





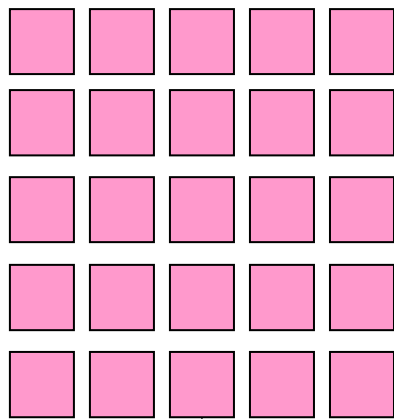
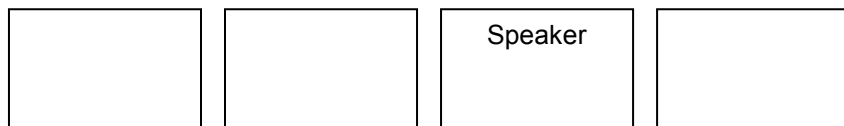
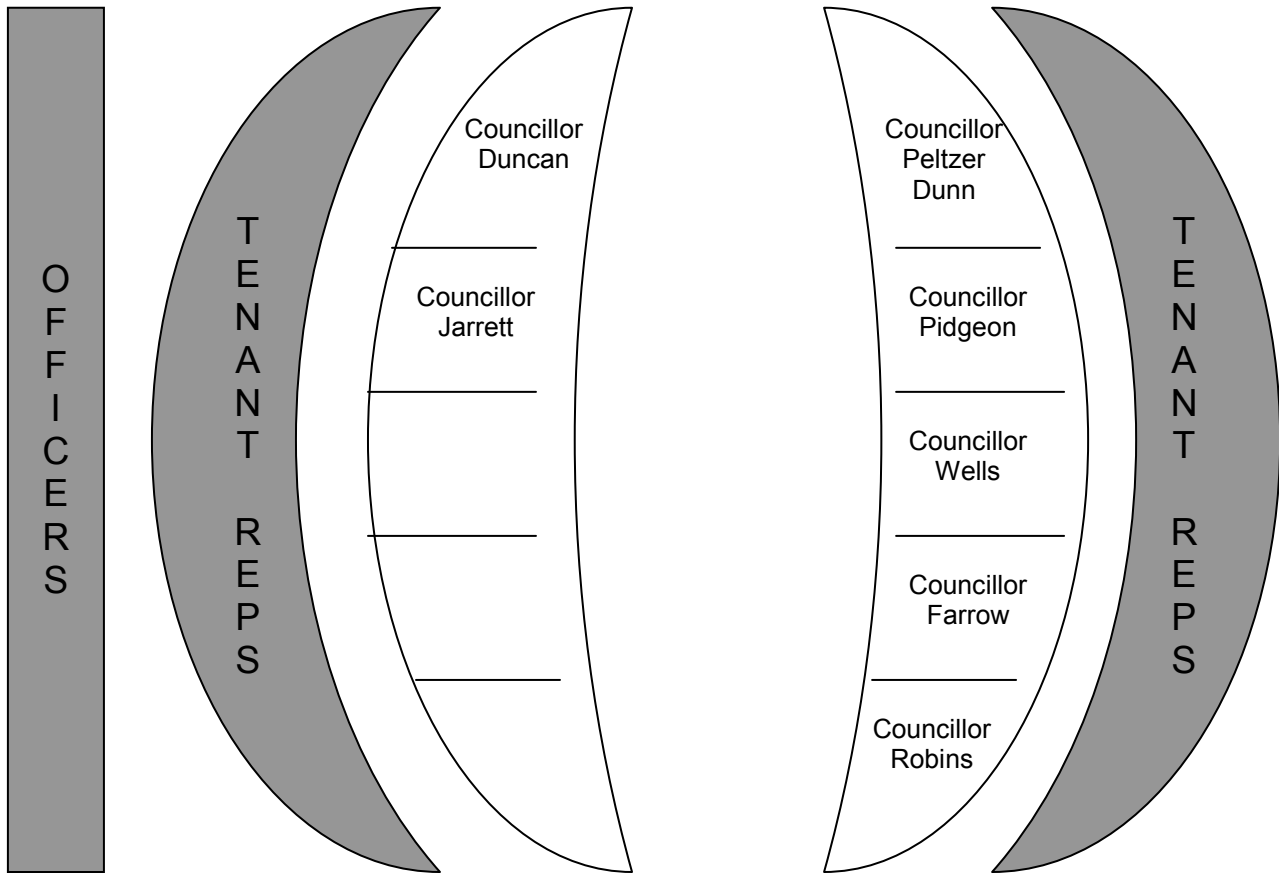
**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Housing Management Consultative Committee

Title:	Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee
Date:	29 May 2012
Time:	3.00pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: Wakefield (Chair), Duncan, Farrow, Jarrett, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Robins and Wells
Contact:	Lisa Johnson Senior Democratic Services Officer 01273 291228 lisa.johnson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

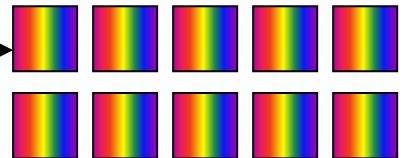
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Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



Public Seating

Members in Attendance



Press



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

Stewart Gover, North & East Area Housing Management Panel

Heather Hayes, North & East Area Housing Management Panel

Tina Urquhart, West Hove & Portslade Area Area Housing Management Panel

(Vacancy) West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel

John Melson, Hi Rise Action Group

Tony Worsfold, Leaseholder Action Group

Colin Carden, Older People's Council

Tom Whiting, Sheltered Housing Action Group

Barry Kent, Tenant Disability Network

AGENDA

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) **Declaration of Substitutes** - Where Councillors are unable to attend a meeting, a substitute Member from the same Political Group may attend, speak and vote in their place for that meeting.

