293354  
*Ward Affected:* All Wards

### 58. ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY 2011 63 - 72

Report of Head of Housing and Social Inclusion (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Alan Smith *Tel:* 29-1072  
*Ward Affected:* All Wards

### 59. OPPORTUNITY FOR MANOR PLACE HOUSING OFFICE TO MOVE TO THE WHITEHAWK HUB 73 - 94

Report of Head of Housing and Social Inclusion (copy attached).

*Contact Officer:* Ododo Dafe *Tel:* 29-3201  
*Ward Affected:* East Brighton

## HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

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](http://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](mailto:caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk)) or email [democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Date of Publication - Wednesday, 23 November 2011



**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING**

**4.00pm 19 OCTOBER 2011**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Wakefield (Cabinet Member)

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson) and Farrow (Opposition Spokesperson)

**PART ONE**

**29. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**29(a) Declarations of Interests**

29.1 There were none.

**29(b) Exclusion of Press and Public**

29.2 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).

29.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items on the agenda.

**30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

30.1 Councillor Farrow drew attention to paragraph 17.1 which referred to the cap on housing benefit. He asked if officers were able to report back on this matter. The Lead Commissioner Housing reported that officers were waiting for the Localism Act to be published within the next few weeks. Following publication of the Act, officers would prepare a paper on housing benefit for the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting. The Lead Commissioner further reported that in addition to the Localism Act there would be a new consultation paper relating to supported accommodation changes. A further

report on that matter would be reported to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting in due course.

- 30.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 7 September 2011 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

**31. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS**

**Tenants Meetings**

- 31.1 The Cabinet Member reported that she had been visiting many areas of the city and attending many tenants' meetings. She hoped to continue to attend tenants' meetings across the city for the next month or so.

**32. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION**

- 32.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

**33. PETITIONS**

- 33.1 There were none.

**34. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

- 34.1 There were none.

**35. DEPUTATIONS**

- 35.1 There were none.

**36. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

- 36.1 There were none.

**37. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

- 37.1 There were none.

**38. NOTICES OF MOTIONS**

- 38.1 There were none.

**39. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

- 39.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 8 September 2011.

- 39.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 20.6 relating to the workshop on community meals. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that the issue of



community meals was the subject of scrutiny activity. Any questions about this matter should be directed to the relevant service head in Adult Social Care.

39.3 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

#### **40. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

40.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 5 September and 26 September 2011.

40.2 Councillor Pelzer Dunn referred to paragraph 16.19 of the minutes of 5 September relating to Stewart Gover's comments about the legality of the proposed changes to Area Panels.

40.3 The Senior Lawyer reported that she had emailed a detailed answer to Councillor Pelzer Dunn (referred to in minute 32.6 in the HMCC minutes of 26 September 2011). The Senior Lawyer's advice had been that she had been unable to find anything in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 to support Stewart Gover's proposition that it was illegal for the council to interfere with tenant representation at Area Panels. The Area Panel's Terms of Reference did not form part of the council's constitution. Legally, resident and tenant associations were independent bodies and it would not be proper for the council to interfere with the annual election of representatives to the Area Panels. However, the problem raised by Stewart Gover had related to the proposal to extend the life of various groups. There was no mention of groups within the Area Panel's constitution, and it was difficult to sustain the argument that extending the life of the groups was contrary to the constitution.

40.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn thanked the Senior Lawyer for her explanation. He was prepared to accept this ruling but felt that it underscored some doubt.

40.5 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

#### **41. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY**

41.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of Strategic Director Place which concluded the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group's (TCMG) current round of work on the Resident Involvement Strategy and presented the revised and recommended document. The Strategy was endorsed by the HMCC on 26 September 2011.

41.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn drew attention to the reference to the Innovation Group in paragraph 4.10 of the report. The minutes of the HMCC of 5 September stated that this group was likely to commence in September. The current report simply referred to the establishment of an Innovation Group.

41.3 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that there had been some delay in forming the group at the request of tenants. They had been keen to re-elect tenants from the Area Panels, rather than the previous election from the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group.

41.4 **RESOLVED** (1) That the Resident Involvement Strategy be approved.

**42. CUSTOMER ACCESS PHASE 3 - CUSTOMER SERVICE & ACCESS STRATEGY FOR HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- 42.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which provided an update on the review of customer access arrangements for the Housing Management Service and presented the Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service and Access Strategy for consideration.
- 42.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 2.1 (3) in relation to the Victoria Road Housing Office. He stated that there was a perception from tenants and leaseholders in the West of the city that all their services were being taken away from them. He stressed that it was important to reassure the residents that this was not the case.
- 42.3 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion concurred. He stated that he was in discussion with officers about this issue. Officers would ensure that residents were fully kept up to date and engaged in the process. Residents would get the same service in a different building in the same location.
- 42.4 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the Customer Service and Access Strategy that is presented with the report as Phase 3 of the Customer Access Review, be approved. Key areas for action within the strategy include:

(a) Promotion and support for customers to use more effective methods for accessing housing information and services in line with council-wide 'Improving Customer Experience' work and our corporate Channel Shift Strategy.

(b) Consultations with staff on staffing structure to support proposed new customer access arrangements and service improvement.

(c) Consideration of opportunities for further office moves and best future use of some housing offices – notably Manor Place Housing Office and Victoria Road Housing Office.

**43. ALLOCATIONS POLICY - REVIEW**

- 43.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which suggested a review of the Allocations Policy including consultation with the city. A further report would then be brought back to HMCC and the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting with final proposals, following the consultation.
- 43.2 The current Housing Register Allocations Policy was implemented in early May 2011. Under the new policy, Care leavers were not automatically awarded priority for housing, but were assessed for housing depending on their housing need in the same way as other applicants are assessed. The Children & Young People's Trust, care leavers and their representatives had raised concerns over the new approach and, in the view of the Council's significant responsibilities as Corporate Parent, this report proposed a further review of the Allocations Policy.
- 43.3 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the undertaking of a Review of the current Allocation Policy be approved. Following the Review, proposals will be brought back to HMCC and Housing CMM for final approval.

**44. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY PANEL ON LETTINGS AGENTS**

- 44.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which explained that a cross party Scrutiny Panel (prior to May 2011) consisting of former Councillor Paul Elgood, Councillor Bill Randall & former Councillor Christine Simpson, considered issues in relation to the activities of letting agents in the city. These were set out in paragraph 1.1 of the report. The Panel made 6 recommendations which were detailed in the report and appendix.
- 44.2 The Executive response welcomed the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel on Letting Agents, and recommended their acceptance in principle and where appropriate, and updates on progress on implementation to date. The Executive response also recommended that the Scrutiny Report was considered in full at the next meeting of the Strategic Housing Partnership prior to a further report on progress to a future Housing Cabinet Member Meeting.
- 44.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that some form of further regulation of letting agents was long overdue. Successive governments had failed to instigate a proper legal governance scheme to ensure people were safeguarded. Councillor Peltzer Dunn was worried that the council were considering a localised scheme and wondered if it would be useful to look at other large conurbations, particularly university towns, to see if they had similar problems. Meanwhile, he welcomed the report and looked forward to hearing the recommendations in due course.
- 44.4 The Chair stated that Councillor Peltzer Dunn's comments would be taken on board. She agreed it was important to learn from other towns, especially university towns.
- 44.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to Appendix 2 (the Scrutiny Panel report). He stated that it would have been helpful if this had had a heading stating that it was Appendix 2. The Chair concurred and stated that in future all appendices should have a correct heading.
- 44.6 **RESOLVED** - (1) That the evidence, findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel on Lettings Agents be noted (see Appendix 2).
- (2) That the responses summarised in Appendix 1 to this report be approved, subject to a further report on progress to a future Housing Cabinet Member Meeting, following consideration of the Panel's recommendations at the next meeting of the Strategic Housing Partnership.

The meeting concluded at 4.25pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

# HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 49

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Petitions</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>1 December 2011</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director, Resources</b>
<b>Contact Officer: Name:</b>	<b>Caroline De Marco</b> <b>Tel: 29-1063</b>
	<b>E-mail: caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>Queen's Park</b>

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 To receive any petitions presented at Council, any petitions submitted directly to Democratic Services or any e-Petition submitted via the council's website.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.2 That the Cabinet Member responds to the petitions either by noting it or writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views, or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter which may give consideration to a range of options, including the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- calling a referendum

#### 3. PETITIONS

##### 3. (i) Essex Place Petition

To receive the following petition presented at Council on 20 October by Linda King and signed by 128 people:

*"We, the undersigned, residents of Essex Place here by call on the Brighton and Hove City Council to honour the long standing promise to clad Essex Place there for cutting heating costs, reducing maintenance costs and also reducing Green House Gases protecting the environment."*

**3. (ii) Supports of the Essex Place Petition**

To receive the following petition presented at Council on 20 October by Linda King and signed by 31 people:

*“We, the undersigned, here by support the residents of Essex Place in their petition calling on the Brighton and Hove City Council to honour the long standing promise to clad Essex Place there for cutting heating costs, reducing maintenance costs and also reducing Green House Gases protecting the environment.”*

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**3.00pm 7 NOVEMBER 2011**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Wakefield (Chair); Duncan, Farrow, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Robins, Summers and Wells

**Tenant Representatives:** Ted Harman (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), David Murtagh (Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel), Trish Barnard (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Jean Davis (Central Area Housing Management Panel), Heather Hayes (North & East Area Housing Management Panel), David Avery (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), Roy Crowhurst (West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel), John Melson (Hi Rise Action Group), Muriel Briault (Leaseholders Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network).

**Apologies:** Councillor Bill Randall, Beverley Weaver, Tina Urquhart and Stuart Gover.

**PART ONE**

**41. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**41A Declarations of Substitute Members**

41.1 Roy Crowhurst declared that he was attending as a substitute for Beverley Weaver. Dave Avery declared that he was attending as a substitute for Tina Urquhart.

**41B Declarations of Interests**

41.2 There were none.

**41C Exclusion of the Press and Public**

41.3 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.

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

## 42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

### Suggested amendments

- 42.1 *Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes Limited (the Local Delivery Vehicle) – Item 27* - John Melson stated that Councillor Mears had remarked that it was essential that there be a clear audit trail on the income in relation to the Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes Limited. He asked for this to be recorded in the minutes.
- 42.2 *Allocation Policy – Item 38* – John Melson stated that Councillor Mears had asked for the changes to the Allocation Policy to be presented to the Area Panels and he wished this to be recorded in the minutes. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that the Allocations Policy would be presented to the Area Panels before coming back to the HMCC.
- 42.3 *Allocations Policy – paragraph 38.10* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that the second sentence should be reworded to make it clearer.

### Comments on the minutes

- 42.4 *Homemove/Internet Access – Paragraph 32.1, 34.4, 34.7* – John Melson stressed that many tenants used Homemove. He asked if it was possible to print a few copies of Homemove to place in council offices. The Chair replied that it had been agreed to put copies of Homemove in Community Centres. There had also been discussions in relation to placing Homemove in Sheltered Housing Schemes. She suggested that Mr Melson should send her a list of places where it might be helpful to place Homemove.
- 42.5 *Residents Involvement Strategy – Item 36* – John Melson expressed his concern that the strategy would have minimal impact. He considered that there was a need to rationalise groups and look to involve more people. There was a lack of information and feedback from groups.
- 42.6 *Establishing a Tenant Scrutiny Panel – Paragraph 36.4* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the sentences “The Chair replied that HMCC and the Area Panels would remain. In addition, there *could* be involvement at scrutiny level.” Councillor Peltzer asked if the second sentence should say “could” or “would”. The Chair replied that it was up to the Innovation Group to decide. There would be an Innovation Group and the Tenants Scrutiny Group would be tenants. Councillor Peltzer Dunn requested that the chair agree to say there would be involvement at scrutiny level. This was agreed by the Chair.
- 42.7 *Innovations Group – Paragraph 36.10* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked about the progress of establishing this group. The Chair replied that the Area Panels had elected 10 people to be part of the Innovations Group. Two dates were currently available for the first meeting.



- 42.8 John Melson stated that he wanted to highlight a failure of consultation on this issue. None of the city wide groups was policy making. He stated that every tenant should have their say. The Chair thanked Mr Melson for his comments but stressed that this matter had been discussed a great deal already. David Murtagh pointed out that this matter had been discussed at the Area Panels.
- 42.9 *Victoria Road Housing Office – paragraph 37.4* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if there was a timescale in relation to the relocation of the office to Portslade Town Hall. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the current office had not been marketed yet. It was likely to be some time in 2012 or even 2013 before the move would take place.
- 42.10 Councillor Peltzer Dunn acknowledged that the original decision had been taken 18 months ago by the previous administration, but commented that 18 months was a long time for a property to be marketed. The Chair agreed that she found the amount of time it took to get things done extremely frustrating. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion agreed to contact the Property and Design Team to obtain a written response.
- 42.11 Councillor Robins stated that people in Portslade found the current situation frustrating. They asked questions but were not getting answers. The Chair asked officers to produce a succinct A4 paper with information points on the current situation with regard to the Victoria Road Housing Office.
- 42.12 *Access to Portslade Housing Office - Paragraph 37.7* – John Melson stated that it should be noted that Chris Kift had a powered wheelchair.
- 42.13 Tom Whiting asked for an indicative vote on the accuracy of the minutes. An indicative vote of the tenant representatives was taken and it was unanimously agreed that the minutes should be agreed with suggested amendments.
- 42.14 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meeting held on 24 January 2011 be agreed with the suggested amendments. The Chair would sign the minutes once the amendments had been made.

#### 43. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

##### Fire at Leach Court

- 43.1 Jean Davis reported that on the evening of 29 October there had been a fire and bad water leak on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Leach Court. There had been a power failure as a result, with flats being plunged into darkness. Jean stated that on behalf of the tenants she wished to thank Nick Hibberd and other council officers along with the emergency services for dealing so well with this serious situation. She mentioned that Daniel Gray had spent 6 days with the tenants at Leach Court. Jean also thanked old Patcham Lodge for providing residents with wonderful meals and drinks.
- 43.2 The Chair also passed on her heartfelt thanks on behalf of the administration and all councillors.

**City Assembly**

- 43.3 The Chair reported that the City Assembly had been arranged for Saturday 19 November 2011 in the Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall. A crèche had been arranged for the first time. She hoped it would be a very inclusive day. A great deal of work had been carried out to ensure its success.

**Leaseholder Action Group - AGM**

- 43.4 The Chair reported that the Leaseholder Action Group AGM would take place on 26 November from 10.00am to 1.00pm. She urged all leaseholders to come along to this event.

**44. CALLOVER**

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

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

**45. PETITIONS**

- 45.1 There were none.

**46. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

- 46.1 There were none.

**47. DEPUTATIONS**

- 47.1 There were none.

**48. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

- 48.1 There were none.

**49. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

- 49.1 There were none.

**50. COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**

- 50.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which stated that the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing required that social housing providers had a Neighbourhood Policy in relation to their housing. The Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy set out in appendix 1 of the report, related to Brighton and Hove City Council's housing and its estates.