(b) **Declarations of Interest** – Statements by all Members present of any personal interests in matters on the agenda, outlining the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

(c) **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 Two of the Agenda states in its heading 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 exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

2. MINUTES

1 - 10

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 April 2012 (copy attached).

3. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

4. CALL-OVER

(a) The following items will be read out at the meeting and Members invited to reserve the items for consideration.

(b) To receive or approve the reports and agree with their recommendations, with the exception of those which have been reserved for discussion.

5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To consider the following matters raised by members of the public:

(a) **Petitions** – to receive any petitions presented to the full council or at the meeting itself.

(b) **Written Questions** – to receive any questions submitted by the public due date of 12 noon on the 22 May 2012.

- (d) **Deputations** – to receive any deputations submitted by the due date of 12 noon on the 22 May 2012.

6. ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

To consider the following matters raised by councillors:

- (a) **Petitions** – to receive any petitions submitted to the full Council or at the meeting itself;
- (b) **Written Questions** – to consider any written questions;
- (c) **Letters** – to consider any letters;
- (d) **Notices of Motion** – to consider any notices of motion.

7. THE NEW COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

Presentation by Legal Services.

8. HOUSING SERVICES THE CITY DESERVES

11 - 26

Report of Strategic Director Place (copy attached).

Ward Affected: All Wards

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

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

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

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

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Lisa Johnson, (email lisa.johnson@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Date of Publication – 21 May 2012

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3.00pm 30 APRIL 2012

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

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

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), Stewart Gover (North & East 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), Tony Worsfold (Leaseholder Action Group), Tom Whiting (Sheltered Housing Action Group) and Barry Kent (Tenant Disability Network)

PART ONE

98. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

98A Declarations of Substitute Members

98.1 Councillor Mears declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wells. 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.

98B Declarations of Interests

98.2 Councillor Randall, Councillor Summers, Roy Crowhurst, Heather Hayes and Ted Harman declared a personal interest in any discussion on the LDV as they are Board Members of Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

98C Exclusion of the Press and Public

98.3 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.

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

99. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Amendments to the minutes

99.1 *Paragraph 83.4* – Delete reference to Local Action Team. It should now read “Councillor Farrow informed the Committee that he had received an invitation to the meeting on 21 March as Chair of the Woodingdean Tenants’ and Residents’ Association”.

99.2 *Paragraph 91.10* – Councillor Robins stated that the reference to family should be replaced with *Parents*.

99.3 *Paragraph 92.11* – Agreed to insert the word “surveyed” to the first line “...96% of tenants surveyed....”.

Comments on the minutes

99.4 *Chair’s Communications on HCA Empty Homes Programme Funding - Paragraph 84.6* – Councillor Mears considered that this statement read out by the Chair (Councillor Randall at this meeting) was right in principle but commented that the wording might lead a lay person to think that the council were obtaining funding of £2 million.

99.5 *Housing Allocation Policy Review – Paragraph 91.17 and 91.18* - John Melson stated that there was no mention in the minutes that there had been an indicative vote on the substantive proposals which had rejected the Allocations Policy. He also stated that the minutes did not state that the Chair (Councillor Randall) had asked councillors to ignore tenants’ views. Barry Kent and Stewart Gover also considered that the word ignore had been used. Councillor Duncan responded to say that Councillor Randall had not instructed councillors to ignore tenants. He had reminded councillors they were not bound to vote in the same way as tenant representatives.

99.6 Councillor Robins reminded members that the Senior Lawyer had clarified the legal position regarding voting at the HMCC. Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that the Senior Lawyer was right in advising that councillors had to make their own decision. He accepted this was fair and lawful. That was why an indicative vote was taken followed by a councillor vote.

99.7 Councillor Randall stressed that it was ultimately the responsibility of councillors to make a decision as this was a consultation committee. It was perfectly acceptable for councillors to take a different view to tenants. He could not remember using the word ignore, but was happy to apologise if he did.

99.8 *Paragraph 92.11* – Tom Whiting still queried the statistic that 96% of tenants surveyed in sheltered accommodation were satisfied with housing services. He considered this was

unrealistic. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that the figure was correct. He had met with Tom and the Head of Tenancy Services to discuss this matter since the last meeting.

- 99.9 *Paragraph 93.5 – Specialist debt and money advice* - Councillor Farrow stated that his concern was that there was the potential for a need for more than 480 in depth specialist casework interventions. He requested that extra finance should be sought to enable a continuous review.
- 99.10 *Paragraph 96.4 – Performance Report* – Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked for percentages and figures to be used in future reports.
- 99.11 *Paragraphs 87.3 and 97.3 – Clarke Court – Scooter Storage Scheme* – It was clarified that the scheme was almost complete. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that she was not aware that planning permission had been granted for the Leach Court scheme. She would find out more information and would meet with tenants in Leach Court.
- 99.12 *Paragraph 97.5 – Mobility Scooter Group* – Barry Kent stated that there was no further news about this group which had not met for some time. The Head of Tenancy Services replied that she would discuss this matter with the relevant officer and give an update to the Tenants Disability Network meeting.
- 99.13 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee Meeting held on 19 March 2012 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to amendments outlined above.

100. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

City Assembly

- 100.1 The Chair informed members that the next City Assembly would take place on Saturday 19th May at Hove Town Hall. The theme would be communication and consultation and there would be workshops to give tenants the opportunity to discuss the suggestions and recommendations of the Innovation Group. Crèche facilities would be available and the council would be using web casting and social media as before. All tenants would be welcome to attend.