- 50.2 The Chair reported that the Committee would receive a joint PowerPoint presentation on all three policies submitted to this meeting. This would be followed by a discussion and individual decisions on each item.
- 50.3 The Head of Tenancy Services reported that all three policies were developed with the help of the Estate Services Monitoring Group. The Neighbourhood Policy was the overarching policy. Copies of the presentation were circulated to all members of the Committee.
- 50.4 John Melson congratulated Policy and Performance Officer on the Neighbourhood Policy report which he considered excellent. However, he noted in relation to paragraph 4.2 to 4.4 that there was no mention of consultation. This was the first time he had seen the report.
- 50.5 The Head of Tenancy Services agreed with Mr Melson's point. It was set out in the Tenant's Compact that the reports should be presented to the Area Panels. If the tenants wished to defer a decision on the reports until after the next round of Area Panels, officers would respect that decision. However they might like to decide that the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group's decision was sufficient.
- 50.6 Mr Melson stated that he had no wish to delay the decision. However he stressed the need to establish a clear audit trail. It was not right for a city wide group to decide for the whole of the city, without consulting various groups. He suggested that a small focus group should look at this matter.
- 50.7 The Chair stated that the Innovation Group would consider this matter.
- 50.8 Muriel Briault stated that there had been a good discussion on these policies at her group along with consultation with residents.
- 50.9 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the contents of the policy and relevant policies and procedures are noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to agree the proposed Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

## 51. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REVIEW

- 51.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which stated that Social Housing Regulatory Framework had set National Standards for Social Landlords to have policies that outlined how neighbourhoods would be looked after. The Grounds Maintenance Policy was one of a range of policies that would sit beneath the Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood Policy. The report set out the key service improvements that had come out of the Ground Maintenance review following partnership working with residents.
- 51.2 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation on all three policies submitted to the meeting. The presentation had been circulated to Members at the meeting.
- 51.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to a suggestion in the presentation that residents at Wellington Road had wanted to get involved in a grass cutting scheme. He asked about

insurance cover for the council, if a tenant or leaseholder were involved in an accident after taking on work on behalf of the council, and having taken part in risk assessment and training.

- 51.4 The Housing Manager replied that he had made enquires with the insurance section. They had not gone into details yet but had said that if the scheme were to take off they could provide cover under the council's insurance. However, there would have to be risk assessment and adequate training carried out.
- 51.5 Tom Whiting asked whether grass cutting was the most expensive item in ground maintenance. The Housing Manager explained that shrub beds had the highest unit price and grass cutting the cheapest unit price. He was not aware if the council spent more overall on grass cutting than shrub maintenance. The Chair informed Mr Whiting that this information would be sent to him.
- 51.6 Mr Whiting suggested that prostrate grasses were grown instead of vertical grasses in order to save on expenditure. The Chair replied that she had heard that one type of prostrate grass could be quite invasive and cause problems, however some might be ok. She suggested that Mr Whiting emailed her with details She would like to see actual costs. .
- 51.7 Heather Hayes expressed concern that the grass on many high banks was not cut, as a special grass cutter was required. She asked if the reason no action was taken was due to cost.
- 51.8 The Housing Manager reported that there were restrictions to working on banks due to health and safety. Officers were trying to address these problems. Meanwhile, some areas were being allowed to turn into scrub in order to attract wildlife. The Parks and Green Spaces Operations Manager reported that Health and Safety legislation had tightened up over the years. No charges were made for banks not that were not cut.
- 51.9 Barry Kent mentioned that Ferris Machines could cut grass on banks. The Parks and Green Spaces Manager confirmed that some banks in the city could be cut with Ferris Machines.
- 51.10 Ted Harman complained that a grass cutting machine had been driven too fast over the pavements. The Chair suggested that Mr Harman should phone the council immediately if this happened again.
- 51.11 Roy Crowhurst expressed concern that the Estate Development Budget was being spent on tree cutting. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that pruning work was carried out under the Grounds Maintenance Budget. Any additional projects such as new planting would be addressed through the Estate Development Budget.
- 51.12 An indicative vote was taken by tenants' representatives. 8 tenants voted for the recommendations. Three tenants abstained from voting.
- 51.13 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the contents of the policy and relevant policies and procedures are noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to agree the proposed Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

**52. HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY 2011**

- 52.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which stated that the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing required that the social housing providers had a Neighbourhood Policy. The Adverse Weather Policy (Appendix 1) sat under the Neighbourhood Policy and contributed to the neighbourhood and community standards outlined in the policy, and the Annual Report to Council Tenants and Leaseholders.
- 52.2 The Chair had agreed that the Committee would receive a joint PowerPoint presentation on all three policies submitted to this meeting. The presentation was circulated to all Members at the meeting.
- 52.3 Councillor Farrow stressed the need for housing to successfully liaise with other departments such as highways, particularly in relation to gritting. He also mentioned the serious flood in Lower Bevendean in 2000. Councillor Farrow suggested housing officers liaised with emergency planning officers to check the dams in Bevendean, before the start of inclement weather.
- 52.4 The Chair concurred with this view. She was keen to see cross department working in the Council.
- 52.5 Roy Crowhurst stated that he was pleased that there would be housing grit bins. He asked for assurance that they would be filled with grit. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that the bins were all filled with grit or were being filled with grit. There was a major incident team with 4 wheel drive cars that would prioritise helping vulnerable people in the event of bad weather. However, they could be used to re-fill grit bins if necessary. Officers would do their best to fill grit bins. Grit bins on estates were kept locked.
- 52.6 John Melson referred to paragraph 7.6 of the policy (areas of greatest risk) and asked if this included high rise blocks. The Head of Tenancy Services confirmed that it did include high rise blocks.
- 52.7 Mr Melson expressed concern about the distribution of grit bins. He applied for one some time ago and would like one supplied for his high rise block.
- 52.8 Heather Hayes mentioned that there were two steep hills to get to Crespin way in Hollingdean. A grit bin had been requested last year, but only arrived after the snow had gone. She asked if grit could be supplied in the event of snow if there was no grit bin. The Team Manager, Highways explained that there would be no more grit bins provided on highways. Officers were looking to provide grit drops. Ms Hayes' comments had been taken on board and officers were investigating whether a grit bag could be provided. Officers would do their best to provide grit bags before the event occurred.
- 52.9 Councillor Wells asked if the grit bins were kept locked. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that the bins were locked during the summer. They were unlocked during the winter. On estates, the grit was kept in cleaners' store cupboards. If there was an area that could store grit, officers could supply grit for that area.

- 52.10 Councillor Duncan mentioned that there had been a number of complaints last year that bins were blocking access for wheelchair users and buggies.
- 52.11 Councillor Farrow mentioned that a BBC TV programme had reported a prediction of snow showers in December and heavy snow in January . He suggested that the council should have everything in place in time for the predicted period of snow and ice.
- 52.12 Councillor Robins mentioned that he had attended a meeting during the morning where the Civil Contingency Manager had spoken. He had only indentified vulnerable buildings and not vulnerable people. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that officers did have data on where vulnerable residents lived. Officers were in the process of carrying out three yearly visits. The Chair asked Members to let officers know if they were aware of vulnerable tenants.
- 52.13 John Melson stated that one issue that was not properly addressed was the delivery of medicines in the event of snow and ice. Some areas were cut off and the delivery of medicines failed. He asked if it was possible for chemists to participate in a scheme where there could be a central point where an emergency “hit squad” could deliver emergency medication.
- 52.14 The Head of Tenancy Services explained that the major incident team included Adult Social Care and health officers. There would be 4 wheel drive cars working 24 hours a day to help vulnerable people with care packages. She would take back Mr Melson’s suggestion to see if something could be done.
- 52.15 David Murtagh mentioned that he had requested grit for a steep road in East Moulsecoomb. He had been told he had asked for too much. He stressed that residents needed to get to work and to the shops.
- 52.16 The Chair suggested that a map showing locations of grit should be made available. The Team Manager, Highways informed the Committee that there was already a map on the council’s website. The map located grit bins and grit drops. The Chair suggested it would be helpful to have printed copies of the map. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed to provide paper copies for the HMCC members.
- 52.17 An indicative vote was taken by tenants’ representatives. The vote was unanimously in favour of the recommendations.
- 52.18 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to a approve the Housing and Social Inclusion - Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011 for publication and implementation.

### **53. MANOR PLACE HOUSING OFFICE AND THE WHITEHAWK HUB**

- 53.1 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement. A copy of the presentation was provided to all members at the meeting. Members were informed that there was an opportunity to move staff to join community services colleagues at the Whitehawk Hub. The hub already housed a library, GP Surgery, Children’s Centre, Pharmacy, Health Centre, School, IT Learning Suite and Community Café.

- 53.2 It was considered that the move would provide a better service, and would save money with regard to accommodation. The money could be reinvested into homes and in helping the most vulnerable tenants. Visits to the Manor House Office in 2010 had been on average 25 a day. This figure had now reduced.
- 53.3 Conversations had been held with all Whitehawk tenant representatives, Ward Councillors, Residents, Staff, the Library Service, the Youth Services and the Children and Families Service.
- 53.4 The presentation detailed resident consultation. 203 tenants had been consulted. One impact of the move would be no cash taking facilities at the Hub. A map of the location of respondents was presented.
- 53.5 The presentation showed pie charts and graphs to report the consultation findings. 71% of tenants surveyed used the housing office to make payments. 11% had housing enquiries and 15% had other enquiries. A number of residents already used the Whitehawk Hub to visit the Chemist, GP, Library and School.
- 53.6 A graph showed alternative payment preference, including payment with a Paypoint Card, post office, direct debit, and the internet. The presentation listed methods of paying household bills and showed that 84% of tenants surveyed had a bank account. 55% had access to the internet and 37% had mobility concerns.
- 53.7 Residents' main concerns were listed. These included making payments, access to the Whitehawk Hub (distance, incline and icy weather) and the Robert Lodge Laundry (how to top up payment card).
- 53.8 The presentation showed how these concerns would be addressed. Officers would provide support to residents who needed to make payments. The Head of Customer Access & Business Improvement stressed that officers did not want the elderly or vulnerable tenants travelling to the Hub in bad weather. Officers could visit these tenants. Meanwhile in terms of distance, both offices were about the same distance from the bus stop. Following consultation, the path leading to the Hub had now been levelled, the bus stop had been moved and there was additional lighting. Gritting would be a priority for housing. There was more parking provided at the Whitehawk Hub. A secure machine would be provided for residents at Robert Lodge to top up their payment card.
- 53.9 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement listed the opportunities that would arise as a result of moving to the Hub. The move offered excellent value for money, and would result in savings that could be reinvested to help vulnerable tenants.
- 53.10 Councillor Farrow stated that his main concern was payments. He considered that the way forward was Paypoint. Residents would need to easily obtain a Paypoint card.
- 53.11 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the physical improvements to the Hub. He asked if the fears Councillor Mears referred to at the last meeting (paragraph 37.14 of the minutes) had all been addressed. These concerns related to the twitten leading to the Library being icy in winter, and elderly people having problems accessing the office.

- 53.12 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that those concerns had been addressed through levelling the path and moving the bus stop nearer to the hub. Residents at a meeting had told her that this was their main concern. Those residents who had visited the Hub had spoken highly of the improvements made. One was a resident using a mobility buggy.
- 53.13 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for clarification about cash payments. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement explained that 484 people in the Whitehawk area visited the office during the six month period to make cash payments. Most people visited weekly or fortnightly. This would be 23% of the Whitehawk population. Councillor Peltzer Dunn remarked that the 71% of tenants surveyed would make a much higher figure.
- 53.14 Ted Harman asked for clarification about the 84% figure quoted for people who had a bank account. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement explained that the consultation findings were based on the people interviewed. 203 people had been sampled. 84% of those people said they had a bank account.
- 53.15 John Melson made the point that because some people had a bank account did not mean they could pay by direct debit. Some people only used cash cards.
- 53.16 Councillor Mitchell was permitted to address the meeting as Ward Councillor. She stressed that there was concern about the bus service. Chris Kift was not happy with the path to the hub and Faith Matyszak had some issues.
- 53.17 Faith Matyszak confirmed that there was a bus service to the main road, but not to the cul-de-sac. The bus company had been requested to provide a small bus to that road but had refused.
- 53.18 Councillor Mitchell reported that there had been a history with regard to access to the hub. It had to be made to work after the event. The bus stop had been moved and the path rebuilt. There was now proper highway standard lighting and the path would need to be gritted. In terms of Whitehawk Road, she had taken the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director Communities to look at this issue. The Chief Executive was exploring whether housing land was required to create a turning circle. He supported the request to get Whitehawk Road (a highway road) on the gritting schedule.
- 53.19 The Chair expressed surprise that Whitehawk Road was not on the gritting schedule. She suggested that if the HMCC members were in agreement she would write a letter to the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director People, on behalf of the HMCC requesting that Whitehawk Road be put on the gritting schedule. This action was agreed.
- 53.20 Roy Crowhurst stated that he came from a generation who paid cash for everything. Many people preferred to pay by cash. He asked how many people it would affect overall. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement acknowledged that some people liked to pay by cash and a lot of people had expressed a preference for paypoint outlets. It was possible to pay at other locations. She remarked that there were 2000 residents on the Whitehawk estate and 203 persons were surveyed. This was high percentage.



- 53.21 Councillor Robins asked if people surveyed were for or against the changes. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement explained that this question had not been asked. However, those that supported the changes realised that there would be a cash benefit to the housing revenue account and agreed that wherever the office was situated it would not suit everyone. Tenant representatives were saying that people did not like change but could get use to change.
- 53.22 John Melson asked if Chris Kift and Faith Matyszak could speak on this issue. The Chair agreed.
- 53.23 Faith Matyszak stated that the cul-de-sac was created after Whitehawk was rebuilt. The through road to the Hub could not be put back. She stated that most people were against the move. It would be difficult for mothers with buggies who had no car and had to walk. The bus company had stated categorically that they would not supply a small bus to take people to the Hub. They stated that if the council wanted a bus they would have to fund it.
- 53.24 Chris Kift thought the number of people used for the survey was fine. The questions that were asked were the problem. He believed percentages could be misleading.
- 53.25 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement informed the meeting that residents had told her that access to the hub was good. It had improved a great deal since the period of consultation and a tenant with a mobility buggy had confirmed it had improved and that they had no problem in accessing the hub. People were already accessing services located at the Hub, including the GP surgery, health centre and school. With regard to the consultation, people were asked questions in order for the council to know the impact of the move.
- 53.26 The Chair remarked that the main issue related to access by bus. She stated that she would write to the bus company on behalf of the HMCC, regarding this issue. She would circulate the letter to all HMCC members before it was sent.
- 53.27 Councillor Peltzer Dunn queried the figures relating to people who paid by cash to the overall number of people who lived in the area. He felt the figures quoted in the presentation were misleading. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion stated that officers would investigate this matter and provide correct information to Councillor Peltzer Dunn. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement agreed that the figures did not seem to marry overall. It was possible that some people made multiple transactions.
- 53.28 David Murtagh felt that a decision on the move should be made by the people of Whitehawk.
- 53.29 Barry Kent stated that people with powered wheelchairs would have difficulty with dropped kerbs. Accessibility was not very good and if there was snow on slopes it was difficult to keep powered wheelchairs moving.
- 53.30 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement reaffirmed that she had been told access was better. The path leading to the hub had been levelled. Officers did not

want vulnerable tenants to visit in icy weather. Officers preferred to visit people in their own homes in these instances.