Recruitment Events for Apprenticeship with Mears

- 100.2 The Chair informed members that in May there will be two recruitment events for young people who were interested in applying for an apprenticeship with Mears. This would bring the number of apprenticeships appointed by Mears up to 57. These events would take place on May 16th 9.00am -13.00pm at City College in Pelham St and on May 17th at City College buildings on Wilson Avenue

Elizabeth Court Sheltered Housing Scheme

100.3 The Chair informed members that this week saw the 30th anniversary of Elizabeth Court sheltered housing scheme. She had attended a celebration at Elizabeth Court with the Mayor and Councillor Jarrett, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health.

101. CALLOVER

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

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

102. PETITIONS

102.1 There were none.

103. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

103.1 There were none.

104. DEPUTATIONS

104.1 There were none.

105. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

105.1 There were none.

106. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

106.1 There were none.

107. HOUSING SERVICES THE CITY DESERVES - IMPROVING SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HOUSING & SOCIAL INCLUSION DELIVERY UNIT

107.1 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Head of Tenancy Services. Slides of the presentation were circulated to members. The presentation set out changes being made to the service and the reasons for those changes. Members were shown a chart setting out the Commissioning Framework for Housing and Social Inclusion and were informed of the way in which residents had been involved in changing the service, and the ways in which the council was responding to tenants.

107.2 Members were shown the Housing & Social Inclusion Delivery Structure 2012/13 and were given details of the new teams within the service and the next steps in implementing the changes.

107.3 Councillor Farrow commented that as this was a major piece of work it would have been helpful if it had been presented in a report, which could have been read in advance of the meeting. Councillor Farrow was concerned at the use of the

expression “working smarter” in the section headed “Why Change”. He considered that this was derogatory wording as there were smart people already working for the service.

- 107.4 Councillor Farrow asked for an explanation of One Planet Brighton and under the section headed Management – Customer Service Team asked for the evidence base for resolving 80% of enquiries on first contact. Councillor Farrow referred to the bullet point “receive housing services from any housing office”. He had doubts that this would be easy to achieve. Councillor Farrow referred to the proposed area structure and was surprised to see Mouslecoomb in the Central area rather than the east area. He was also concerned that the Central area was split between Oxford Street and Selsfield Drive.
- 107.5 The Head of Tenancy Services explained that Smarter Working was a term used as part of the Corporate Plan. The term was about improving processes and was not about people. One Planet Brighton was also from the Corporate Plan and was about a different way of improving performance taking account of the environment by reducing carbon emissions and improving the sustainability of the stock.
- 107.6 The Head of Tenancy Services explained that the references to resolving 80% of enquiries on first contact and receiving housing services from any office were about the internal management of the service which needed to change. The proposed area structure was about the internal structure of staff. It did not relate to area panels. With regard to the question about Oxford Street and Selsfield Drive, it was the intention to enable tenants to use any reception at any housing office. For example, if a tenant lived in Mousecoomb and wanted to use Selsfield Drive or Oxford Street, officers could respond to the issue.
- 107.7 Councillor Farrow asked if the front line point of contact would be by telephone only. He stressed that many tenants had disabilities and local officers knew tenants.
- 107.8 The Head of Tenancy Services confirmed that contact would not only be by phone. Every housing office would have a Senior Duty Officer. Meanwhile, if tenants had an ongoing issue, they would have an identified key worker.
- 107.9 Stewart Gover noted that Saunders Park and Albion Hill were not mentioned. He considered more detail was required, in order for people to know which office to go to.
- 107.10 The Chair stressed that the area structure was based on wards. Albion Hill was in Queen’s Park Ward. She suggested that a map was produced to show tenants which ward they lived in.
- 107.11 Councillor Mears considered that there should have been a report rather than a presentation and felt that the proposals were vague in places. She asked for an explanation of “co-production and co-regulation”. Councillor Mears felt that the proposal for a single phone number was worrying and considered that the proposals were not very localised and would make it more difficult for tenants.
- 107.12 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion accepted the comments about the lack of a report but explained that HMCC had received a report on the Customer Access

Strategy in September 2011 and a report on an evaluation of Turning the Tide in January 2011. The key changes reported in the presentation were reflected in the Customer Access Strategy. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that references to co-production and co-regulation referred to the idea of service users being involved in the development of the service.

- 107.13 Councillor Randall made the point that the council were working closely with the most vulnerable families in the city and that there were a number of ways to contact people. He stated that it would be useful to have some figures regarding the use of social media. He assumed that there would be a bank of people to answer the single phone number.
- 107.14 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that Housing and Social Inclusion would be involved in the work that was being commissioned to help families on low incomes. Meanwhile there was a great deal of information for tenants on access to the internet. 56% of tenants surveyed had access to the internet. The survey showed that a higher percentage of younger tenants had access to the internet.
- 107.15 John Melson thought it was a good presentation but would have preferred a report. He was concerned that the area structure was based on wards rather than areas. He was encouraged to see how clearly the presentation demonstrated the importance of residents input in the proposals.
- 107.16 Heather Hayes had concerns about the proposed area structure. She had tried to phone the Oxford Street office and someone in the Victoria Road office had answered the phone. The Head of Tenancy Services explained that this was due to problems with the computer system last week. It was one reason why there was need for change with one team trained to answer the phone. It would not be a call centre approach and the staff would have a mix of duties and still have contact with tenants.
- 107.17 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to the section on Management – Customer Service Team (resolve 80% of enquires on first contact). He asked if people would be referred on to an area if the first person they spoke to could not answer the question. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement explained that it was the intention to deal with 80% of the enquiries on first contact. Some difficult queries might be referred on. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion stressed that the majority of enquiries were general, and other social landlords achieved these kinds of outcomes.
- 107.18 Councillor Peltzer Dunn expressed concern about the phased approach of launching the new service in July and the telephone service in the autumn. He considered that a whole service should be launched. He felt that there was a great deal that was good in the presentation but commented that he was not being asked to make a decision, and found it difficult to take ownership of what was before the committee. He considered that a report should be brought back asking for approval for the implementation of the service.
- 107.19 The Strategic Director Place stressed that the presentation had been given to councillors and tenants as part of the consultation process. The proposals were not a

policy issue. They had been based on what had already been approved. Internal re-organisations were not brought to committee for approval.

107.20 There was agreement that a report should come back to the HMCC. The Chair stated that she, Councillor Randall and the Strategic Director would discuss how to take this matter forward.

108. REPORT OF THE INNOVATION GROUP ON RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

108.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which shared with the HMCC the work and recommendations of the Innovations Group. Members were informed that the Innovations Group had been meeting since November 2011 to look at ways that resident involvement could be widened to include as many residents who wished to contribute to their housing management service in ways that they preferred and to modernise the Council's approaches while strengthening support for tenant and resident associations (TRAs). The recommendations in the report were designed to achieve this.

108.2 The Chair advised that the Committee were being asked to comment on the suggestions and recommendations that had been made by the Innovations Group and stated that there would be an opportunity for further discussion at the City Assembly on 19 May. All these comments would be fed into the report before coming back to the HMCC when there could be further discussion and additions before the final report was submitted to the Housing Committee for a decision.

108.3 Trish Barnard asked why the report was not going to the Area Panels. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion explained that an interim report had been submitted to the Area Panels. The report was being submitted to the City Assembly as it had city wide implications.

108.4 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from Sam Murphy and Julie Nichols who were both residents on the Innovations Group. Copies of the slides were circulated to members.

108.5 Roy Crowhurst stated that although the Area Panels had received a presentation, they had not seen this report. It was bypassing the Area Panels and going direct to the City Assembly. He expressed the view that the report might lead to some residents leaving the tenant's movement rather than attracting new members. A great deal of effort had been made over the years to get more tenants involved.

108.6 John Melson considered that there was a good consultation process at the moment and he felt that the Area Panels should not be bypassed. He stated that when the Innovations Group had been created, it had co-opted people without any consultation with tenants. Members of the Hi Rise Action Group completely rejected the methodology of the Innovations Group. Mr Melson stated that he was talking to fellow residents and they were in the process of forming a Residents' Action Group. Mr Melson said he was disgusted with the report which he considered was bypassing residents' views.

- 108.7 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement reported that the Area Panels had received an interim presentation on the work carried out so far. It had been decided at the Area Panels to let everyone know about the work of the Innovation Group. In answer to Roy Crowhurst's point about resident involvement, there was a great deal in the report about this issue. Tenants had spoken about a lack of support in local areas and poorly attended meetings. The report was recommending a new approach with additional support through training, and having the tenants' representatives themselves training newly elected tenants' representatives. There were a range of suggestions in the report that would help tenant involvement. In terms of the assumption that the proposals would put people off wanting to be involved, the aim was to have a strong, vital tenant movement.
- 108.8 The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement referred to John Melson's comments and stated that the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group were contacted first in terms of electing people to the Innovations Group. They had decided the matter should be considered at the Area Panels.
- 108.9 Julie Nichols remarked that members of HMCC had been elected to the Innovations Group. She stressed the importance of working together to go out and engage tenants who currently did not want to get involved.
- 108.10 Councillor Mears had a number of concerns about the report. She stressed the importance of the HMCC as a platform for tenants to express their views. She felt that the report did not reflect that. Although she understood the move to a scrutiny panel she noted that matters were often scrutinised after the event. Councillor Mears felt the wording of the report was trying to stifle debate and she did not want to see tenants being sidelined. She stated that it was important that the tenants should feel comfortable with the recommendations.
- 108.11 The Chair stated that she believed tenants were crucial to decision making.
- 108.12 Councillor Peltzer Dunn said that he considered the report to be interim bearing in mind that there was no feedback from the constructive meeting in April. He had considerable sympathy with the report but felt that he should not comment until the report had been submitted to the City Assembly and came back to HMCC before being submitted to the Housing Committee.
- 108.13 The Head of Tenancy Services thanked members for their comments. She stressed that she did not want members to think that members of the Innovation Group did not think HMCC important.
- 108.14 Councillor Mears referred to the comment in the report that HMCC was used as a political platform. She felt this was a misleading and inappropriate comment. There had always been debate and shared views in HMCC.
- 108.15 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the report had been drafted by officers with feedback from the Innovation Group. Officers had tried not to change feedback. The Head of Customer Access and Business Improvement stated that the comments were representative of the feeling of people who were involved. For all its good points there was some negative feedback from HMCC. Officers wanted to acknowledge that outside there was that perception.

- 108.16 Julie Nichols stated that she was pleased to hear the committee's views. She and Sam Murphy had given collective views to the committee. There was no intent that HMCC should disappear or that there should not be discussion. They wanted HMCC to be a platform where people could have discussion and make considered views.
- 108.17 The Chair stated that the report was stating feelings expressed by tenants across the city. They wanted a wide and vibrant tenant movement. It would be wonderful to attract new people with a range of ages.
- 108.18 Stewart Gover expressed concerns that the report of the Innovations Group came into conflict with S98 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. He has spoken to Simon Kirby MP who will be sharing this information with Eric Pickles, Secretary for State.
- 108.19 The Head of Tenancy Services stated that in her reading of the Housing and Regeneration Act, there was nothing to suggest the Innovation Group was contravening the Act. When the report was submitted to again to HMCC and the Housing Committee there would be legal implications regarding that point.
- 108.20 The Chair invited Stewart to the next meeting of the Innovation Group and asked him to bring the legislation he quoted from.
- 108.21 Heather Hayes asked for abbreviations to be explained in the document in future and the Chair agreed this should happen.
- 108.22 John Melson stated that the report was a history of what tenants had tried to achieve before with the exception of tenant scrutiny. He did not think more tenants would become involved as a result.
- 108.23 Tom Whiting stated that he felt there was some good sense in the report, but he considered there was not enough material in front of the committee to express a clear view.
- 108.24 Councillor Randall thanked members of the Innovation Group for the work they had carried out. It was an honest and thorough attempt to involve more people in the tenant movement. The burden was put on too few people at meetings.
- 108.25 Ted Harman stated that he considered it to be a good report. There was a lack of trust among tenants which was why they did not come to meetings. The Chair stressed that building up trust was important to the tenant movement.
- 108.26 Councillor Farrow stressed the need to work collaboratively. The report needed to be carefully considered and brought back to the HMCC.
- 108.27 The Head of Tenancy Services stated that the current report was part of a consultation and was not dictating anything. HMCC's feedback was needed. If members disagreed they should let officers know how they would like it to be done differently. The proposals were about further legitimising the tenant movement. If nothing was done the tenant movement would die on the vine. Having a vibrant tenant movement was critical to the Council as social landlords and the Council had no interest in undermining it.