53.31 The Chair stated that the proposed move was ongoing and officers were working to improve the access. Any feedback would be welcome.

The meeting concluded at 5.57pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

# HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 56

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>1 December 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Housing and Social Inclusion</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Becky Purnell</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3022</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>becky.purnell@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing requires that social housing providers have a Neighbourhood Policy in relation their housing. The Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy (Appendix 1) relates to Brighton and Hove City Council's (the council) housing and its estates.  
<http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.19794>
- 1.2 This is an umbrella policy that brings together our policies, procedures relating to neighbourhood and estates management, local area cooperation, and anti- social behaviour. Policies, procedures and Equalities Impact Assessments and service pledges in relation to this are listed in Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the policy.
- 1.3 The aim of the policy is to create a safe, secure and well maintained environment, to develop sustainable and independent communities, and to ensure consistent and fair treatment of council housing residents.
- 1.4 This mission statement was developed by the Estates Services Monitoring Group. 'We recognise that all our housing areas are diverse and that no one size fits all. To ensure that we improve our services we will listen to residents' views to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.'

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the contents of the policy and relevant policies and procedures are noted. That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees the proposed Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy (Appendix 1)

### **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS**

- 3.1 The Tenants Services Authority introduced the current regulatory framework in 2010. We require a Neighbourhood Policy in order to meet the Neighbourhood and Community Standard; the aim of the standard is to encourage housing providers to contribute to the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.
- 3.2 To be agreed concurrently and sitting under this policy are the Grounds Maintenance and Adverse Weather Policies.
- 3.3 The council will work with residents to consider the best use of the communal room and spaces owned by Housing and develop policies including a use of Community Rooms Policy.
- 3.4 The council are currently running a Bulk Waste Project to look at how the council will reduce fly tipping in our Neighbourhoods and encourage recycling. This will be the subject of a future report to HMCC.
- 3.5 Local Management Agreements are a voluntary option for tenancy management as council tenants require our permission to do this. They are arrangements that give tenants and residents control over a limited range of services. The value of any contract has to be below the EU procurement limit, currently around £156,000.
- 3.6 This policy fits in with Housing and Social Inclusion's key objectives of tenancy, neighbourhood and community and resident involvement and empowerment.
- 3.7 This policy also contributes to the Housing Strategy's vision of *enabling healthy homes, healthy lives and a healthy city that reduces inequality and offers independence, choice and a high quality of life.*
- 3.8 It recognises the *Tenant Participation Compact* agreed with residents that gives tenants a range of options about how they can shape, influence and monitor housing matters and local decisions which affect them.
- 3.9 This work is part of the Housing Commission Framework and the Performance Compact for Housing & Social Inclusion agreed with the Lead Commissioner Housing (activity outcome 'Neighbourhood & Community').
- 3.10 While the policy relates only to the council's housing and its estates historically council housing has engaged with a range of neighbourhood forums with a focus on regeneration, renewal and community safety and this policy recognises the importance of partnership working to develop sustainable and independent communities and reiterates our commitment to this work.

### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The mission statement within the policy was written and agreed by the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

- 4.2 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.
- 4.3 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from front line managers during September 2011. The support for community clear up days was endorsed.
- 4.4 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the General Management Team on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011.
- 4.5 The draft policy (Appendix 1) was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

**5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs of drawing up this policy have been met within current budget resources within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). One objective of the policy is ‘ to ensure that Brighton & Hove City Council (the council) maintains and improves the common areas around its housing stock to increase satisfaction and enable residents to take pride in the environment where they live’. Any plans to improve common areas will be included in the Capital Programme or the Revenue Budget as appropriate

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*Date: 18/10/11*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Section 193 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 empowers the regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) to set standards as to the financial management, the nature, extent and quality of accommodation and facilities provided in connection with social housing. In pursuance of that power the TSA has set 6 standards, including a Neighbourhood and Community Standard which states that “registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.” The TSA can take enforcement action where a provider fails to meet a standard under section 193. The proposed Neighbourhood Policy will demonstrate that the Council is properly addressing the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Name Liz Woodley*

*Date: 19/10/11*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 All of the policies which sit beneath the Neighbourhood Policy are subject to Equality Impact Assessments. Housing and Social Inclusion has already undertaken various Equality Impact Assessments for existing policies (see Appendix 4 of the policy).

Reviews of the policy (Appendix 1) will be undertaken in consultation with the Estates Services Monitoring Group.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Housing is one of the key objectives in the council's sustainability strategy that 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.

Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will improve the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.

Key to this is the commitment to provide opportunities and encourage residents to become involved with caring for their neighbourhoods, for example by getting involved with estate inspections or training in and delivering the Rate Your Estate programme.

The Council have developed the service pledges *Getting Involved, Looking After Your Home, Looking After Your Neighbourhood, Dealing With Anti Social Behaviour, Managing Your Tenancy, Living in Sheltered Housing, Council Leaseholders and Garages and Car Parks* through consultation with residents about what is important to them; these are monitored and reported.

The commitment to partnership working with residents, other council departments, and external agencies enable a coordinated approach to problem solving that will provide value for money for residents, and the city.

This policy reinforces Housing and Social Inclusions' commitment to the council's Environmental Policy.

A core principle of the neighbourhood policy and the policies and procedures that sit beneath it is to have a preventative approach, be it with tree maintenance or anti social behaviour; early intervention improves the service we give our customers and saves money.

Another key principle is the commitment to promote activities that have a minimal impact on the environment, for example minimising the use of pesticides with a view to eradicating them, the use of environmentally friendly chemicals that are not tested on animals as far as practicably possible; promoting recycling; and promoting growing projects.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 This policy will reinforce Housing and Social Inclusion's commitment to reminding tenants and leaseholders of their Tenancy and Occupancy Agreements.

An improved physical environment is known to improve community safety and reduce the fear of crime.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The policy development in this area was undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

The opportunities for improved partnership working will increase knowledge of local issues, avoid duplication, and provide better value for money.

#### Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will help to prevent ill health by improving the environment where our residents live, and increasing opportunities for residents to influence and have choice about services in the neighbourhoods where they live.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 This policy contributes to the council priorities of promoting enterprise and learning, reducing crime and improving safety, improving health and well-being, strengthening communities and involving people, improving housing and affordability, and living within environmental limits and enhancing the environment- these are being reviewed at Full Council in October.

This policy also contributes to the 2020 Community Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Relevant corporate strategies and policies are outlined in Appendix 1 of the policy.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement of the regulator to have a neighbourhood policy.

- 6.2 If the council did not have a neighbourhood policy the quality of our neighbourhood and estates management could decline leading to the deterioration of the quality of our stock, an increase in anti social behaviour, reduced opportunities for residents to monitor the quality of our services, and reduced opportunities for residents to improve the quality of their lives. There would also be a risk that our partnership working on this agenda could decline.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 A neighbourhood policy is required under the regulatory requirements and this provides Housing and Social inclusion with an opportunity to highlight our commitment to developing sustainable communities and improving the environment, and to bring together our policies and procedures together into one place.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendix:**

1. Draft Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy



## APPENDIX ONE: DRAFT COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY



### HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

#### DRAFT COUNCIL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (VERSION 7)

##### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy sets out the framework and measures we have developed to ensure effective and responsive estate and neighbourhood management in relation to Brighton and Hove City Council's (the council) housing and its estates.
- 1.2. We recognise that we need to do more than just improve the physical condition of our properties to bring about lasting, sustainable improvements to local communities.
- 1.3. This policy has been developed jointly by members of the Housing Cabinet Member, the Housing Management Consultative Committee, the Estates Services Monitoring Group and staff.
- 1.4. This mission statement was developed by the Estates Services Monitoring Group. 'We recognise that all our housing areas are diverse and that no one size fits all. To ensure that we improve our services we will listen to residents' views to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.'

##### 2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.2 To ensure that the council maintains and improves the common areas on housing land around its housing stock to increase satisfaction and enable residents to take pride in the environment where they live.
- 2.3 To ensure that a structured and uniform approach to agreed neighbourhood and community standards is used to ensure the consistent and fair treatment of all residents.
- 2.4 To work in partnership with residents and other agencies to develop sustainable and independent communities and to create a safe, secure and well maintained environment. This is about the physical environment and support and advice offered to residents.
- 2.5 To ensure that estate and neighbourhood management services provide value for money and are planned, adequately resourced, effectively controlled, budgeted and resourced.

- 2.6 To ensure that our customers are involved in developing, monitoring and reviewing our estates and neighbourhood management services.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all the common areas of homes and estates owned or managed by the council.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all the tenancies and leases managed by the council.

### **4. Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance**

- 4.1 We will ensure that the estates are managed in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation including the following
- Tenancy Agreement
  - Tenant Handbook
  - Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
  - Regulatory Framework for Social Housing

### **5. Developing Sustainable Communities**

- 5.1 We recognise that estate and neighbourhood management has to be tackled in partnership because no single agency can tackle such wide ranging issues and we are committed to developing effective partnership working.
- 5.2 We work with the police, social services, health services and community and voluntary organisations to improve the quality of life of residents.
- 5.3 We will work with residents and partners to support the improvement of neighbourhoods by having an active role in various neighbourhood forums.
- 5.4 We are committed to developing the skills and knowledge of residents and residents groups to increase community involvement in the management of our estates and the number of community led projects and to increase opportunities for residents to improve their skills.
- 5.5 We will work with residents to ensure that our communal facilities are used for optimal community benefit, are places where people want to be, are safe, accessible and meet legal requirements.
- 5.6 We recognise that all our work has effects on the environment and we are committed to reducing our environmental impact wherever possible by promoting energy efficiency, biodiversity, waste prevention, recycling and environmental awareness to staff and residents.

### **6. Estates Management**

- 6.1 We ensure that the communal areas of our properties and estates are clean and safe through Housing and Social Inclusion's policies and procedures (see Appendices 2 and 3).

- 6.2 We monitor the performance of estates based services and report this to the Estates Services Monitoring Group, the Partnership Group, the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group, and the Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- 6.3 We will display the cleaning standards in each block where we clean communal areas.
- 6.4 Residents will be able to chose what degree they get involved in monitoring and developing services on our estates though making a report, completing surveys, attending estates inspections, tenant and resident meetings, and taking part in our resident involvement framework.
- 6.5 We will encourage, train and support interested residents to take part in the “Rate Your Estate” programme.
- 6.6 We will provide support and training and help identify funding to residents groups who want to lead a project to improve the estate such as a community clear up day or a community gardening project.
- 6.7 Residents are able to prioritise spending on improvements to communal areas through the Estates Development Budget.
- 6.8 We will provide positive support and training to resident groups who want to explore setting up a Local Management Agreement.
- 6.9 We reprioritise work on our estates according to the adverse weather policy.

## **7. Enforcement of Tenancy Conditions**

- 7.1 We will encourage residents to help keep estates and communal areas clean, safe and well maintained by reminding them of their responsibilities when they sign their tenancy agreement, in the Tenant Handbook, newsletters, estate visits and on the website, and where necessary taking action to enforce the terms of their tenancy and leaseholder agreements.

## **8. Resources**

The effective delivery of this Policy is dependant upon

- 8.1 Good quality design and construction of developments.
- 8.2 A responsive and effective reactive repairs service.
- 8.3 Planned Maintenance Programme including provision for cyclical and major repairs.
- 8.4 Regular inspections by staff to quickly identify issues and take appropriate and preventative or remedial action.
- 8.5 The effective provision of ground maintenance services.

- 8.6 The effective provision of communal cleaning services.
- 8.7 Tenants' and leaseholders adherence to their tenancy and occupancy agreements.
- 8.8 The council will closely monitor the impact and quality of the services it provides, either directly or through agents, including the use of surveys and other means to record resident satisfaction.
- 8.9 Residents also have a key role to play in helping the council to monitor the provision of services and copies of service specifications will be made available to residents on request.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

- 9.1 We will monitor and review this policy in conjunction with residents to ensure its effectiveness and relevance to the council's stated aims and objectives.
- 9.2 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion has overall responsibility for the on-going monitoring of the policy through the work of frontline staff, particularly those engaged in resident involvement directly. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Strategic Director of Place.
- 9.3 In implementing this policy staff will refer to corporate strategies and policies and Housing and Social Inclusion policies and procedures and service pledges outlined in Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. These are subject to their own review processes.

## **APPENDIX 1: Corporate Strategies and Policies**

- 1.1 Complaints Policy
- 1.2 Community Engagement Framework
- 1.3 Environmental Policy
- 1.4 Equalities and Inclusion Policy
- 1.5 Data Protection
- 1.6 Health and Safety
- 1.7 Housing Strategy
- 1.8 Safeguarding Children and Adults Policies and Procedures
- 1.9 Social Enterprise Strategy
- 1.10 Social Inclusion Strategy
- 1.11 Sustainable Community Strategy
- 1.12 Reducing Inequalities Review
- 1.13 State of the City Report 2011

## **APPENDIX 2: Housing and Social Inclusion Policies**

- 2.1 Adverse Weather - to be agreed with this policy
- 2.2 Allocations
- 2.3 Estates Inspection
- 2.4 Empty Homes Management
- 2.5 Grounds Maintenance - to be agreed with this policy

- 2.6 Recharges
- 2.7 Repairs and Maintenance
- 2.8 Rent and Service Charges
- 2.9 Tenancy and Occupancy Agreements
- 2.10 Use of Community Assets- to be developed
- 2.11 Tenant Participation Compact

### **APPENDIX 3: Housing and Social Inclusion Procedures**

A range of Housing and Social Inclusion procedures support this Policy document to ensure a consistent and effective approach to service delivery. These include:

- 3.1 Abandoned Vehicles
- 3.2 Access to and Sale of HRA land
- 3.3 Animals and Animal Welfare
- 3.4 Anti-Social Behaviour
- 3.5 Demoted Tenancies
- 3.6 Estates Development Budget
- 3.7 Estates Inspections
- 3.8 Estates Monitoring
- 3.9 Fire Safety
- 3.10 Garages and Car Parking Spaces
- 3.11 Garden Standards
- 3.12 Grounds Maintenance and Trees
- 3.13 Hard standings or Driveways
- 3.14 Improvement Works to Council Manages Properties
- 3.15 Information Exchange for Improving Crime and Disorder
- 3.16 Parking on HRA land
- 3.17 Play Areas
- 3.18 Property Inspections
- 3.19 Racist Incidents and Racial Harassment
- 3.20 Repairs and Maintenance
- 3.21 Tenant Meeting Room Facilities
- 3.22 Storage of Mobility Scooters – to be developed

### **APPENDIX 4: Relevant Equality Impact Assessments**

- 4.1 ASB
- 4.2 Estate Inspections
- 4.3 Estates Service
- 4.4 Grounds Maintenance
- 4.5 Housing Management Customer Access Review
- 4.6 Housing Management Service Improvement Plan
- 4.7 Housing Repairs, Refurbishment and Improvement Strategic Partnership
- 4.8 HRA Budget
- 4.9 Laundry Facilities
- 4.10 Mobility Scooters
- 4.11 Mystery Shopping
- 4.12 Resident Involvement
- 4.13 Revised Tenancy Agreement
- 4.14 Right to Buy and Leasehold Team
- 4.15 Sheltered

- 4.16 Tenancy Management Tenant Handbook
- 4.17 Tenant Services Authority Work Programme

### **APPENDIX 5: Council Housing Service Pledges**

Please note that these service pledges were developed with our customers to ensure that our services meet local needs. These will be reviewed on a regular basis. Full details of the service pledges are available on our website.