- 108.28 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee’s comments, as set out above, on the proposals listed below be noted.
- (i) Code of conduct
 - (ii) Framework for resident involvement
 - (iii) Creation of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel
 - (iv) Menu for involvement
 - (v) Training offer with some compulsory training
 - (vi) Recommendations to form an action plan for taking forward suggestions to make them happen (summarised on page 36).
- (2) That it is noted that there will be further discussion and consultation at City Assembly on 19 May, before recommendations are presented to HMCC and the final report to the relevant committee.

The meeting concluded at 6.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

Subject: Housing services the city deserves
Date of Meeting: 29 May 2012
Report of: Strategic Director - Place
Contact Officer: Name: Sam Smith Tel: 01273 291383
Email: sam.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision: No
Ward(s) affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Housing & Social Inclusion delivery unit is responsible for around 12,300 council managed homes and over 2,200 leasehold properties in the city. The service has made great progress over recent years improving performance and achieving financial savings to re-invest in homes and services. Following consultation with residents and members about improvements that they would like to see to the way housing management services are delivered we are now restructuring the Housing & Social Inclusion service in order to further improve customer service, increase support for vulnerable residents and provide a platform for meeting our current and future challenges.
- 1.2 A presentation was given to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 30 April 2012 providing an overview of these changes. Members of the committee requested that further details are brought to a future meeting in the form of a report.
- 1.3 The changes taking place reflect improvements the wider council is making under the banner 'A council the city deserves' and are therefore under the heading 'Housing services the city deserves'.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee note the changes detailed in this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Housing management services have existed within a fairly static structure for a number of years with only marginal changes to meet service priorities and budgetary pressures. This is in part due to the fact that, for several

years, the service was preparing for the potential of major change through a stock transfer that did not go ahead.

- 3.2 There have been a number of reports that have been agreed by HMCC over the past few years which have recommended significant policy changes in order to improve service delivery, access to services and efficiency. For example the [Improvement Programme HMCC¹](#) report (September 2011), Customer Service & Access Strategy reports (HMCC [January 2010²](#) and [September 2011³](#)) and the [Turning the Tide recommendations⁴](#) (HMCC January 2011).
- 3.3 10 principles were agreed by residents at Housing Management Consultative Committee in January 2010 to provide a basis for the service to change and develop. These principles are:

- 1) Housing management should provide an effective and efficient service that meets residents' needs
- 2) Current ways of working need to change as they are resource intensive and do not always deliver what residents want
- 3) All residents should be able to easily access the service
- 4) There should be a range of ways for residents to contact the service
- 5) Administrative functions should be organised to reduce waste and avoid duplication
- 6) Housing officers should have a proactive role focused on providing support and tackling problems as early as possible
- 7) Housing officers should spend less time on administration and more time with residents and taking care of their neighbourhood
- 8) Support should be targeted at those who need it most
- 9) It is possible to improve service delivery whilst reducing costs
- 10) Residents and staff should be involved in developing and delivering change and improvement.

- 3.4 The Customer Service & Access Strategy agreed by HMCC on 26 September 2011 included the following actions:

- Continue engaging with staff to develop and then formally consult on a proposal for service transformation
- Set up a Customer Service Hub consisting of a front-line team who will be located together and responsible for the majority of our

¹ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

² [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

³ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

⁴ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

customer contacts by phone, email and letter. The team will also be responsible for staffing our reception points or service hubs, as well as responding to complaints. The team will strive to deal with 80% of its contacts 'right first time'

- Devise new staff training and induction to ensure officers have the skills and abilities to provide improved and memorable customer service

3.5 The [Social Inclusion Pilot report](#)⁵ that was considered by HMCC in January 2011 proposed that successful elements of the Moulsecomb 'Turning the Tide' pilot are rolled out to the citywide. The pilot demonstrated effective ways of tackling problems early, providing increased support to vulnerable residents and improved resident involvement in estate inspections. The changes to the service structure facilitate this, particularly in terms of:

- A focus on a preventative approach where problems are tackled early
- Increase in Tenancy Sustainment Team to support vulnerable residents
- Roll out the Rate Your Estate inspection model through the new Neighbourhood Team

3.6 In 2010 as part of the Housing Improvement Plan the 10-year Repairs and Improvement Partnership was procured and a new Property & Investment Service was established. There was also a restructure at the senior level of Housing & Social Inclusion. The unit was divided into three sections under three Heads of Service:

- **Property & Investment** – Asset Management, Partnership Management, Energy & Engineering and Contract Monitoring and Compliance
- **Tenancy Services** – Sheltered Services, Estates Services and Tenancy Management
- **Customer Access & Business Improvement** – Policy, Performance & Resident Involvement, Income Management, Rent Accounting, Leasehold Management, Car Parks & Garages, and Lettings.

3.7 In 2010 the Council was reorganised to move from a traditional departmental structure into Commissioning and Delivery Units. The Housing Management department became Housing & Social Inclusion Delivery Unit and are now commissioned to provide housing management

⁵ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

services. We needed to change our structure to meet the priorities of our Commissioners who have identified three arms of service delivery:

- **Management** – the basic landlord service that the majority of our tenants receive
- **Support** – work that we need to do with the most vulnerable residents on targeted and tailored interventions to help tackle inequality and promote social and financial inclusion
- **Investment** – capital investment in council homes, as well as supporting communities and improving neighbourhoods.

3.8 Housing & Social Inclusion are commissioned to reduce the cost of our basic landlord service from average to below average (compared with other social landlords), and to reinvest the savings into support and investment. Taking a stronger preventative approach will ensure problems are tackled quickly, homes are well maintained and longer term costs to the council are reduced.

3.9 The Government is seeking to bring about significant changes to the way local authorities provide their services and how social landlords provide their services. A central tenet of the Localism Bill⁶ is '*Freedom from Command and Control*', for example:

- Less emphasis on nationally set targets and monitoring.
- A change in the Regulatory Framework for Social Landlords to make it less onerous and locally adaptable⁷
- A self-financing business model for local authority landlords – we will be required to operate as a 'stand-alone' business
- Increased resident scrutiny and involvement in local decision making

3.10 We need to ensure that our service model is ready to take these opportunities and rise to the challenges.

3.11 A new [Corporate Plan](#)⁸ was published in November 2011 and we need to adapt our service delivery to reflect these priorities. The five priorities of the Corporate Plan are:

- Tackling inequality

⁶ The Localism Act 2011 received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011 and is coming into force in instalments.

⁷ The Tenants Services Authority was dissolved in April 2012 and the residual regulatory functions transferred to the Homes and Communities Agency

⁸ <http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>

- Creating a more sustainable city
 - Engaging people who live and work in the city
 - A responsible and empowering employer
 - A council the city deserves
- 3.12 The council's administration is also seeking to develop Neighbourhood Councils and devolve decision making to this level as far as possible. We need to align ourselves to this model of working as it develops.
- 3.13 There are a number of financial reasons for remodelling our service. Every public service is required to demonstrate that they are providing value for money by scrutinising the way they provide services and ensuring they operate at maximum efficiency. We are expected to demonstrate this through year on year efficiency savings alongside continuous improvement in service delivery.
- 3.14 We are experiencing an economic recession and, as a result the most significant public spending cuts in the UK since the 1980s. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring fenced budget consisting of income from rents and service charges and is therefore not currently directly affected by these pressures. However some of our residents are amongst the most vulnerable people in the community and will be experiencing the impact of other public services being reduced or withdrawn. These changes enable us to provide additional support for residents at this time, for example by helping residents experiencing financial difficulties, providing learning opportunities and improving homes to reduce fuel bills.
- 3.15 This service restructure will save in the region of £146,000 in 2012/13. The new service model will provide us a platform to generate additional savings year on year. These savings have been made from reducing management posts and there has been an overall increase in frontline staff. These saving proposals were presented to HMCC in the [Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13](#) report⁹ following consultation at Area Panels and a resident workshop at Citywide Assembly.
- 3.16 There are other ways in which we can save money for the longer term by moving away from a reactive service model to a more preventative service model. This means that rather than responding to issues and problems as they arise, we tackle them as early as possible or prevent them from occurring at all. The housing stock in Brighton, Hove and Portslade has been underinvested in for many years. By freeing up money to improve the quality of our stock we can also help to free some pressure on our tenancy management service. For example we can reduce the numbers

⁹ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

of repairs, the risk of lift breakdowns, and the impact of overcrowding and damp.

Improving our services

- 3.17 We are improving the way that residents access our services and making some changes to the way we organise ourselves (see structure chart in Appendix 1). These include:
- Creating a single phone number for housing enquiries provided through the customer service hub
 - Creating a new team to answer phone, email, internet enquiries and staff Housing Office receptions
 - Changing some staff roles and creating new specialist teams
 - Having a group of staff responsible for a larger geographic area rather than one officer for a smaller area
 - Changing the way estate inspections are managed
 - Increasing support for the most vulnerable residents
 - Providing improved money advice and learning opportunities for residents
 - Providing more support to deliver projects to improve sustainability, save energy and reduce carbon emissions
 - Improving delivery of major projects and ensuring the council gets good value for money
- 3.18 In order to support these improvements we are currently establishing a number of new teams that will cover services provided from our housing offices. A table of roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix 2.

Improving the management of neighbourhoods

- 3.19 We are improving neighbourhood services by introducing a new team that will be responsible for the day to day work of the housing service. The Neighbourhood Team will be area based, with staff spending the majority of their time working out on our estates. Their role will be similar to that of the Community Warden with their duties including routine tenancy visits, leading estate inspections and monitoring estate areas including car parks and garages sites. To support improved neighbourhood management we have also introduced new senior posts.
- 3.20 We will also roll out the 'Rate Your Estate' initiative which has been trialled in Moulsecoomb and received positive feedback in improving the effectiveness of estate inspections.

Improving the management of tenancies

- 3.21 Tenancies will be managed by four teams that will work closely together and

resolve particular issues or problems and support residents through their time in a council property. The teams are:

- **Tenancy Officer Team** – dealing with any cases where ongoing work is required for example if there is a breach of tenancy
- **Tenancy Sustainment Team** –providing tailored support to help vulnerable residents maintain their tenancies
- **Anti-Social Behaviour Team** –dealing with serious cases of anti-social behaviour
- **Rehousing Team** – dealing with letting of vacant properties and supporting people to settle into their new home

3.22 The Tenancy Service Operations Manager will be responsible for all of these teams. There will no longer be a role called 'Housing Officer' and their duties will be continued by staff in new roles, primarily the Tenancy Officers and Senior Neighbourhood Officers. These staff will continue to be area based and will work in groups covering larger areas than previously. This will reduce the reliance on a single officer with the risk of things coming to a stop when they are away from work, and will result in a much more responsive and timely customer service.