- 5.1 Getting Involved
- 5.2 Looking After Your Home
- 5.3 Looking After Your Neighbourhood
- 5.4 Dealing With Anti Social Behaviour
- 5.5 Managing Your Tenancy
- 5.6 Living in Sheltered Housing
- 5.7 Council Leaseholders
- 5.8 Garages and Car Parks

**Policy Review Date:** .....

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

- 1. None

### **Background Documents**

- 1. None

# HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 57

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Grounds Maintenance Review</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>1 December 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director of Place</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Graham Page</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 293354
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Graham.page@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Forward Plan No: HSG 14247</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Social Housing Regulatory Framework has set National Standards for Social Landlords to have policies that outline how neighbourhoods will be looked after. The Grounds Maintenance Policy is one of a range of policies that will sit beneath the Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- 1.2 The new Corporate Plan has set priorities around reducing inequality, creating sustainable communities and increasing community empowerment. These are central themes of the Grounds Maintenance Policy.
- 1.3 The report sets out the keys service improvements that have come out of the Grounds Maintenance review following partnership working with residents.
- 1.4 The Grounds Maintenance Policy (appendix 1) has been developed using the key themes that residents raised in the pilot areas about how the grounds maintenance service should be delivered. This policy is one of a range of Neighbourhood Policies which set out how Housing and Social Inclusion seeks to work with residents to look after our housing estates and land which are the responsibility of the Housing Revenue Account
- 1.5 We have reviewed 250 housing sites with City Parks and recalculated the Bill of Quantities. This has enabled us to ensure that residents will be paying for the service that they receive. There will be a slight decrease in the overall cost of around £10000.
- 1.6 It is also proposed that the Health and Safety Maintenance of Trees is included within the Bill of Quantities and relevant service charges and recharges are made to residents rather than the current situation where these are paid for from the wider Housing Revenue Account and thus subsidised by residents who do not have trees.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- .2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees to the new Grounds Maintenance Policy which has been developed by the Estate Services Monitoring Group (ESMG).
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves a rolling programme of site by site grounds maintenance reviews.
- 2.3 That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the continuation of current arrangements with City Parks for grounds maintenance services.

## 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Five pilot areas were identified across the City which were all very different to reflect the diversity of our housing sites. These pilots were used to explore what improvements residents wanted to see from the service
- 3.2 Due to the complexity and numbers of residents involved in the pilot areas, the areas were split into phases. Phase 1 was completed in October 2010, and phase 2 in November 2010 with phase 3 completed in December 2010. The five pilot locations were;

Wickhurst Rise Maisonettes	Mile Oak Portslade	West Area	Phase 1
Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge	Upper Hollingdean Road	North Area	Phase 1
Fitch Drive, Ryelands Drive and Thorndean Road	Bevendean and Bates Estate	East Area	Phase 2
Elwyn Jones Court (sheltered scheme)	Carden Avenue Patcham	North Area	Phase 2
Essex Street, Hampshire Court and Wiltshire House	Eastern Road area	Central Area	Phase 3

- 3.3 Residents in the pilot areas were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire that presented a 'menu of services' (appendix 2). The group were keen to include questions on food growing and increasing biodiversity and conservation. Residents were given feedback on the pilot outcomes and the opportunity to attend resident forums' and put questions to officers
- 3.4 Walkabouts were undertaken allowing the opportunity for residents to scrutinise the standards of the grounds maintenance. On some sites, officers have acknowledged that the standards needed to be improved and an action plan was



agreed and put in place. On other occasions, resident's expectations were found to exceed what should be achieved under the service contract.

- 3.5 All pilots were evaluated but it proved difficult to establish any real consensus among residents about the grounds maintenance service. Residents had varying views of the grounds maintenance service depending on their experience of the service they received and what their expectations were.

Pilot Area	Issue identified by Tenants	Proposed Solutions
Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge	Low satisfaction with shrub bed maintenance, shrubs have died	Residents encouraged to make bids through EDB when replanting is required
	Sycamores undermining boundary wall	Felled for Health & Safety reasons
	Residents interested in promoting wildlife and conservation	Trees pruned by arboriculture team, wildlife area set up in wooded area within the grounds (with support from Sussex Wildlife Trust)
Wickhurst Rise	Grounds reasonably looked after, but trees and shrubs lacked interest	Resident EDB bid for raised beds for vegetable growing and fruit trees on grass bank
	Dog fouling a problem	Local event in Sept 2011 with Animal Welfare Officer to raise awareness
Bates Estate	Shrub beds below standard. Housing site plans out of date	Revised site plans produced
Fitch Drive	Difficult to maintain due to steep banks	Community Payback Team cleared area of rubbish and fly tipping with the support of the estates service  City Parks side flailed the bank of brambles from the car park, leaving the top part for wildlife  Maintaining steep bank remains difficult for health and safety reasons
Elwyn Jones Court	Resident dissatisfaction with planting	Community Payback team cleared site and City Parks replanted with flowering plants  Sussex Wildlife Trust gave advice to residents on planting and attracting butterflies and other wildlife  Improvement marked by Garden

		Party in July 2011, opened by the Chief Executive
Hampshire Court	Successful community gardening club that has won 'City in Bloom' competition in previous years. Confusion over which beds are maintained by residents and which by the council	Resolved through meeting with Chair of resident association
	ESMG and residents on the pilot areas want the Council to consider wildlife and biodiversity when planting wildflowers and shrub planting is suitable for wildlife	Grounds Maintenance Service pledge established

### Project outcomes that will shape service improvements

3.6 The 250 site paper plans were checked by Housing and City Parks staff and 75 were found to have discrepancies. These particular sites were re-measured and the Bill of Quantities adjusted to calculate the revised cost of the grounds maintenance service. The adjustments also ensure that residents will not be charged for areas that they are maintaining themselves. They have now been put on an electronic database which can more easily be updated. This means that we can review the way each site is maintained with residents and make changes to the Bill of Quantities and service charges accordingly. We are hoping to make this system available on the website so that residents can see what to expect in relation to the maintenance of their communal areas.

3.7 We have produced a revised specification for the grounds maintenance service developed with City Parks using pilot locations to test and cost out the service improvements.

As a result of the review the following service improvements have been implemented:

- Staff in Housing and City Parks have received additional training for example in Tree assessment and Shrub Maintenance.
- Formal joint working arrangements between Housing Estates Service and City Parks has improved. An example of this is the extension of litter picks carried out by the Estates service to include shrub beds and car parking areas.
- Following trials with City Parks and Estate Services we have established that we only need to spray once on most sites in order to control weeds on hard surfaces. This treatment is followed some weeks later by Estate Services staff who remove dead weeds and sweep away the soil from hard surfaces. This is an informal arrangement at present which we intend to formalise with a programmed schedule of works. Housing Officers will be briefed so that a reactive spray only occurs if necessary.

- Consideration is being given to using the Highways department weed spraying vehicles to treat our garage and car parking sites. Further work is required on the maintenance of car parks and garages sites and this will be the subject of a future report.
  - Active involvement of residents in promoting wildlife and conservation is being supported. Residents have responded positively by engaging with Sussex Wildlife Trust through the Access to Nature Project Officer.
- 3.8 The possibility of giving tenants greater control of certain grounds maintenance tasks (such as grass cutting) is being piloted with Wellington Road Estate. Work is taking place with Health & Safety and Insurance teams to ensure risk assessments, training and insurance cover is in place. If residents agree to the proposal, this will be piloted and will form the template for a Local Management Agreement. This could be extended to other areas if residents show an interest.
- 3.9 The Project has provided an excellent example of joint working between different Council Departments, residents, Community Payback and the Voluntary Sector to provide a Value for Money service that residents want. Under the direction of the Chair of the Bristol Estate, the Community Payback Team have been involved in painting public ways, marking steps, painting handrails and cutting back bushes that has improved the appearance and feel of the estate

#### **Maintenance of trees on housing sites**

- 3.10 The maintenance of trees on Housing Sites is not currently included in the grounds maintenance bill of quantities. City Parks Arboriculture team manage health & safety tree work. Last year, housing staff were given training to enable them to identify potential health and safety problems with trees and working with residents identified a number of long term tree problems which have now been addressed. The budget for tree maintenance was £21,260 for 2011-12 but has been increased to £40,920 for this year only to allow for these extra tree works.
- 3.11 Currently tree maintenance for communal areas and for individual gardens is paid from the HRA and is therefore being subsidised by residents who do not have trees in their gardens or communal areas. A fairer way of covering this cost might be for the costs to be included in the grounds maintenance service charge for communal areas and to be directly recharged to council tenants who have trees in their private gardens.
- 3.12 Any new planting or maintenance of trees that is not health and safety related will continue to need to be funded through the Estates Development Budget
- 3.13 The grounds maintenance services for housing land are currently provided by the Council's in-house service, City Parks, under a service level agreement. The arrangements have worked well and the Service Level Agreements are designed to deliver value for money, including improvements in the quality of service through reviews of the type set out in this report. It is therefore recommended that the current arrangements continue in place.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Resident involvement has been crucial in reviewing the Grounds Maintenance Service which was last looked at in 2004 as part of the wider citywide contract.
- 4.2 The review was undertaken and the policy developed in partnership with Estate Services Monitoring Group, Housing and Social Inclusion and City Parks. Collectively we explored residents concerns and identified what are the core issues with the service.
- 4.3 Initially, the Estate Services Monitoring Group focused on the three key aspects of the Social Housing Regulatory Framework National Standards, namely;
- Emphasis on outcomes- what are resident's priorities for the grounds maintenance service
  - Initial assessment of strengths and weakness of the service
  - Score the service and identify parts of the service and geographical areas which should be prioritised for improvement
- 4.4 The group initially developed a Grounds Maintenance Action Plan to explore residents concerns, identify the core issues and consider recommendations. This included setting up 5 pilot areas

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The changes to budgets for grounds maintenance and tree maintenance to reflect the new bill of quantities will be included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget report which will report in February 2012. The estimated budget savings as a result of the changes outlined in this report are £7,000,

As a result of the changes to the detailed bill of quantities and an inflationary increase, new service charges for grounds maintenance will be calculated and applied from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012. Any changes will be included within the (HRA) Budget report as mentioned above. At this time a weekly charge for tree maintenance (for trees on communal land) will be added to the charge if agreed by this committee. The grounds maintenance service charges currently range from 4p per week to £2.45. Without the effects of inflation, most charges will stay the same or reduce slightly as a result of the changes outlined in this report. Any individual increases to charges will be due to increased levels of service receivable, agreed by residents.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*Date: 17/10/11*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The proposals in this report are consistent with legal requirements and within the powers of the Cabinet Member for Housing under the Council's constitution. There are no adverse Human Rights implications arising from the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis Date: 25.11.2011*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An EIA has been completed and is (appendix 3) to the report. Key outcomes were to achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service delivers where they live. Being more responsive to resident requirements and letting them know what they are getting from the service. Elwyn Jones Court is an example where landscaping was not suitable for residents and flowerbeds were replanted with the plants they wanted.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 ESGM members were keen for residents to be given the opportunity to consider increasing bio diversity and food growing on housing land. Although food growing has not been something that residents have shown an interest in on the pilot sites, residents have shown keen interest in increasing bio diversity. On a number of sites schemes have been introduced, such as conservation areas and wildflower planting facilitated by Sussex Wildlife Trust engaging with Community Groups. Recognised the value of scrub for wildlife and altered shrub bed maintenance to reflect this.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 It is well documented that the real and perceived safety and well being of residents is improved when the area where they live is looked after. This reduces fly tipping, vandalism and criminal damage. Encouraging residents to participate in grounds maintenance empowers them to take an interest and make improvements. Related services are more integrated on our estates so the council can respond to what residents want.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Opportunity for good partnership working across council departments with the voluntary sector and residents being involved. The review has provided a good opportunity to pilot a Local Management Agreement. Risks have been reduced by having more up to date electronic mapping and specification that can be easily monitored and adapted. A major step in managing trees to decrease the risk has been taken. Not able to have all trees inspected, but a basic level of training has been given to officers and some residents to identify those trees that pose a potential risk. Taken the opportunity to add value by supporting residents and facilitating them to make changes to their estate for the better.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Promoting opportunities for residents to get involved in gardening or growing their own food. Promoting opportunities for community working which can reduce social isolation. Ensuring areas are well maintained reduces the risk of vermin and associated risks. Only a few housing sites on the pilot area were affected by fly tipping. Some sites that had problems have been solved, but on others made people aware so that it can be dealt with by the agencies concerned. The introduction of quarterly estate inspections, cleaning teams on sites with blocks of flats and officers being out on the estate has helped to identify and tackle problem areas.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Revised grounds maintenance specification will provide a more consistent service across the city. The proposals clearly links to priorities in the Corporate Plan to tackle inequalities by involving residents, communities and voluntary groups in everything we do i.e. growing projects. Make Brighton & Hove Britain's greenest City by using sustainable products and methodology to improve the biodiversity of our neighbourhoods. Engage with residents and be more transparent about the service by providing choices and by recognising that 'one size does not fit all'

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

- 6.1 The Project officer is a member of the HouseMark Performance Improvement and some preliminary investigations have been undertaken to benchmark grounds maintenance service against other local authorities. However, this is proving difficult as authorities do not provide, measure or cost services consistently. As we have developed close links with Crawley BC by reciprocating resident inspections of our estates we will utilise this opportunity to look at benchmarking our grounds maintenance and estate service against theirs
- 6.2 Residents to take over the management of all Grounds Maintenance on housing sites. Residents have not expressed interest so far. Local Management Agreement is piloting this approach. Could be considered for the future if resident want this.
- 6.3 Contracting out to another organisation. Residents have not expressed an interest in this option, but could in the future. The advantages of keeping it 'in house' are the economies of scale, consistency and continuity of service across council owned land. City Parks as a whole has been subject to its own tendering process.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The arrangements for City Parks to maintain housing land is working well and as a result of this review officers are satisfied that this option provides the best Value for Money for residents and the council.
- 7.2 An ongoing programme of grounds maintenance review allows residents to be involved in decisions about their local environment and the extent to which they want to be involved or pay a service charge for this service to be provided.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Grounds Maintenance Policy
2. Grounds Maintenance Questionnaire
3. Equalities Impact Assessment

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. Decent Homes, Decent Spaces
2. Cleaner, Safer Greener Communities agenda
3. Bill of Quantities and Specification





## Appendix 1



### **Brighton & Hove City Council**

#### HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

#### **COUNCIL HOUSING - GROUNDS MAINTENANCE POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Social Housing Regulatory Framework has set National Standards for Social Landlords to have policies that outline how neighbourhoods will be looked after. The Grounds Maintenance Policy is one of a range of policies that will sit beneath the Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- 1.2 The Grounds Maintenance Policy has been developed using the key themes that residents raised in the pilot areas about how the grounds maintenance service should be delivered. This policy is one of a range of Neighbourhood Policies which set out how Housing and Social Inclusion seeks to work with residents to look after our housing estates and land which is the responsibility of the Housing Revenue Account
- 1.3 Grounds Maintenance Contract is undertaken by CityParks on Housing Land. The contract includes basic maintenance of grass, shrubs and hedges. Alterations to the grounds of housing sites are made in consultation with Housing Officers and residents. Addition of new features or replanting of beds is separately funded by housing or residents.
- 1.4 In some situations partners or residents are able to enhance the service provided. By improving joint working with our key partners we have been able to facilitate improvements to housing sites. Our partners include Sussex Wildlife Trust, Community Payback Team and Harvest. Although residents chose not to use Harvest in the pilots they are available to give support to residents interested in growing their own food.
- 1.5 The Ground Maintenance Policy has been developed in line with Tenant Services Authority guidelines. Resident involvement has been crucial in the development of this policy.
- 1.6 Council officers including staff from CityParks, CityClean, Estate Services and Tenancy Management staff will all work together to provide a suitable environment for residents to live in.

### **2. Grounds Maintenance Service**

- 2.1 Resident Involvement  
Through a rolling programme we aim to consult residents on the grounds maintenance service they receive. We have done this successfully on five pilot housing areas across the City. The level of resident interest will vary and where there is clear consensus of what residents' want we will aim to provide this where practicably possible
- 2.2 Service Charges  
We will ensure that services charges reflect the service that residents actually receive. Neighbourhood teams are responsible for ensuring that any changes to Housing site plans are recorded on the electronic database. The information will be provided to residents in an

easily understandable format so they can understand what they are paying for. We aim to make this information available to all residents via our website as soon as is practicably possible

### 2.3 Flexibility

We will endeavour to be as flexible and responsive as possible and work with residents to resolve any issues or concerns. As far as possible we will facilitate residents who wish to maintain their own grounds but only where a full consultation has been carried out with all residents potentially affected.

### 2.4 Diversity

We recognise that our estates are diverse and that no 'one size fits all'. To ensure we improve our services we will listen to residents to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.

### 2.5 Environmental & Sustainability

The Grounds Maintenance Service will minimise any adverse environmental effects. The environmental effect of removing shrubs or scrub areas will always be considered along side other factors, prior to an agreement to remove them. It is recognised that scrub banks are good for wildlife and need to be preserved to encourage bio-diversity for wildlife. We will encourage residents to give added environmental value to where they live. And will either directly assist them or put them in contact with partner organisations.

We will minimise the use of pesticides and encourage organic methods of gardening as far as is practicably possible.

### 2.6 Service Standards

We aim to make it clear what grounds maintenance service each site will receive and who to contact to report problems. This could be achieved in two ways by having the Housing Officer as the point of contact and providing residents with more information about the grounds maintenance service where they live. The Neighbourhood Policy document will encompass grounds maintenance and highlight any significant standard failings.

### 2.7 Health & Safety

Operative working on site will work within to Health & Safety procedures to ensure the well being of residents and operatives alike. Some sites have steep banks and gradients that cannot be maintained due to health & safety considerations.

### 2.8 Economic

Housing aim to provide a value for money service through better integration with CityParks and Estate Service Teams. If residents want to spend more money and give 'additionality' to an area where they live we will work with partners to meet that local need.

### 2.9 Bio-sphere

The grounds maintenance service will adopt a 'green approach' to make Brighton & Hove the 'greenest city in Britain'. Conservation and wildflower planting will be encouraged where it occurs naturally, such as on chalky banks

### 2.10 Food Growing projects

Where residents wish to participate in a food growing project we will aim to facilitate this. Although interest among residents for food growing projects is limited at the moment, we will continue highlight this as an option for residents to work with our food growing partners.

### **3. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

- 3.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Housing when consulting and reviewing grounds maintenance services.
- 3.2 The council is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty. The council will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Equalities Legislation and Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom we work, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

### **4. This Policy should be read in conjunction with**

- Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- Housing and Social Inclusion Business Continuity Plans
- Equality Impact Assessment

### **5. Reviews**

- 5.1 The Business Improvement Manager Tenancy Management will review the policy every three years (from the date of approval) to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulation that impacts on the obligations of the council, changes to council business practices or in the light of management system audits.

### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 This policy has been subject to an EIA screening and was carried out by the Projects Officer who reviewed the Grounds Maintenance Service. This is to achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service is and where they want it to be to meet their aspirations. Further data will be collected upon implementation of this policy, and a further screening will take place after twelve months of operation.





# Grounds Maintenance Service Standards Phase Three

**Phase three applies to Essex Street flats, Hampshire Court and Wiltshire House**

Where you live has been chosen as one of our 'pilot areas' on our Housing estates to look at the quality of the grounds maintenance service we provide.

This is your opportunity to tell us about the current service and how the service could be improved.

**Please read the instruction for each question before answering.**

**Please leave blank any questions that you do not wish to answer or do not have an answer for.**

## Grounds Maintenance Survey 3

### Location

**Where do you live?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Essex Street flats .....

Hampshire Court .....

Wiltshire House .....

### One

**1. Overall how satisfied are you with the service?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Very Satisfied .....

Satisfied .....

Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied .....

Dissatisfied .....

Very Dissatisfied .....

**2. How would you rate this service out of 10?**

*(please tick one answer)*

1 ....  2 ....  3 ....  4 ....  5 ....  6 ....  7 ....  8 ....  9 ....  10 ....

**3. What could we do to make it a ten?**

## Two

### 4. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of the Grounds Maintenance service?

(please tick one answer for each question)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<b>The standard of grass cutting.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to shrub bed and flowerbeds.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to paths, car parking spaces and garage areas.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to trees.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to steep bank maintenance.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The attention paid to litter.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 5. Are you able to gain access to the communal garden areas?

(please tick one answer)

Yes .....  No .....  Don't have one .....

**If you have a communal garden what do you use the area for?**

### 6. Do you know how much you pay for the grounds maintenance service?

(please tick one answer)

Yes .....  No .....

**7. Are you satisfied the service charge you pay towards grounds maintenance represents good value for money?**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Very Satisfied .....
- Satisfied .....
- Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied .....
- Dissatisfied .....
- Very Dissatisfied .....

**Three**

**8. Which of the following "enhanced services" listed below would you be interested in receiving in the future?**

*(please tick one answer for each question)*

	Yes	No	Possibly
<b>Boxed mown grassed area</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Raised flower beds</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Vegetable garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Herb garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Sensory garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Ornamental garden</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Composting area</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. Do you want the communal grounds to encourage wildlife and be better for conservation?**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Yes .....  No .....  Don't Know .....

**Any comments?**



**10. Would you like to become involved in the grounds maintenance service standards pilot?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....  Don't Know .....

**If so, what would you like to do?**

**11. Would you like to be a trained assessor to work with us to monitor the standard of the communal gardening and cleaning services?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....  Don't Know .....

**Would you like more information?**

Yes, I would like more information .....

**12. How would you prefer to receive information about the grounds maintenance service? (please tick all that apply)**

*(please tick all that apply)*

E-mail .....

Telephone .....

Letter .....

Website .....

Text .....

Private Meeting .....

I don't want to receive this information .....

**13. Would you be happy for us to contact you to discuss any points you have raised in the questionnaire?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....

Please provide preferred contact details:

**Monitoring Information**

The City Council provides a wide range of services that affect the daily lives of The city's service users. We are determined to make Council services responsive to the needs of all members of our community.

This means we must take account of the different needs and requirements of people from a variety of backgrounds. We want to make sure that Council policies and practices do not directly or indirectly discriminate against people on the basis of colour, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief or disability.

In order to turn these commitments into action we must have accurate information on the composition of our service. Therefore, may we have your consent to collect this information from you?

The records collected will be kept confidential and will only be used to enable the Council to monitor the delivery of its services.

Thank you for your cooperation.

**Gender:**

*(please tick one answer)*

Male .....  Female .....

**Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....

**What age are you?**

*(please tick one answer)*

- Under 18 .....
- 18-24 .....
- 25-34 .....
- 35-44 .....
- 45-54 .....
- 55-64 .....
- 65-74 .....
- 75+ .....

**I would describe my ethnic origin as:**

*(please tick one answer)*

- White - British .....
- White - Irish .....
- White - Gypsy .....
- White - Traveller .....
- White - Polish .....
- White - Portuguese .....
- White - Other Background .....
- Mixed - White & Black - Caribbean .....
- Mixed - White & Black - African .....
- Mixed - White & Asian .....
- Mixed - Asian & Black - Caribbean .....
- Mixed - Asian & Black - African .....
- Mixed - Other Background .....
- Asian or Asian British - Indian .....
- Asian or Asian British - Pakistani .....
- Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi .....
- Asian or Asian British - Other Background .....
- Black or Black British - Caribbean .....
- Black or Black British - African .....
- Black or Black British - Sudanese .....
- Black or Black British - Other Background .....
- Chinese .....
- Turkish .....
- Arab .....
- Japanese .....
- Other Background .....
- Don't Know .....

**If there is an ethnic category that is not included here that you think should be, please tell us what it is:**

**Please select the option which best describes your sexual orientation**  
*(please tick one answer)*

- Heterosexual .....
- Bisexual .....
- Gay .....
- Lesbian .....
- Other .....
- I do not wish to disclose this* .....

**If other, please state:**

**Please indicate your religion or belief**  
*(please tick one answer)*

- Atheist .....
- Buddhist .....
- Christian .....
- Hindu .....
- Jain .....
- Jewish .....
- Muslim .....
- Pagan .....
- Sikh .....
- Other (please state below)* .....
- Other philosophical belief (please state below)* .....
- I have no particular faith* .....
- I do not wish to disclose this* .....

**Other, please state:**

**Other philosophical belief, please state:**

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long term limiting condition?**  
*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....

**Please state the type of impairment which applies to you. People may have more than one type of impairment, in which case you may indicate more than one. If none of the categories apply, please mark 'other'.**  
*(please tick all that apply)*

*Physical Impairment* .....

*Sensory Impairment* .....

*Mental Health Condition* .....

*Learning Disability/Difficulty* .....

*Long-standing illness* .....

*Other* .....

**Other, please state:**

**Are you a carer?**

*(please tick one answer)*

Yes .....  No .....  *I do not wish to disclose this ...*

**If yes, do you care for...?**

*(please tick all that apply)*

*Parent* .....

*Child* .....

*Other family member* .....

*Partner / Spouse* .....

*Friend* .....

*Other* .....

**Other, please state:**





### Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment Publication Template: Grounds Maintenance

<b>Name of review:</b>	Grounds Maintenance (HM34)
<b>Period of review:</b>	January 2010 – April 2011
<b>Date review signed off by GMT:</b>	21 October 2010
<b>Scope of the review:</b>	<p>This review will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the level of services residents would like,</li> <li>• Benchmark with other housing providers and compare how other housing organisations provide their service and achieve value for money.</li> <li>• Prepare a specification for future service delivery of our grounds maintenance.</li> <li>• Make proposals for performance management which involve residents and work with City Parks to look at innovative ways of maintaining grounds.</li> </ul> <p>The paper 'Decent Homes, Decent Spaces' recognises that well designed, well managed green spaces within housing developments are crucial to contributing to people's quality of life and make neighbourhoods liveable. Similarly, the Cleaner/safer Greener Communities agenda is about providing quality spaces in which residents want to live.</p> <p>We aim to become a three star authority so must meet the requirements of KLOE 6 which asks 'are estate grounds and other communal areas kept clean, tidy and attractive by working closely with service users, other departments and external agencies?'</p> <p>Formal estate inspections were introduced following the Audit Commission inspection in 2005. Although in place now for a number of years and working well, the ESMG is taking this opportunity to develop the grounds maintenance and cleaning service by directly involving residents in setting standards and monitoring performance.</p> <p>We currently have an in-house contract for the provision of grounds maintenance by City Parks. This contract has been in place since 2004 but has not been revised since it was awarded to the in-house team.</p>

<p><b>Review team:</b></p>	<p>Graham Page &amp; Estates Service Monitoring Group (ESMG).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team has access to demographic data on its clients. LGBT Housing Strategy, BME Housing Strategy consultation and Older Persons Housing Strategy and consultations used.</li> <li>• Clients of Concern database</li> <li>• Equalities monitoring is carried out but not on a consistent basis. This is being addressed via tenancy visits over the next two years.</li> <li>• Results of selected residents' survey.</li> <li>• Estate Inspection quarterly data.</li> <li>• Estate Services inspection data.</li> <li>• Decent Homes, Decent Spaces – published by Neighbourhood Greens</li> <li>• Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities agenda</li> <li>• Leaseholder Satisfaction Surveys for 2007 &amp; 2010</li> <li>• Grounds Maintenance Report October 2008 presented to Housing Management GMT</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relevant data and research:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autumn 2008 – A group of staff were selected to identify the problems with the grounds maintenance service and identify solutions which formed the basis of the report that went to GMT in October 2008. The content of that report provides useful information for the ESGM to draw on when reviewing the current grounds maintenance service.</li> <li>• Leaseholder Satisfaction Surveys for 2007 &amp; 2010.</li> <li>• Local – ESGM and subsequent consultation with residents, councillors, stakeholders and Area Panels</li> <li>• Area Panels will receive regular updates and progress reports that will be shared with their residents</li> <li>• Residents will be consulted locally about the grounds maintenance service and any changes that may follow</li> <li>• Results from Grounds Maintenance inspections will be brought to quarterly steering group consisting of residents, councillors and officers to consider service concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultation:</b> indicate who was consulted and how they were consulted</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress reports on the Grounds Maintenance Review will be sent for consultation at Housing Management Consultative Committee. Decisions will be made by the Cabinet Member for Housing about any service improvements that are recommended in the reports.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment of impact, outcomes and key follow-up actions:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service is and where they want it to be to meet their aspirations.</li> <li>• Prepare specification for future delivery of our grounds maintenance service</li> <li>• Publicise results on notice boards for all grounds maintenance inspections</li> <li>• Equalities training/hate crime and DV awareness training for staff when specification revised</li> <li>• Encourage residents outside of the tenant movement to get involved in monitoring the service by becoming a resident assessor.</li> <li>• Establish 'pilot areas' across the city to explore and demonstrate what could be achieved by way of operating local standards agreed with residents in a particular location</li> </ul>
<p><b>Name and contact details of lead officer responsible for follow-up action:</b></p>	<p>Graham Page, Housing Manager, 293354</p>
<p><b>For full report contact:</b></p>	<p>Graham Page, Housing Manager, 293354</p>



# HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 58

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing &amp; Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7 November 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Housing and Social Inclusion</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Alan Smith</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 29-1072
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>alan.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1 SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing requires that social housing providers have a Neighbourhood Policy, the Adverse Weather Policy (Appendix 1) sits under the Neighbourhood Policy and contributes to the neighbourhood and community standards outlined in the policy, and the Annual Report To Council Tenants and Leaseholders.
- 1.2 The aim of the policy is to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Housing and Social Inclusion on housing land during severe weather conditions effecting employees, tenants, leaseholders contractors and members of the public. The document sets out the minimum standards of service which will be provided and defines the required responsibilities. This policy also forms a part of the corporate plan and sets out the provisions in the event of extreme weather.
- 1.3 The aim of the policy is to create a safe and well maintained environment, to develop sustainable and independent communities, and to ensure consistent and fair treatment of council housing residents
- 1.4 This policy has been developed to work in partnership with fellow department plans, including: The Corporate Service Winter Plan, Civil Contingency and Adult Social Care and Health Plans, all of which address the risk of adverse weather.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011 for publication and implementation.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 How we deal with adverse weather and in particular snow and ice has been raised at a number of residents' forums including Tenant and Residents' Associations, The Sheltered Housing Action Group and the Area Panels.
- 3.2 The council has developed a Highways Adverse Winter Service Plan in January 2010 in response to a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny and this policy and we are working in partnership with Highways to provide a complementary service on Housing land.