Improving customer service

3.23 A new customer service hub will be the first point of contact for tenancy management and general housing enquiries, whether by telephone, letter or email. The team have experienced and knowledgeable officers who will answer telephone calls from across the city and staff reception counters at Housing Offices. The team will be responsible for resolving around 80% of all non-repairs enquiries.

3.24 A new single phone number for non-repairs enquiries will be introduced in autumn 2012 in order to make it simpler for residents to phone the service. Before the number is changed information and publicity will be sent to all residents' homes, and we will also ensure that existing numbers are 'forwarded' to the new number for a transition period, so that residents who are not aware of the change still get through.

Supporting social inclusion and resident involvement

3.25 We are introducing a new Inclusion team to promote social inclusion. Resident Involvement Officers will replace Community Participation Officers and will work as part of the Inclusion & Involvement Team. This is because we recognise that resident involvement is key to reducing social exclusion.

3.26 We are introducing new roles to improve support and advice for people who are experiencing financial difficulties. New posts are also being introduced to work directly with residents to improve access to training and skills.

3.27 We will also be improving our support for tenant associations and supporting residents to get involved in the management and development of the service in

a wide variety of ways. Resident Involvement Officers will play a key role in supporting those who are currently involved or want to get involved in improving their neighbourhoods and supporting their community.

Improving the delivery of planned works and sustainability projects

- 3.28 The Property & Investment Team are adding extra project management support to continue improving value for money and customer service through our partnerships. This will also improve our support for sustainability projects which will deliver energy efficiency measures to homes and create savings and benefits for residents.

Area structure

- 3.29 We are changing the way we organise our services into three areas to enable properties and workloads to be more evenly distributed. The changes are about how we organise ourselves internally and will not affect things like area panels or which housing office residents can report issues to. The areas are not yet final but are likely to be as in the attached map (appendix 3).

Housing Offices

- 3.30 Services will continue to be provided from local housing offices and residents will continue to be able to visit offices or make an appointment to see an officer as now. The changes in our team structures mean that residents can visit any housing office, including their local office and receive a consistent customer focussed service. We are also looking at different ways of providing face to face access such as teaming up with colleagues in community libraries. We will continue to look at ways of making better use of our buildings in order to reduce costs, and have already achieved this at Lavender Street where we now share the building with colleagues from Children's Services, and in Whitehawk where we have moved to the Whitehawk Community Hub.

Next Steps

- 3.31 The following actions will be taken to move forward with these changes and ensure that residents are kept informed:
- Briefing sent to resident representatives
 - Information in the summer and autumn editions of Homing-in magazine
 - Staff move into new roles in July 2012
 - Single phone number starts in autumn 2012 and widely publicised

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 These changes are part of the process of the council continually looking to improve the services we provide and ensure value for money for residents. The changes to customer access and the principles on which the changes are

based have been developed with tenants and resident groups over the last few years.

- 4.2 Formal reports presenting the Customer Service & Access Strategy and agreeing the principles for change have been unanimously agreed by Housing Management Consultative Committee which includes resident representatives and councillors. These reports and associated consultation are detailed on the table below:

Report	Date	Link	Associated consultation
Housing Management Customer Access Review HMCC	8/02/10	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00002017/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction and other surveys • Customer Access focus groups • Mystery shopping
Turning the Tide Social Inclusion Pilot outcomes HMCC	14/01/11	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000000002796/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident & stakeholder workshops • Tenant association events • Various working groups, forums and steering groups • Website via Consultation Portal
Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service & Access Strategy HMCC Report	26/09/11	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00003299/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homing-in • Satisfaction and other surveys • Customer Access focus groups • Resident workshops • Mystery shopping • Website
Improvement Programme HMCC update	26/09/11	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00003299/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us what you think events and surveys • Various resident working groups • Various surveys and focus groups • Mystery shopping
20012/13 Housing Revenue Account Budget Report	6/02/12	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00003302/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions at Area Panels • Resident workshop at Citywide Assembly

- 4.3 There has been a wide range of consultation with residents and residents groups which have helped us develop these new ways of working. These include:

- Consultation events and questionnaires such as the 'Tell us what you think?'
- Customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups and resident 'mystery shopping' exercises
- Feedback from resident representatives, meetings and working groups
- Feedback from compliments, suggestions and complaints

- 4.4 Housing & Social Inclusion staff and trade unions have been formally consulted about changes to roles and responsibilities following the council's Managing Change Policy.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The service improvements in this report have produced forecast budget savings of £146,000 relating to employees costs and £31,000 for office costs. These savings were included in the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13 report approved by Cabinet in February 2012 and will contribute to a reduction in management unit costs of approximately £0.28 per unit.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant. Ext 3105

Date: 10 May 2012.

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The changes to the service outlined in the report do not need formal Member approval, as the Strategic Director of Place has extensive delegated powers to manage the Council's housing services. Those powers are also exercisable by the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion. The changes to the council's constitution required by the return to a committee system do not affect those delegated powers. No individual's human rights are adversely affected by the changes.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Senior Lawyer

17 May 2012

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 A draft Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for these changes and will continue to be updated as the changes are implemented.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The changes include additional support for projects to make homes more energy efficient and improve the sustainability of the overall housing stock.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The changes include strengthening the council's preventative service including those to support vulnerable tenants and tackle anti-social behaviour.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The changes are being made using a project management approach with risks and opportunities are being identified and recorded following the council's guidelines.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The benefits of improving council housing will have affects across our neighbourhoods and the city, that are not just confined to those living in council managed housing.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. New Housing & Social Inclusion structure chart
2. Table detailing new team responsibilities
3. Map of city showing proposed new area structure