- 3.3 The policy recognises that severe weather can be defined as extreme conditions that may have a direct impact upon a person's health, safety and well being, and outlines the process for undertaking a risk assessment and action plan in such conditions
- 3.4 With residents and leaseholders an online map will be available on the Brighton and Hove City Council website with the location of grit bins and snow clearing equipment. The possible use of additional resource of estates services across the city; this involves staff time being reprioritised.
- 3.5 This policy outlines our commitment to providing the materials and resources to enable residents to participate in the care of their neighbourhoods in adverse weather.
- 3.6 As part of this review, a number of further service improvements have been identified. These include the need for improved planning, mobilisation and management of the estates service resource for the deployment in the event of adverse weather conditions.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011
- 4.2 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the General Management Team on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011.
- 4.3 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### 5.1 Financial Implications:

Costs associated with the publication and implementation of this policy will be met within existing Housing Revenue Account Budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant*

*Date: 12 October 2011*

##### 5.2 Legal Implications:

The Occupiers Liability Act 1957 imposes upon the occupier of land a common law duty of care. The occupier must take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reasonable to see that a visitor will be reasonably safe in using the premises for the purposes for which he is invited or permitted by the occupier to be there. In the context of housing land, the Council is the occupier of the common parts of buildings and all housing owned land. The Adverse Weather Policy will assist the Council in discharging that duty.

*Legal Officer Consulted: Liz Woodley*

*Date: 19 October 2011*

### 5.3 Equalities Implications:

Housing and Social Inclusion has completed an Equality Impact Assessment relevant to the policy and attached for HMCC to view.

The consultation group for EIA for this policy is being agreed at GMT on 6<sup>th</sup> October

### 5.4 Sustainability Implications:

Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will improve the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.

This policy reinforces Housing and Social Inclusions' commitment to the council's Environmental Policy.

This policy will provide opportunities for residents to be involved in the care of their neighbourhoods and help develop more sustainable communities.

### 5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Potential for the theft of grit, this has the possibility to impact on our reaction in the event of cold weather conditions. Vandalism is also a potential criminal action which could also impact on our service level.

### 5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The policy development in this area was undertaken with due regard to the appropriate risk assessment requirement, a risk assessment is included as a supporting document.

We will endeavor to encourage staff and residents who are willing and able to work together to grit where this is safe to do so. This would facilitate the "Salt, Sweep & Shovel" initiative that the Highways department promotes.

The only risk at present that can be identified is the ability to reach bin locations to re-stock if conditions are extreme.

From lessons learned from past experience, we will try to, where practical and safe, carry out requests for assistance with access and regress problems, in all types of weather. This stance could potentially help maintain the local economy by enabling access to amenities.

In the event of severe snow and ice, the resource at hand could also impact on the cleaning service that the Estates department provide, staff would be asked to take on additional tasks dependable on the situation and conditions.

### 5.7 Public Health Implications:

There are strong links between improving housing and reducing health inequalities. The policy will reduce the isolation of our most vulnerable residents and improve well being in adverse weather conditions.

## 5.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

This policy contributes to the council priorities of improving safety, and improving health and council tenants and leaseholders. However it aims to compliment the City wide Winter Service Plan and Adult Social care and Health Plans which support vulnerable people in times of adverse well being .This policy applies to Management of Council Housing Land and support provided to tenants and leaseholders.

## 6. **EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 The consequences of no action could potentially have lasting repercussions with a particular focus on the vulnerable with the potential of isolation and risk to health and well being
- 6.2 We could explore further developing the partnership with the community payback service and request that they redirect their service during adverse weather.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

- 1. Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

- 1. Housing & Social Inclusion Neighbourhood Policy
- 2. Adverse Weather Risk Assessment 20113.
- 3. Equalities Impact Assessment (Upon completion for HMCC review)
- 4. Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan





## Brighton & Hove City Council

### HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

#### COUNCIL HOUSING ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Estates Services during severe weather conditions affecting employees, tenants, contractors and members of the public. The document sets out the minimum standards of service which will be provided and defines the required responsibilities.

1.2 It is the responsibility of the council to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage on or around an entrance to a block of flats is not endangered by snow or ice. However, in some circumstances, dependent upon the risk to staff or residents the organisation may incorporate public areas within this policy.

1.3 For the purpose of this policy, severe weather can be defined as extreme conditions that may have a direct impact upon a person's health, safety and well being.

## 2. The extent of 'duty of care'

2.1 This will depend upon a number of factors, including the type of property and the people likely to be affected, e.g. much greater care would be required around a sheltered scheme where tenants may be more unsteady on their feet and where they would be expected to use the common areas. Key matters to be considered include

- The high risk areas
- When action is to be taken (preventative and reactive)

2.3 Whilst our duties are enshrined in law (statutory and common) it is important to note that our response will be proportionate and using sensible risk management – see relevant departmental risk assessments for guidance.

2.4 We will take an objective view of issues, such as where the responsibility for clearing snow, ice begins and ends, and how far we should go in terms of gritting and clearing. There is often no straightforward answer to these questions but the controls put in place will reflect the degree of risk identified.

2.5 This policy meets the council's following corporate objectives

- Promoting public, partnership and community engagement
- Delivering improved customer service
- Supporting the delivery of the City Outcomes/Priorities

### **3. Access and Communication**

3.1 The council is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone. We will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for us or use our services.

3.2 The organisation recognises the need to safely maintain services during adverse weather conditions, whilst properly discharging its duty of care to employees. We have a new and updated winter information map; this shows the locations of our Estates Service grit bins. This can be used in conjunction to the Highways winter information map. All this information can be found on the council's easy to navigate website.

### **4. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

4.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Estates Services during severe weather

4.2 The council is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favorably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty. The council will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Equalities Legislation and Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom we work, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

### **5. This Policy should be read in conjunction with**

- Corporate Policy for Staff on Adverse Weather
- The Health & Safety Policy
- The Estates Service Pledge
- Highways Winter Maintenance Service (available on BHCC website)
- Housing and Social Inclusion Business Continuity Plans
- Estates Service Adverse Weather Risk Assessment

### **6. Policy**

6.1 The council will carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of severe weather effects to help identify and prioritise risk areas. The risk assessment will include

- Areas that are most likely to be affected (e.g. walkways, building entrances, sloped areas etc.)
- Persons likely to be affected and how (our duty of care increases in areas likely to be used by elderly, children and other vulnerable persons)
- The risk factors and reasonable precautions. It is unreasonable to hold the council responsible for all weather conditions but certain hazards are foreseeable such as adverse weather forecast days in advance and autumn/winter months providing generally wetter/icier weather
- The process involved and the responsible persons for implementing the remedial works (i.e. gritting/clearing). The council will facilitate the services of the Neighborhood Response Team to carry out gritting services as per agreed specification. Every effort will be made to deliver the service in accordance with the specification at agreed locations. However, no guarantees of service can be given to residents if the adverse weather conditions present a high risk to employees or contractors.

6.2 In accordance with section 2 of this policy, the council will, so far as is reasonably practicable, maintain safe access to and from our premises. As such snow clearing and/or gritting will be carried out for the following premises

- Sheltered Schemes
- Housing Estates
- Housing Offices

6.3 Providing areas that are not common and where tenancy agreements make the tenant specifically responsible for outside areas within the boundary of their home, there is no duty for the council to clear them.

## **7. Extreme cold Snow and Ice**

7.1 We have 102 grit bins which are kept stocked with grit for use by residents and staff on housing owned land during periods of snow and ice. These are located at priority locations across the housing stock and an online map is available on the Brighton & Hove City Council website. Housing and Social Inclusion are not able to supply grit for use on public highways and any land which is not owned by housing. This includes public highways and the associated pavements.

7.2 Pavement clearance is a lengthy labour-intensive task by hand spreading, so operationally and practically this work requires a high level of resources. To help combat this issue all tenant and resident representatives have been supplied upon request with snow shovels to aid with clearance. Therefore the Duty Manager must decide on priorities and when the snow may be likely to clear naturally due to improved weather conditions. In heavy and continual snowfall, clearance may need to wait until it stops because all efforts would be immediately covered over again.

7.3 Grit bins will be kept locked in the summer months and unlocked during winter so that residents can access the grit easily during the winter. A guidance panel is fitted to each bin with all the relevant information that the user may require, for example, specific location, contact details for re-stocking and guidance for the use of the grit.

7.4 There is a limit to the number of grit bins we can supply as we are limited on the amount of grit we can store and the number of bins that we can realistically replenish.

7.5 Priority will be given at all times to areas of greatest risk, as identified by the risk assessment outlined in section 2. The council will adopt a preventative approach wherever possible. Using met office forecasts and information from our Civil Contingencies Department will enable us to grit when snow and ice is forecast.

7.6 We would generally regard the areas of greatest risk as being

- Geographically challenged buildings
- Sheltered Schemes
- Hilly Areas
- Areas where high densities of older people

7.7 In icy/snowy periods we will redirect Estates staff to gritting and restocking grit supplies. However it should be recognised that it will not be possible for housing staff to grit all areas of housing land due to staff numbers, the need to keep the rest of the service operational and because in times of snow and ice we may not be able to access all areas of the city. We will however try to maximise our capacity to grit as much housing land as possible by:

- Keeping grit supplies in cleaners store rooms in blocks of flats

- Arranging for staff to grit near to their home if they live near housing land that they are able to safely access
- Encourage staff and residents who are willing and able to work together to grit, where this is safe to do so. This would facilitate the “Salt, Sweep & Shovel” initiative that the Highways department promotes.
- Facilitate the Community Payback Team to grit

## **8. Taking Care of Vulnerable Residents**

8.1 Housing Management and Sheltered Service staff will try to proactively contact tenants known to be vulnerable in circumstances of extreme weather and check what assistance they need. This could include the provision of an electric heater if there is a heating breakdown, advising tenants to keep battery powered torches if there is an electrical failure, delivery of shopping in extreme situations, and the possible provision of temporary accommodation if a major problem was to occur.

## **9. Flooding**

9.1 The Environment Agency’s Flood Warning service aims to reduce risk to life, distress to people and damage to property caused by flooding by providing accurate, timely flood warnings. To provide this service in an area it must be technically feasible and the costs against the benefits must be justified.

9.2 The service is provided to residents within the floodplains of rivers, estuaries and coasts in England and Wales; to the media and partner organisations. Where the water levels in rivers rise rapidly due to heavy rain or melting snow, there may not be enough time to issue specific warnings. In these cases, a general warning will be issued to a large geographical area.

9.3 In the event of severe flooding we will assist with any emergency accommodation that is required. This would form part of the major incident contingency plan that housing has developed. The Estates Service will work with the Corporate Emergency Planning Unit to provide resources in line with the Corporate Major Incident Plans, along with associate council partnerships will endeavor to provide flood defences or clear up facilities in the event of this potential risk.

## **10. Extreme Heat**

10.1 A Heat-Health Watch system operates in England and Wales from 1 June to 15 September each year. During this time social and healthcare services will ensure that all awareness and background preparedness work is ongoing.

10.2 The Heat-Health Watch system comprises four levels of response based upon threshold maximum daytime and minimum night-time temperatures. These thresholds vary by region, but an average threshold temperature is 30 °C by day and 15 °C overnight.

10.3 The distribution of water if the water supply is disrupted and the local authority requires our assistance. We can also liaise on the tenant’s behalf with social care services and voluntary groups if they need additional help during this period with day to day activities. Every reasonable effort will be made to help out the local community within the resource at our disposal.

## **11. Sustainability**

11.1 All our grit is sourced as locally as possible. This can be affected by demand levels during cold conditions. We have learnt lessons from previous years and we are now forward planning and building up our stocks from late August to ensure the maximum level required, this also helps reduce the need for repeat deliveries and the impact of potential congestion on the local highway infrastructure in times of severe cold weather.

11.2 Insulating your home is often an easy job which is cost-effective and keeps your house warmer in the colder months. You might even be eligible for insulation grants and discounts. Better standards of Insulation of homes to improve heat retention, reduce fuel poverty and increase the health and wellbeing of residents.

## **12. Performances and Resident Involvement**

12.1 Following Extended Periods of Snow and Ice or other adverse weather the Estates Services Business Manager will review the performance of the Estates Service with Estates Services Monitoring Group to determine if the service is meeting the needs and aspirations of residents or if any improvements can be made. .

## **13. Reviews**

13.1 The Estates Services Business Manager will review the policy every three years (from the date of approval) to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulation that impacts on the obligations of the council, changes to council business practices or in the light of management system audits.

## **14. Equality Impact Assessment**

14.1 This policy has been subject to an EIA screening and carried out by the Estates Service Projects Manager. This is to help identify any adverse impact on the local communities. Further data will be collected upon implementation of this policy, and a further screening will take place after twelve months of operation.



**HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING**

**Agenda Item 59**

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Opportunity for Manor Place Housing Office to move to the Whitehawk Hub</b>		
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>1 December 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Service, Housing &amp; Social Inclusion</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Ododo Dafé</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3201</b>
	<b>E-mail:</b>	<b>ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>East Brighton</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Manor Place Housing Office is situated very close to the blocks of flats that form Robert Lodge, near The Broadway in Whitehawk. Since the transfer of some staff from that office to the Housing Centre, it has a 55% staff occupancy rate. An opportunity arose a few months ago for the remaining 17 staff (in 13 posts) to move to vacant office space in the Whitehawk co-location hub.
- 1.2 The services currently located at the Whitehawk Hub are the primary school, library and IT learning suite, GP surgery, health centre, pharmacy, children's centre, and children's and families services.
- 1.3 If the move were to go ahead, it would necessitate the Council not having a cash payment facility in Whitehawk, as there is no provision for rent payments to be made at the Hub. However cash payments will still be able to be made at four other non-council outlets in Whitehawk.
- 1.3 The objective of this proposal is to achieve a new long term base for the Whitehawk tenancy management service that fits within the service transformation framework of 'a council the city deserves' - improving customer service, working in more efficient office accommodation, working in more efficient and effective ways, and achieving value for money.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing agrees for the tenancy management housing service to move from the Manor Place Housing Office to the Whitehawk Hub.

### **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 This report is preceded by the Customer Access Phase 3 report presented to Cabinet Members Meeting on 19 October 2011 in which one of the approved recommendations was to “Consider the opportunities for further office moves and best future use of some housing offices – notably Manor Place Housing Office and Victoria Road Housing Office.” The Customer Access Strategy that was introduced by that report highlighted council-wide work to make best and most cost-effective use of council office accommodation, and one of the actions in the strategy was to consult on proposals to move staff from Manor Place Housing Office to the Whitehawk Hub.
- 3.2 The relocation of the Manor Place Housing Office links to the Council’s Corporate Plan (2011–2015) priority and the Housing & Social Inclusion business plan objective to tackle inequalities. The local tenancy management services contribute to tackling inequalities in that the team works with some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the city, often in conjunction with other service providers. Moving the team to the Whitehawk Hub would allow the links that are already in place with other services to develop towards the vision set out in the corporate plan of the council ‘work(ing) in a more joined up and creative way, so that our resources have the greatest impact possible and give the best value for money’. The Corporate Plan ‘Tackling Inequalities’ outcomes that the proposed relocation would particularly contribute to are:
- 3.2.1 *Children & young people have the best start in life*  
The housing team at Manor Place has many years experience of working with other services that work locally with vulnerable families – children & families, the children’s centre and the youth service. Co-location with these agencies will offer an opportunity to further develop links, share knowledge and develop joint working initiatives to support families and improve the life chances of children living in families with multiple needs that need an inter-agency approach for support.
- 3.2.2 *Vulnerable adults supported to live healthy, independent lives*  
Local housing staff, and in particular those who visit residents in their homes can signpost residents to services that may be of use to them at the hub, eg the wide range of services and support in the library which include free access to computers, an IT learning suite, health checks and sessions with the Citizens Advice Bureau. The improved working with council colleagues has to potential also to develop more co-ordinated and preventative approaches to protecting vulnerable adults.
- 3.2.3 *Reduce health inequalities and long standing public health issues*  
Again, local housing staff will be able to develop their knowledge of local services and agencies that work to promote improved public health and



signpost residents as appropriate for support. Housing staff have always had this knowledge, however, co-location will facilitate better information sharing on local services and improved client referrals.

#### 3.2.4 *Cohesive and safe communities*

Housing & Social Inclusion contributes in many ways to this corporate priority. A key benefit of moving the Whitehawk housing service to the hub would be that it has the potential of bringing staff into contact with a different demographic through the wider demographic of the hub's users. This may lead to increased resident participation not only in housing services but in other community initiatives. In addition, the closer working with other council colleagues is likely to lead to improved early intervention and action around issues of anti social behaviour and support for our most vulnerable households.

3.3 The proposed relocation also links to the Corporate Plan priority to 'Engage people who live and work in the city'. Housing & Social Inclusion's work on resident involvement and engagement fits within this corporate priority. A move to the Whitehawk Hub offers the opportunity to work with our services to find new ways to engage with residents, particularly those who are younger and are outside the current resident involvement model, and will contribute to the following outcomes:

##### 3.3.1 *A council that is easy to contact and demonstrates that it listens to residents*

Located with a range of other services at the Whitehawk Hub will make it easier for a wider range of residents to contact the tenancy management service.

##### 3.3.2 *Improved collaboration between the council and its communities*

Co-location at the hub will enable the housing service to participate in community development initiatives involving a wider range of partners (eg schools, youth work), and that has the potential to increase participation and positive feeling within Whitehawk.

3.4 The proposal also contributes the council-wide work to make the best use of, and achieve value for money from, our office accommodation. The Manor Place Housing Office now has a 55% occupancy level since some staff moved to the Housing Centre in Moulsecoomb. Work carried out by our Business Improvement Manager, finance colleagues and colleagues in Property & Design show that the annual running cost per desk space at this occupancy level is £3,144. Had it been fully occupied, the figure would reduce to £1,715 per desk space. However the annual rental cost per desk space of moving to the hub is only £607.

3.5 The total annual running cost for Manor Place is estimated at £37,700 and this figure is likely to increase as the prefabricated building continues to deteriorate. Whereas the annual total rental cost of co-locating at the hub is

£7,286 – this represents only 19% of our current annual cost. Represented another way it costs almost five times as much to stay at Manor Place as it would to re-locate.

- 3.6 The Housing Revenue Account cost savings achieved by the proposal would be reinvested in tenants homes and in the provision of services to our most vulnerable tenants.

### **Resident feedback**

- 3.7 A face-to-face resident survey was conducted from the Manor Place Housing Office and in the Whitehawk area during September 2011 to ascertain the impact of the proposal to move the service to the Whitehawk Hub and close the cash desk facility. Of the 203 people who responded, a large majority (71%) visited the office to make a payment, 11% for a housing enquiry and 15% to enquire about another council service.
- 3.8 There were significant proportions already using services provided at the hub, with for example (and in descending order) 52% using the pharmacy, 50% visiting the GP surgery, 30% using the library, 24% using the health centre and 21% using the school. 10% of respondents reported using each of these services - the toy library, children's/youth services, and the community café, and smaller numbers reported using the remaining service.
- 3.9 When discussing the impact that a move of office location and the closure of the cash desk facility would have on them, 50% reported no impact and 24% felt it would have some impact. The remaining were not sure or did not respond. There were two main impacts that people spoke of – how they would make their payments, and access to the Whitehawk Hub. These matters will be referred to further in the section below 'Impact Assessment' (please see paragraphs 3.12 - 3.15).
- 3.10 Other observations from the survey exercise were:
- There was limited awareness of the telephone (28%) and the internet (30%) as alternative payment options; middling awareness of post office (48%) and standing order (43%), and higher awareness of Paypoint (56%) and direct debit (61%).
  - The highest preferred alternative payment method was for Paypoint (33%), followed by post office (25%), telephone (20%), direct debit (17%), and the internet at 10%.
  - Aside from key meters for paying for gas and electricity, other popular methods for paying household bills were direct debit and Paypoint.
  - 84% of respondents had a bank account – although not all were able to use this method to pay rent
  - 55% of respondents reported they have access to the internet
  - 37% have mobility concerns.

- 3.11 In discussions with tenant association representatives, their priority concern for local residents was the issue of access to the Whitehawk Hub. This was mainly because there is no bus provision to the front entrance of the hub on Whitehawk Road, although bus access is afforded from the main road, Whitehawk Way. A further significant concern is that the route from the bus stop to the buildings contains some gradients which, although being successfully used by some mobility scooter users, are not suitable for all people using these vehicles or wheelchairs. Resident representatives however acknowledge that the area is hilly, and that a relocation will be advantageous to some residents and disadvantage others – similar to the current office location. In addition they considered the balance of residents using services at the hub who would benefit from the relocation, and were particularly struck by the potential for cost savings.

### **Impact Assessment**

#### Access

- 3.12 Residents concerns relating to access to the hub have been largely (but not wholly) addressed in that the bus stop on Whitehawk Way has been moved to be closer to the location; the path affording access from the bus stop to the hub was previously narrow and on a camber but this has now been widened to allow greater access and has reduced the camber; and enhanced lighting to the path has been installed. A resident representative using a mobility scooter has accessed the site from a variety of routes and reported that the access is now much improved, and that the hub is regularly visited with ease in the mobility scooter. However, another tenant representative, also using a mobility scooter has provided a clear account of the access difficulties experienced, mainly because there are several gradients to negotiate before gaining access to the building. A site map is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 3.13 It is fair to say that access to the Whitehawk Hub could present access difficulties for some people because of the presence of slopes, inclines and cambers in some places. While it is not ideal for all, the Hub has had visitors in wheelchairs and mobility scooters who have used one of the various routes. The site is better suited than at Manor Place for those residents or customers who are drivers with a disability, as there are more disabled customer parking bays. Reviewing the various comments and feedback that have been made regarding access to the Hub, the following points appear pertinent:
- The site does present access limitations for a few people, similar to how Manor Place housing office does for some too. The limitations of some of the slopes and inclines can also be balanced against some of the advantages – eg disabled car parking facilities within approximately 400 yards of the entrance by the rear of the school, many services on one site, good drop-off access for taxis or other drivers, and a fully accessible building.
  - It is very difficult in an area such as Brighton and Hove to make every location or facility fully accessible for everyone – for example some residents in other areas of Whitehawk experience difficulties

in accessing Manor Place because of the hilly nature of the roads they live on. However as service providers we do not want to disadvantage residents and will continue to offer alternative means by which customers can access our services through eg home visits, the telephone or the internet.

- There are many parents with buggies using the Hub, and some have commented that housing relocation would be more accessible for them as they do not have free bus passes and cannot afford the bus fair to go down to the Broadway.
- It does appear incongruous that with so many community services located at the Hub (and with such a range of people with and without mobility issues using it), housing services is currently missing even though the site is located within the middle section of the Whitehawk estate and is surrounded by council housing.

3.14 Concern was raised about the access path not being on a major gritting route and therefore potentially dangerous for elderly residents or those with mobility difficulties. We would not like to see our tenants struggling to come to the service in treacherous weather, and our current service model of home visit provision will not change if the service were to move to the hub. The service is also accessible by phone or via the internet - for those who have access. While the path is not on the highway and therefore not a consideration for the highways gritting route, it will be a priority for services located at the hub. In addition, a grit bit has now been installed on the site, located near the path from the bus stop, behind Kirdford Lodge, close to the disabled parking area.

#### Payments

3.15 Residents responding to the survey were primarily concerned about where they would make their payments if the office were to move – because there would be no cash receipting facility at the Hub. On discussing a range of alternative options with them, many residents were happy to change to Paypoint and some requested a Paypoint card be ordered for them at that time. Four of over 70 Paypoint outlets in the city are located in Whitehawk. Smaller proportions of respondents were interested in direct debit payments, payments over the phone, and payments via the internet. In order to ensure that every resident currently paying at the housing office has the most appropriate alternative payment method for them, staff from various housing teams will be able to provide one-to-one financial inclusion advice and support.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

4.1 A face-to-face impact survey of 203 residents took place in September 2011.

4.2 Individual conversations and meetings have taken place with tenant association representatives in the Whitehawk area, and two meetings have been attended with groups of the tenant representatives in order to hear their feedback and that of their members. At this latter meeting, resident

representatives were informed of our intentions to feed back their main concern about access in a presentation on the proposal to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 7 November 2011. In addition they were informed that the proposal would then go to Cabinet Members' Meeting with the recommendation to approve the proposed move. The subject had not gone to the Area Panel, essentially because the next Panel meeting is not until January 2012, hence the reason for meeting with Whitehawk representatives. They were satisfied with this, feeling that the matter was of pertinence to Whitehawk residents.

- 4.3 Staff feedback has informed the recommendation as they are keen to relocate with other service colleagues, and staff, and their trade unions, will be formally consulted on the proposed move if the recommendation is approved.
- 4.4 Ward councillors have been consulted throughout the process and have themselves worked to achieve the improvements to customers' physical access to the Whitehawk Hub. While being supportive of the benefits of the proposed move, they would also like to see any further steps taken that can improve access to the site – eg through the provision of a bus route to the spur road leading to the front entrance of the school. However they have made several approaches in this regard, and the road does not afford appropriate turnaround facility for the local bus company vehicles.
- 4.5 There has also been dialogue and meetings with providers of services currently located at the Whitehawk Hub, notably the library service, youth service, and children's' and families' service.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### **5.1 Financial Implications:**

The relocation of staff from Manor Place to Whitehawk Hub will result in savings in office accommodation costs, staffing costs in relation to office management and cashiers, and a reduction in transaction costs through the use of alternative payment methods to the cashiers office. These savings are currently estimated at £48,000 per annum and will be included in the 2012/13 Budget.

Finance Officer: Sue Chapman

Date: 15 November 2011

### **Legal Implications:**

- 5.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing has delegated power to discharge the council's functions as a local housing authority. Any decision to relocate the tenancy management housing service from Manor Place to the Whitehawk Hub and/or to close the cash desk facility is clearly within that authority. In making those decisions the Cabinet Member must have regard to relevant considerations, such as the impact on tenants, access etc. These are adequately addressed within the report. It is not considered that any

individual's human rights will be adversely affected by the report's recommendations.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 18 November 2011

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Equalities implications, particularly for older residents and those who have mobility difficulties have been considered in coming to the recommendation to move the tenancy management services to the Whitehawk Hub. The additional provisions that have been made to the physical access to the building means that by bus, the distance to the hub is very similar to that of the distance from the bus stop near Manor Place Housing Office to that office. There is a variety of people currently using the Whitehawk Hub, many of whom are elderly and some of whom have disabilities. Provision will be made to offer all residents who need it one-to-one support for transferring to a different and convenient payment method.

A summary of the draft Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 2.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 It is a corporate priority to create a more sustainable city by protecting and enhancing the environment, meeting social needs and promoting economic success. Co-location of housing services within the Whitehawk Hub has the potential to contribute to this priority and achieve the following outcomes:

*A strong and low carbon economy*

At the moment more than half of the Manor Place housing office is empty. The running costs for the building remain the same. Relocating the staff to another building will, in time, reduce running costs and contribute to the council's drive to reduce CO2 emissions.

*A healthier and higher quality built environment*

With the current staff relocated to the Whitehawk Hub, there is the potential to use the vacant Manor Place site for future housing development. It affords relatively level access, and proximity to shops and transport links. It's proximity to the over 50s blocks at Robert Lodge would make it particularly suitable for accessible housing.

A decision to move to the Whitehawk Hub will also lead to a reduced use of paper in our operations, as there will be the need to meet with the council's 'Smartspace' working principles which include electronic storage of documents which greatly contribute to a paperless office.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Closer physical access of our tenancy management team with other public service providers in Whitehawk has the enormous potential to further improve our co-ordinated responses to some of our most vulnerable tenants which may reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the perception of crime.

#### Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There is the risk that the closure of the cash office will unsettle people's rent payment habits, and lead to an increase in rent arrears. This risk will be managed by our mobilisation of a range of staff to our financial inclusion work in providing one-to-one sessions with residents currently paying at the Manor Place office to set up alternative payment options to suit. We know who these customers are, and some are already switching to Paypoint, direct debit and internet payment options with new information and staff support.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Changes and improvements to customer service and customer access arrangements have been considered in a corporate context. Council wide work on eg co-locating services, Smartspace, work styles, sustainability, best use of council office accommodation have been considered in coming to the recommendation of this report.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The alternative is for no action, and for staff to remain at the Manor Place Housing Office. The empty office space could be offered to other services that might be able to contribute to the running costs of the building or to voluntary sector organisations so that the space is used. However this option would not realise the benefits outlined in paragraph 7.1 below.