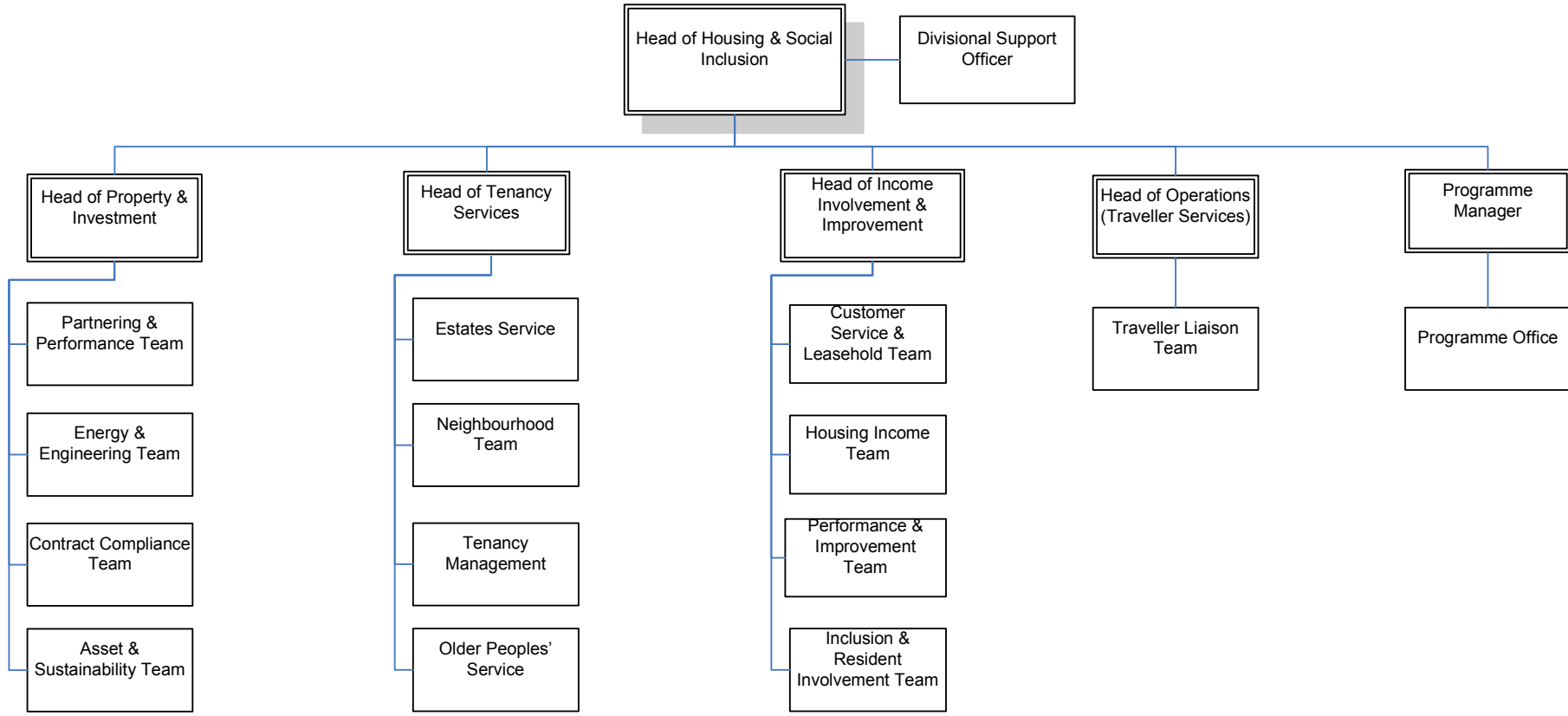
Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background documents

1. A council the city deserves <http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/priority/council-city-deserves>
2. Corporate Plan <http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>
3. Housing Management Customer Access Review HMCC Report 8/02/10
[http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
4. Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service & Access Strategy HMCC Report 26/09/11 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
5. Turning the Tide Social Inclusion Pilot outcomes Report 14/01/11
[http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
6. Improvement Programme HMCC update report 26/09/11
[http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
7. 20012/13 Housing Revenue Account Budget Report 6/02/12
[http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

Appendix 1 – New Housing & Social Inclusion structure chart



Appendix 2 – New Team Roles and responsibilities

Neighbourhood Management Team	Tenancy Management Team	Housing Customer Service Team	Inclusion & Involvement Team
<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Manager • Senior Neighbourhood Officer • Neighbourhood Officer 	<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy Services Operations Manager • Tenancy Managers • Senior Tenancy Officers • Lettings Manager • Tenancy Officers • Tenancy Sustainment Officers • Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Officers • Rehousing Officers 	<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Services Operations Manager • Housing Customer Services Manager • Housing Customer Service Team Leaders • Housing Customer Service Advisors • Car Parks & Garages Customer Service Advisors 	<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Manager • Resident Involvement Manager • Resident Involvement Officers • Financial Inclusion Coordinator • Learning & Participation Coordinator • Basic Skills Coordinator
<p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day estate management • Current Community Warden duties • Estate inspections • Car park and garages inspections • Routine tenancy visits 	<p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy related casework • Supporting vulnerable tenants to stay in their homes • Letting homes • Helping new tenants to settle in their homes • Tackling Anti-social behaviour • Enforcement of the tenancy agreement 	<p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering phone calls to the service (not those relating to repairs) • Staffing Housing Office reception counters • Dealing with email and internet enquiries • Managing complaints • Routine tenancy visits • Managing car parks and garages • Managing schemes such as decorating for older people 	<p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging and supporting residents to get involved in a wide variety of ways Supporting resident and tenant associations • Organising Area Panels and the City Wide Assembly • Coordinating support and advice for residents experiencing financial difficulties • Developing learning and training opportunities for residents