### **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

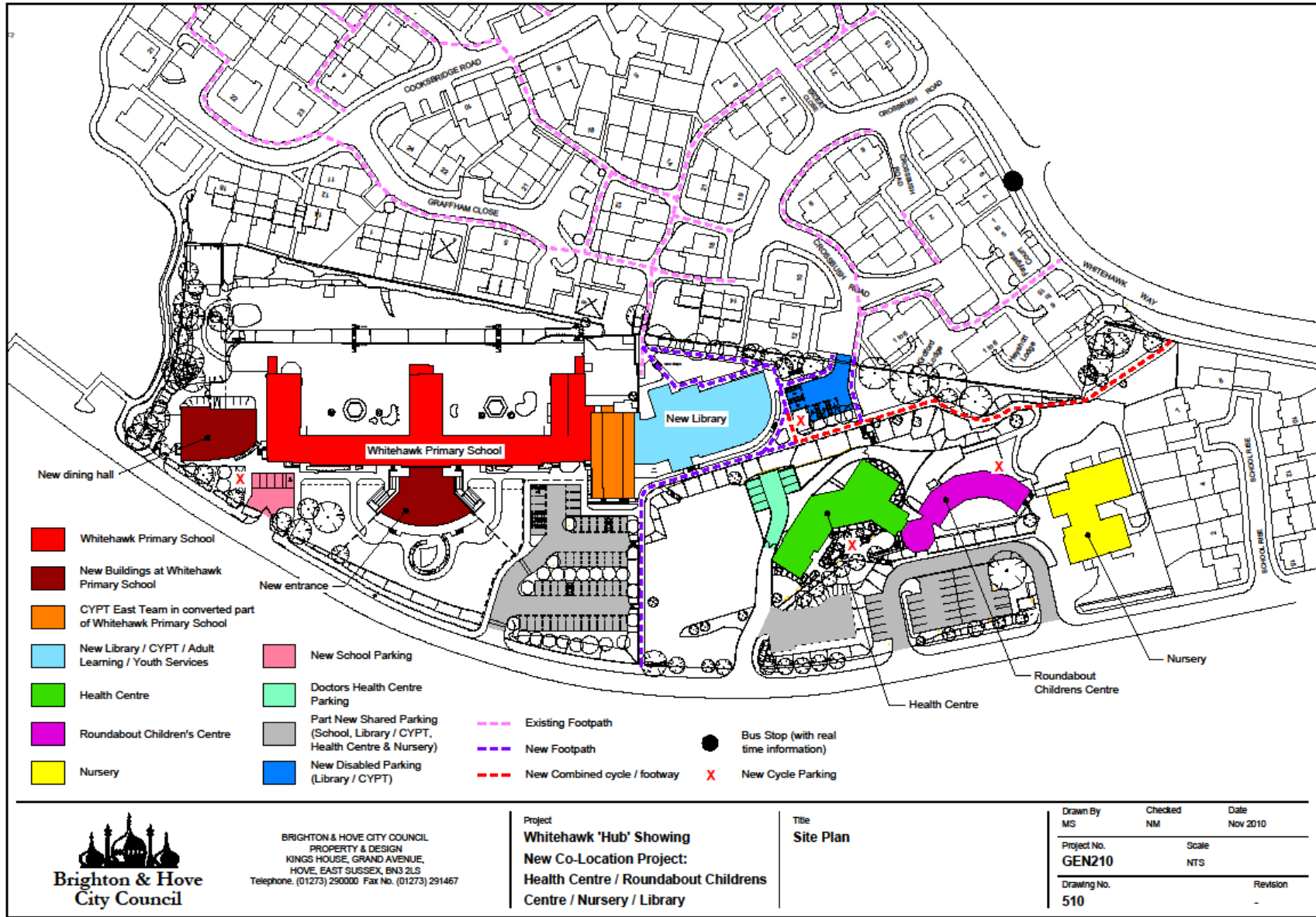
- 7.1 To enable the tenancy management service provided from the Manor Place Housing Office to relocated to Whitehawk Hub, and for the cash desk facility to be closed, leading to a range of benefits which include the following:
- Co-location of staff with key public services in the area – improving access for customers using the various services
  - Provide opportunities for improved joint working
  - Modernise our rent payment options in line with major housing providers, and reduce transactional costs
  - Minimise the financial and sustainability costs of office accommodation that does not provide value for money.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendices:**

1. Map showing the Whitehawk Hub
2. Draft equalities impact assessment

Site plan of the Whitehawk Hub





**Draft Equalities Impact Assessment: Moving Manor Place Housing Office to the Whitehawk Hub**

**Aim of Policy / Scope of Service:**

Manor Place Housing Office provides a base for tenancy management staff working in the Whitehawk area. It has a public reception and cash office for payments of rent, council tax, insurance and other housing related payments. There is a proposal to close the Manor Place Office and relocate staff in the Whitehawk Hub, a base for a number of council services, including the local library. The Hub is adjacent to two GP surgeries, a dentist, children’s centre, nursery and pharmacy. If the move goes ahead, the cash office will close, and not move to the Hub. This Equalities Impact Assessment considers the impact of such a move and the closure of the cash office on residents and staff.

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
<p><b>All (impacts that apply to all groups)</b></p>	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>The lack of cash office facilities at Whitehawk Hub may impact on people who are used to paying their housing charges via this method.</p>	<p>There are 1,758 tenancies in the Whitehawk area:</p> <p>533 - North W’hawk 631 - Central W’hawk 594 - South W’hawk</p>	<p>There will be a range of communications to residents, should the office relocate. This will include tailored information to those residents who use the cash office, setting out alternative methods of payment (direct debit, pay point, on line, standing order, telephone, alternative cash offices) and the one-to-one support that housing staff will give to residents to make these changes.</p>	<p>We hold details of all residents who use the cash office.</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Residents who live close to the Manor Place office will have to travel further to their local housing office.</p>	<p>There are 72 flats in Robert Lodge, the block adjacent to the Manor Place Housing Office</p>	<p>Use the relocation of the Manor Place office to further promote current alternative ways for residents to access housing services and information – eg home visits, the customer on line service and attendance of local tenancy management staff at residents meetings and community events, including the Robert Lodge lunch club.</p>	
	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Some residents have raised concerns over access to Whitehawk Hub regarding the distance from Manor Place, the approach and icy weather.</p>	<p>The Hub is located between Whitehawk Road and Whitehawk Way, with access on foot from both roads; from Whitehawk Rd for general parking and from Whitehawk Way for disabled parking.</p> <p>The co-ordinates of the building are:</p> <p>50.825424,-0.107174</p>	<p>Since the Hub first opened, the path leading to the Hub has been widened to increase access for mobility scooter or wheelchair users or those pushing double buggies (the widening has also helped reduce the camber of the path), the bus stop on Whitehawk Way moved further up the hill so that it is directly opposite the path, and additional lighting has been fitted along the path.</p>	<p>Officers will work with residents to review this issue and identify further improvements, if needed.</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
	<p><u>Residents</u> Access - some residents have commented on the positive impact of the housing service locating to the hub in that it increases access for the many residents in North and Central Whitehawk who do not have free bus passes, and walk with their children to the Manor Place office because of prohibitive transport costs.</p>	<p>The following bus services are available from Whitehawk Way:</p> <p>1, 1A, 21, 37, 71, 72, 73, 84</p>	<p>All residents will be offered a range of ways to access housing services at the Hub, including home visits and information via the internet.</p> <p>Gritting the access to the Hub will be a priority in winter, however residents will not be encouraged to leave their homes in these conditions – home visits will be offered, or telephone advice/support.</p> <p>A grit bin has been located on the site.</p>	

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
	<p><u>Residents</u> Co-location of the Manor Place office at the Hub will enable residents to access a wide range of services in one location with scope for multi-agency appointments.</p> <p>Co-location with the library offers residents the opportunity to make use of its wide range of services including the toy library, free internet and computer access, DVDs and many more services</p>	<p>Link to 'reasons to use Whitehawk library' web page <a href="http://www.brighton-hove-rpml.org.uk/Libraries/sites/Whitehawk/Pages/ReasonstovisitWhitehawkLibrary.aspx">http://www.brighton-hove-rpml.org.uk/Libraries/sites/Whitehawk/Pages/ReasonstovisitWhitehawkLibrary.aspx</a></p>	<p>The benefits of co-location will be promoted in advance of the office move, to ensure residents are aware of the range of facilities at the Hub and adjacent site.</p>	
	<p><u>Residents</u> Robert Lodge residents will no longer be able to add credit to their laundry charge cards if the cash office closes</p>	<p>There are 72 flats at Robert Lodge</p>	<p>Two options are currently being considered as alternative ways for residents to be able to use the laundrette, without having to charge their cards. These are a drop safe in the laundrette (where money is placed in a safe, which then 'allows' the resident to use a machine) or through the introduction of a service charge for this facility as is the practice at sheltered housing schemes.</p>	<p>Selection of a preferred method and inform residents</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
	<p><u>Staff</u></p> <p>Details of how staff with individual needs may be affected are set out below. In general, this experience is likely to be positive for staff due to the flexibility it gives and the opportunities to develop joint working initiatives with other services based in the Hub.</p> <p>Working at the Hub would enable the team to provide a continuous service to residents – the low number of staff currently working in Manor Place can lead to cancellation of home visits and other appointments as a minimum number of people need to be in the building to allow it to open to the public.</p>	<p>There are currently 17 staff (mixture of full and part time) working at the Manor Place Housing Office</p>	<p>Staff will be provided with information in advance of a move to the Hub about co-location, smart space and the other teams based in the building, and input to design and guidelines on ‘Smartspacing’ working as practiced at eg Bartholomew House, Hove Town Hall, Kings House and Lavender St Housing Office.</p>	
<p><b>Ethnicity inc. asylum seekers, refugees, gypsies and travellers</b></p>	<p><u>Residents &amp; staff</u></p> <p>No specific impact identified, although there may be some service access benefits from a variety of services being located on one site.</p>			

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
Gender (men, women, trans people)	<p><u>Residents &amp; staff</u></p> <p>No impact identified</p>			
Disability - Physical/ sensory impairment	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Some residents with mobility problems have raised access to the Hub as an issue. See section on impact on 'all' above for potential action to minimise this impact.</p> <p>The public facing areas, reception and interview rooms are accessible in accordance with DDA requirements.</p>	<p>Equalities legislation requires that all reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure services are accessible. Given the topography of Brighton and Hove there is difficulty in ensuring that each resident can navigate the roads and pathways of the city to access services.</p> <p>Disabilities, their impact on individuals, the use of mobility aids and their effectiveness for each individual person are so diverse – as for example where two different tenant reps have a completely diverse experience of accessing the site using their mobility scooters.</p> <p>The service needs to be confident that there are alternative methods for customers to access the services they need eg by home visit, telephone or the internet.</p>	<p>See actions above in 'all section' on how residents will be encouraged to access services in different ways and on work to identify scope for improving access to the Hub</p> <p>Managers to ensure an induction loop is available in reception and interview rooms</p>	<p>Identify residents who use Manor Place Housing Office with a physical or sensory impairment and offer individual advice and support to adapt to the change in location</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
	<p><u>Staff</u></p> <p>Staff may have individual requirements for their workstations and in terms of getting around the building</p>		<p>Individual workstation can be adapted for staff who need DDA adjustments; managers to ensure all staff requirements are known before the move and adjustments made.</p> <p>There is a lift in the building which can be used by staff to move between the ground and first floor</p>	<p>Identify staff who need adaptations to their workstations</p>
<p><b>Disability - Learning/ Mental Health</b></p>	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Residents with learning disabilities/mental ill health may take longer to adapt to the changes</p>		<p>Tailored support for residents who will find it difficult to adapt to changes</p>	<p>Identify residents who will have particular difficulty in making changes to either paying rent differently or coming to a different location and who will need home visits to ensure they know the cash office is closing and how they can pay their rent and other charges in the future</p>

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
	<p><u>Staff</u></p> <p>Staff may find it difficult to adjust to the loss of personal space through the desk sharing arrangements within Smart Space</p>		<p>Information on Smart Space will be provided to all staff, with the opportunity to see the new office, prior to move. Opportunity for staff to discuss individual concerns and to input to the guidelines on how desks should be used and work carried out in the new set up.</p>	<p>Identify staff who may find the change process difficult and offer support through the process</p>
<p><b>Age - younger people</b></p>	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Co-location with Youth Services and Children and Families will provide better opportunities for younger people to access housing services</p> <p>Young people may be attracted to the Hub through the range of services for younger people at the library</p>		<p>Joint working with other services at the Hub could lead to an increase in the number of younger people at resident association meetings</p>	



Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
<b>Age - older people</b>	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Older residents may find it more difficult to access the Hub compared to Manor Place.</p> <p>Older people coming to the housing office at the Hub may be encouraged to use the wide range of services and activities on offer at the library</p>		<p>See section on impact on 'all' above for potential action to minimise this impact.</p> <p>Promote the facilities available at the library in communications to residents over the relocation of the Manor Place office</p>	
<b>Religion/Belief inc. faith communities and no belief</b>	<p><u>Residents &amp; staff</u></p> <p>No impact identified</p>			
<b>Sexual Orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual and unsure people)</b>	<p><u>Residents &amp; staff</u></p> <p>No impact identified</p>			

Different groups included in scope	Potential impact on this group/s – positive and negative	Existing data/information including relevant legislation	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts	Data or information required
<p><b>Other groups i.e. carers, homeless, (see Social inclusion groups on page 14 of toolkit)</b></p>	<p><u>Residents</u></p> <p>Residents who are carers with children at Whitehawk Primary school may find it easier to access the housing office as the Hub is adjacent to the school</p>		<p>Promote information on local services adjacent to the school/hub in communications to residents over the relocation of the Manor Place office.</p>	

<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Methods used</b>	<b>Key findings</b>
<p>All local resident associations and ward councillors have been advised of the proposal to relocate the Manor Place office to the Whitehawk Hub</p> <p>Consultation with 203 tenants over the proposal</p> <p>Housing Management Consultative Committee</p>	<p>Two meetings in October</p> <p>Sept 2011</p> <p>7 November 2011</p>	<p>Meetings with the Head of Customer Access &amp; Business Improvement</p> <p>Questionnaire carried out in Manor Place reception, local shopping area, the Hub, library and school waiting area</p> <p>Presentation</p>	<p>Concern by some residents over access to the Hub and cash office closure</p> <p>71% of tenants surveyed used the housing office to make payments. 11% had housing enquiries and 15% had other enquiries. A number of residents already used the Whitehawk Hub to visit the Chemist, GP, Library and School.</p> <p>The consultation found 84% of tenants surveyed had a bank account, 55% had access to the internet and 37% had mobility concerns over access to the Hub</p> <p>Resident reps raised issues over cash office closure and access to the building. See draft minutes of the discussion on the presentation</p> <p><a href="http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=3300&amp;T=1">http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=3300&amp;T=1</a></p>

Prioritised and agreed actions	Timescale	Lead Officer	Review date
Details of all residents who use the cash office.	By 31/12/11	Graham Davies	
Review access to the Hub and identify further improvements, if needed.	By 30/11/11	Hilary Edgar	
Select alternative method for laundry payments	By 31/12/11	Martin Booty	
Identify residents who use Manor Place Housing Office with a physical/sensory impairment and offer individual advice and support to adapt to the change in location	By 31/12/11	Graham Davies	
Identify staff who need adaptations to their workstations	By 30/11/11	Graham Davies	
Identify residents who will have particular difficulty in making changes to either paying rent differently or coming to a different location	By 31/12/11	Graham Davies	
Identify staff who may find the change process difficult	By 30/11/11	Graham Davies	

Lead Equality Impact Assessment Officer: Hilary Edgar

Date: November 2011

Departmental Management Team

Date:

Assistant Director:

Date:

Corporate Equalities and Inclusion Team

Date:

(NB: Actions must now be transferred to service or business plans)